

REDEFINING THE WORKING CLASS

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Left-wing intellectuals and activists, beginning with Marx, have never had anything in common with the working class, yet they speak endlessly about their need to liberate them. Marx himself lived a pampered existence—he had a maid, whom he impregnated (never supporting his son)—and went to his grave thinking that at any moment the working class would rebel against the capitalist class. But they never did.

The working class revolution that Marx predicted was supposed to take place in advanced capitalist countries, yet the only places where Marxism took root were in pre-industrial countries like Russia and China, and it wasn't inspired by the working class. Today, Marxism is back in vogue, and as usual it is not the working class who are leading the cause: it's privileged, well-educated radicals, many of whom look down their noses at blue-collar workers.

It's always a good idea for revolutionaries to know something about the folks they want to liberate, even if the "oppressed" don't want their services. But today's emancipators can't even define who the working class are. Perhaps the most clueless is New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

In a recent interview with Lulu Garcia-Navarro in the *New York Times*, Mamdani—who ran his campaign boasting how he would liberate the working class—struggled mightily to define who they are. He began by saying it was someone who has "to work to pay your bills." Presumably, that would include hedge fund managers and their butlers.

The reporter wasn't fooled. "So someone making \$250,000 a year is working class?" After he stumbled to answer, she asked where he draws the line. "I've drawn it at about a million dollars a year." Which prompted her to respond, "So anyone

under a million dollars a year in income is working class.” He tried to laugh his way out of it, and then said, “That’s not what I’m saying.” But that is exactly what he said.

Mamdani is not the only one on the Left who thinks most Americans are members of the working class.

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) has a training program for its adherents, and they are told that “a big majority of Americans are in the working class”; it cites government workers as an example. This would mean that municipal comptrollers are identical to the household staff who clean their toilets. Fortune magazine opines that “A lot of tech workers are working class,” which means that a good swath of the left-wing rich folks who work in Silicon Valley are members of the working class.

The Ford Foundation, which has been funding left-wing causes for decades, says, “today’s working class is often primarily defined by education rather than occupation: individuals without a four-year college degree.” It concludes that “the working class constitutes over 60% of the U.S. labor force.” This means that many professional athletes, who never graduated from college, are in the same economic class as those selling hot dogs in the stands, despite the fact that the jocks are multi-millionaires.

For Marx, the prototype of the working class was the urban factory worker. Today, the working class would include such employees as construction workers, cops, firefighters, truck drivers, electricians, plumbers, landscape workers, bartenders, barbers and sanitation men. But don’t expect them to take up arms against the capitalist class—they are more likely to rally around uber capitalists like Donald Trump.

We know from presidential election data that it is not the working class who hates Trump—it is many of those with an income of \$100,000 or more and who have a post-graduate

degree. They are among the few demographics that did not vote for Trump in 2024.

This is nothing new. When radical well-to-do students took to the streets in downtown New York City in 1970 to protest the Vietnam war—burning the American flag and shouting anti-American slogans—they were met by construction workers who taught them a lesson with their fists. The “hard hat” riot pitted the working class against the privileged class, something that Marxists are still at a loss to understand.

It goes back to Marx himself. He was a lazy, filthy man who wrote voluminously about the urban factory worker yet, as English historian Paul Johnson pointed out, he never set foot in a factory in his entire life. Today’s champions of the working class also have no idea who they are.

Maybe if privileged radicals spent more time in working class bars, and less time in left-wing seminars, they would learn something about the way blue collar workers think. They might even learn why they are so hated.