

Thousands protest in Berkeley in wake of Trump election

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In the wake of the late-night announcement of the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States, hundreds of protesters took to the streets in Oakland and Berkeley, California, marching down the main thoroughfares and shouting, “Not my president!” Similar midnight protests broke out in cities across the United States, including in Pittsburgh, Chicago, Seattle, Portland, Los Angeles and New York.

Some of the demonstrators made a brief attempt to block traffic on the 580 freeway before dispersing at around 3a.m.

The next morning, several thousand high school students in the East Bay walked out of their classes and staged multiple protest marches, denouncing the election of Trump. Fifteen hundred students walked out of Berkeley High School, and were joined by students from neighboring Albany High, and from several schools in North Oakland.

The protesters converged on the UC Berkeley campus where they rallied on Sproul Plaza at 10a.m. followed by a second wave at noon, when they were joined by protesting UC Berkeley students. Campus police stood watching the demonstration, others patrolled its fringes on motorcycles. A helicopter circled overhead.

The UC Berkeley chapter of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) intervened at the protests, distributing 300 copies of the *World Socialist Web Site's* perspective on the election, “Trump’s victory and the debacle of American democracy.” They built for a meeting on the significance of the election of Trump and the danger of war, which will be held on the Berkeley campus Thursday evening.

The protesting youth gathered on the Berkeley campus displayed a mingled sense of shock, fear and anger. Students who spoke with the WSWS talked of

being afraid of concentration camps, mass deportations and a ban on Muslim immigrants under a Trump presidency. Most expressed disbelief at his election.

The leaders of the protest gatherings, associated with By Any Means Necessary (BAMN), the Chicano/Latino Club and the Gay Straight Alliance, controlled the megaphone during the rally at 10a.m. and addressed the crowd, seeking to channel the protests behind identity politics and the Democratic Party. At one point they transformed the chant “Not my president!” to “She’s my President,” and at another led a chant of “We’ll be back,” openly identifying themselves with the Democratic Party.

The protests, however, had largely emerged spontaneously and were not fully under the control of any particular organization. The impetus for the Berkeley walkouts and marches seems to have originated with high school students on social media late last night. For 20 minutes at noon, over 1,000 people gathered without any leadership and stood in angry silence on the steps of Sproul Plaza.

Some of the handmade signs held up by students expressed the disorientation of identity politics, one read “Brown Power,” and another “White America: We Did This and We Should Be Ashamed.” The great majority simply read “F*ck Trump.”

By 2p.m. the protests had dissipated and the protesters gone home.

The spontaneous protests in the wake of Trump’s election express an intuitive recognition on the part of many young people that the right-wing politics of Donald Trump represent a tremendous danger. This is an entirely healthy impulse.

At the same time, the chants and placards of the protest reveal the profoundly disorienting effect which identity politics has had on broad layers of youth,

particularly in liberal bastions such as the San Francisco Bay Area. The danger of Donald Trump and the far-right cannot be opposed on the basis of the politics of race, gender or sexuality.

The Democratic Party and its pseudo-left promoters incessantly peddle identity politics as a means of hiding the fundamental question of class and covering up for their right-wing policies of imperialist war, austerity and police state measures.

The shock and outrage expressed on the Berkeley campus and elsewhere are but an initial expression of broader social opposition which will take shape. As was manifested during the Berkeley protest, the pseudo-left will attempt to use identity politics to channel this outrage back behind the Democratic Party, which has been thoroughly discredited by the outcome of the election.



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