

# ENVIRONMENTALISTS FOR BERNIE

## A LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR BERNIE FROM DEVON PEÑA: WHY LATINX VOTERS SHOULD JOIN THIS POLITICAL REVOLUTION

Moderator's Note: It is my privilege to present this endorsement statement by a respected and diverse group of environmental activists formed a few months ago, Environmentalists for Bernie. I wish to use this statement as an opening for me to make the case for Latinx endorsement of Senator Sanders as our candidate for the Democratic Party nomination.

It is especially important that Latinx youth and young adults, the so-called Millennials, lead the way in turning out to vote for Sanders in the forthcoming California, Oregon, and Washington state primaries. California Latinx youth have an especially significant opportunity to play a decisive role to make sure that the nomination does not go to Hillary Clinton, who is a neoliberal not a progressive and is certainly no where near to understanding and respecting the democratic socialist ideals that our young people are rapidly embracing in widening social movements against the dictatorship of the 1 Percent.

Let me make the case by focusing quickly on four of the most salient issues facing young adult Latinx voters, who are the fastest growing segment of the electorate:

1. Environmental justice.
2. Immigrant and workers' rights.
3. Universal health care.
4. Free college education.

**1. Environmental justice.** The Flint water crisis is just the tip of the generalized poisoning of our youth and families through the privatization and corporate takeover of our municipal water supplies. Environmental racism remains widespread and, despite the EPA's environmental justice (EJ) programs, and Executive Order 12898, progress has been close to non-existent on this immense and widespread environmental problem. Bernie Sanders will greatly expand EPA EJ programs he will also support legislation to establish a national environmental justice act to make the demand of the decades-old movement statutory. Sanders will shut down the fracking industry, which is responsible for increased environmental risks in low income and people of color communities. Sanders will give us climate justice, and implement policies and seek legislation to make the climate change a the centerpiece driving a shift to renewable energy sources, and not the type of centralized solar farming that the Obama Administration has promoted.

Many have asked: How will we pay for these initiatives? Is it realistic or do we need Clinton to negotiate the politics of the possible? My response is simple: Tax the Hoard, Clean Water Across the Board! Suggested hashtag, #TaxTheHoard. There is a \$5 trillion hoard in sequestered capitalist wealth right now that is stowed away from reinvestments and is part of the 1 percenters' political strike on investments during the Obama

Administration. This wealth, which we created, must be re-appropriated and used to invest in environmental protection, which would include the \$50-100 billion needed to upgrade water systems across the country. Bernie Sanders will find a way to tax the hoard and re-appropriate this collective wealth to invest in our cities and towns; Clinton is in the pockets of the Wall Street financiers, her banker friends are among the most brutal of the hoarders.

**2. Immigrant and Workers' Rights.** Bernie Sanders understands that the key to addressing immigration is to provide for workers' rights across the board, regardless of citizenship status, educational attainment, or skills. He also understands intersectionalities, and how the same system that exploits immigrant workers is the system involved in mass incarceration and privatization of the nation's prison and detention center complex. Sanders will support a pathway to citizenship for out of status workers while emphasizing family reunification for those split across borders. He will suspend deportation campaigns, downsize and de-militarize Customs and Border Enforcement, and refocus resources on naturalization instead of border repression. He will lead for reform of the system to end the impunity with which Border Patrol agents regularly shoot, wound, and kill innocent border crossers and even residents on the other side of the border.

**3. Universal Health Care.** Bernie Sanders seeks a system "where all people can get the care they need to maintain and improve their health when they need it regardless of income, age or socioeconomic status." This includes people who are of uncertain legal status. Health care for all, means everyone! Sanders will end the politics of death, which is what our current system based on private insurance is delivering, death for the uninsured or the underinsured. This issue is important to the future wellbeing of Latinx young adults and youth, whose parents and grandparents they will soon care for. Imagine the ruinous burden this will turn out to be if our young people inherit the devastating job of caring for families ruined by unaffordable health care costs. Sanders will make sure this sort of debt is not allowed to interfere with our young peoples' future prospects.

**4. Free College Education.** A well-educated populace is indispensable if we are to have any truly democratic prospects. Sanders will invest resources to make sure every person wanting to gain a college education will be able to do so without falling into the debt trap currently imposed on students of all age groups. Sanders will also support a 'jubilee' to forgive all student loan debt, about \$1 trillion, and this could be achieved by taxing the hoard and adding new 'just transition' taxes to be levied against the wealthiest families and corporations. Since Latinx people are becoming the demographic majority across many states, like California, New Mexico, and Texas, access to free college education is a powerful demand that will unlock our future potential. Imagine how recent and future college graduates will be able to invest in creating small businesses to grow a solidarity economy instead of falling into the crushing trap of college debt, which prevents them from ever being able to command the resources to help build a more just and equitable economic system.

An educated populace is more likely to support the kinds of wealth re-distribution policies needed if we are to meaningfully and effectively address structural inequalities. Educated persons embrace progressive ideas and will help social movements revive and expand environmental protections, re-invest in our youth and infrastructure, protect workers and immigrants by strengthening workers' rights across the board, and bring an end to the thanatopolitics of privatized health care, while placing us back on the long path toward a multiracial mass-based democracy, which has been interrupted by three decades of neoliberal mischief and unacknowledged centuries of settler colonialism. Decolonize the government, vote for Bernie!