

Left To Their Own Devices

Review: *The Truce: Progressives, Centrists, and the Future of the Democratic Party*
by Hunter Walker and Luppe B. Luppen W.W. Norton, 320 pp., \$29.99

By David J. Garrow

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This rich and sometimes compelling book touches on multiple newsworthy themes, but its central thesis will come as no surprise to anyone who closely follows U.S. politics. Joe Biden "ran for president as a staunch moderate," but since taking office he has "applied his pragmatic moderate branding on a far more left-wing set of policy prescriptions than the Democratic Party had ever offered."

That's not simply the authors' conclusion; it's enthusiastically vouched for by some of the most far-left members of Congress. Minnesota representative Ilhan Omar told them that Biden is "proud of the image that he crafted as a centrist and moderate," but in actuality he "is now repeating the policy positions of Bernie Sanders."

Congressional Progressive Caucus chair Pramila Jayapal (D., Wash.) likewise celebrates the "joining of the progressive movement and the Biden administration," and the authors emphasize how that caucus "made a key choice to embrace Biden as tightly as possible." As a result, the progressives "proved to be far better allies for him than the centrists," and accordingly "the president understood that the biggest part of his base was progressives in Congress," Jayapal told them.

Because of this unlikely alliance, Biden became "a surprisingly and uniquely unifying figure in the fractured party," the authors write, thus resulting in "a truce between progressives and the Democratic establishment that would last through Biden's first term."

Senator Sanders, for his own part, proudly remains a pre-woke leftist eager to denounce the party whose presidential nomination he sought in 2016. "The struggle for America is the need to bring together the working-class, low-

income people in this country," he told the authors. "It is not identity politics. Alright? It is not seeing that a Black woman goes to the moon." He also rightly declared that "the Democratic Party has become a coastal party, run by elitists," a "corporately controlled party beholden to your wealthy campaign contributors and to the corporate media."

The Truce is a brisk and satisfying read once one is past an oddly styled first chapter that's largely a 22-page narrated transcription of some vacuous yet surreptitiously recorded remarks that former president Barack Obama made at a private party for newly elected congressional Democrats in March 2019. The authors write that their book is based on "hundreds of hours of interviews with hundreds of sources," the vast majority of whom go unnamed, but their presentation of the Obama event leaves a reader suspecting that a member of the so-called Squad may deserve a J. Edgar Hoover Award for this act of covert surveillance.

Walker and Luppen devote a good deal of attention to the Squad's four prominent members and report how a leading group sponsoring their initial candidacies, Justice Democrats, sometimes "filed declarations of candidacy with the Federal Election Commission without authorization from the candidates in question—forms that they falsely represented as signed by those candidates," including one in New York.

That's striking news, yet vastly more memorable is another research discovery the authors fail to milk for all that it's worth. [An archived web page from 2018](#), created by a developer named Riley Roberts, purported to offer for sale Civet Select, "the world's most exotic cup of coffee." In Indonesia, according to the web page, "cage-free indigenous Palm Civets climb to the top of the plantation trees to eat the best coffee beans in the crop. Civets digest the berries and pass the coffee beans. The enzymes in the digestive process remove the bitterness and acidity from the coffee. Farmers hike the plantation and surrounding forest to find the rare, wild Civet droppings. The found beans are thoroughly cleaned, washed and sun dried at the plantation. Lab testing confirms Civet coffee is clean and safe to drink."

Anyone reading these astonishing claims might well think the resulting product, pardon my French, tastes like shit, but a winsome photo of Roberts's attractive partner, "Alexandria," highlights her reassuring guarantee that that's not the case: "This Civet coffee has a unique, smooth and full-bodied flavor that I really enjoyed."



"I was skeptical at first, but this unique, smooth and full-bodied enjoyed trying."

-Alexandria, New York

Yet most amazing of all is the listed *price* of the "found" beans for which Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was shilling: \$40 for *two* ounces! Coffee beans usually come in 12-ounce packages, so \$240 for a bag of "droppings" would be an awfully steep price even for New York City Democratic Socialists.

AOC's archived web page should be good for endless laughter, but vastly more important is *The Truce's* alarming reporting on Vice President Kamala Harris. "Soon after Biden took office, a consensus began to emerge that—despite his age—he would have to run for a second term," the authors write, because of the "fear" that Harris "could not win a race against Donald Trump, or perhaps against any Republican. ... Democrat after Democrat who we interviewed, ... including members of Biden and Harris's own teams, ascribed to this conventional wisdom. 'Kamala is not ready for prime time,' one senior White House staffer said, adding, 'She ain't made for this.'"

Walker and Luppen spoke with multiple veterans of Harris's prior offices, and "the stories of mismanagement shared by our sources on Harris's various teams were substantive, nuanced, and consistent," they write. This will

surprise only readers unfamiliar with pre-2020 California coverage of Harris, for as this writer highlighted in an [August 2020 essay](#) in the *Spectator*, experienced Democratic operatives had spoken of Harris's "lack of discipline, focus, and decisiveness," and a veteran San Francisco editor dismissed her as "a shallow narcissist" for whom "there's not that much there."

Harris's own 2020 presidential campaign flamed out before the end of 2019, and Walker and Luppen report that "those closest to it were left with deep-seated doubts about her ability to lead." Faced with the question of whether Harris could "serve as a successful successor to Biden, some of the staffers who had worked most closely with her were among the most afraid."

Afraid? It gets worse. They quote "one top aide" as telling them that "a lot of us, at least folks I was friends with on the campaign, all realized that "Yeah, this person should not be president of the United States." Yikes. Unsurprisingly, as multiple stories over the past three years have similarly reported, nothing changed in Harris's vice presidential office, which "saw heavy staff turnover, with aides describing a toxic climate riven with factionalism and mismanagement."

Whatever opinion one may have about Joe Biden's fitness to potentially continue serving as president until age 86 in 2029, how can *anyone* in good conscience allow Kamala Harris to remain one heartbeat away from the presidency during a time when her ascension to the Oval Office would become ever more likely? A *far* more qualified black woman until recently worked in Biden's White House—Domestic Policy Council director and former U.N. ambassador Susan Rice—and in any event, to allow an identity politics fixation to potentially endanger U.S. national security would be nothing short of treasonous.

David J. Garrow's books include the Pulitzer Prize-winning Martin Luther King Jr. biography Bearing the Cross and Rising Star: The Making of Barack Obama.