

May Day campaign: Workers and students speak out against war

Our reporters
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Supporters of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) campaigned in New York and California this week to promote the May 3 International Online May Day Rally. Workers and students they spoke to expressed interest in participating in the rally in order to oppose war, inequality, and the attack on democratic rights.

California

Jeremy, a resident of Los Angeles, drew attention to the perpetual wars carried out in the interests of the American ruling class. "I read that there were only 15 years or so in the last century when America was not at war, and we've been at war since the beginning of this one. It's crazy. I'll be at your rally, if only to learn more."

Armel, an engineering student from Cameroon, commented on the negative effects of American imperialism on workers throughout the world. "The impact of US presence anywhere in the world is obvious: Iraq was a relatively stable country before 2003. Now, sectarian violence has turned it into hell. The entire Middle East has been dragged into an explosive situation. First Afghanistan, then Iraq, then look at Libya today, where thousands of people escape daily. Then Syria, also with hundreds of thousands forced to flee. Now Yemen, such a poor country.

"There is an element of cowardice in attacking such vulnerable people. It's troubling that the US speaks of democratic rights while it made tyrannies like Saudi Arabia one of its key allies. I think Obama is worse than Bush at this point. The fact that he is black like me doesn't mean anything to me. In the end, it comes down

to policy."

Anna Clears, an undergraduate studying biology at University of California Irvine (UCI), spoke about the growth of inequality. "It seems that this government is not prioritizing things right if the wealthiest people are getting richer and richer, and then everybody else is getting poorer. The gap between the middle class- if you can call it that anymore- and the super-rich is increasing."

Tim Duong, a senior studying political science and sociology at UCI, spoke about the burden of rising tuition costs in the UC system on students. "Tuition is almost \$15,000 a year at the UC campuses. Four years ago when I started here, it was \$9,000. I'm very lucky that I was able to get financial aid and work/study because my parents don't make enough. I heard that the regents voted to raise the tuition again something like 25% over the next five years."

Hayley, a young college student at Berkeley City College and a special needs worker, called for all the money spent on war to instead be invested in education. "They spend all this money on war, just to kill people at the end. We also lose so many troops every year and we're just spending more and more money on weapons and war that could be invested in our schools and education and raising our youth. They're spending money just to cause more conflict."

New York

Marcia Brown, a resident of Brooklyn, New York, explained why she is planning to participate in the International May Day Rally. "Let's start with the need

for increasing the minimum wage,” she said. “As a single mom taking care of a son that goes to college, we need a little more. What we need is what can take care of our family.

“Why do we need all this money for war planes?” she asked. “This money should be invested in the economy for better schools. Pay teachers better salaries so they can teach.

“Or more affordable housing,” she added. “The housing market is crazy. For instance, I make \$500 a week and my rent is \$1140 a month. Lights are not included. I need internet for my son. I am paying over \$1500 a month. Invest in a program to help keep a middle class.”

She concluded that current Democratic New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio “is talking about income equality but I don’t see income equality. We poorer class are getting squeezed.”

Lefert Joinville, a musician, said he hated the profit system. “I would like to be in the May Day rally. It would make me feel normal, not alone, to see how many people feel like me.”

Janet Ranger, a mother of two, opposed the imperialist policies of the US government. “I wasn’t born in the US. I am getting educated and trained here to go back to my country– Jamaica,” she said. “We should have the right to go where we want and do what we want, but the US wants to control policy in Jamaica and all countries. The US says they want to help with food, education and training, but they really go in to dictate and control us with acts and threats including overthrowing the government. And they have done this to so many people.

“The working class needs to stand up in every country, but they are not standing up together. Look at the poverty in this country. Many people don’t know where their next meal is coming from. But the government doesn’t take care of the people here. There is poverty here, but it doesn’t slow down the government at all from going into other countries and dictating.”

Kendis Edwards, a sales associate, said, “I don’t condone the wars, and they are fighting wars while we have very big issues at home. Medicare as part of the health care system is under attack. Then there is homelessness, problems in the school system and overall poverty.”

Jhonny Trezil, a recent college graduate, originally from Haiti, expressed his hostility to imperialism and war. “Imperialism, for me, is a war that for the top countries in charge like the US, they try to take and keep control of underdeveloped nations and their politicians like they do in my nation– Haiti. They try to make this control in a fashion where the people aren’t even able to recognize it. The politicians from my country settle for this and as a result the country is deteriorating politically, socially and economically.

“At the end of the day, the people, the students and the working class suffer. This is the imperialist system.”



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