

Several thousand join anti-Trump protests in Chicago

Our reporters

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On Saturday morning, anti-Trump protesters assembled in downtown Chicago to denounce Trump's election to the presidency. Several thousand were estimated to be in attendance. The protest, which began on the Eastern side of downtown in Millennium Park, moved throughout the downtown area, looping around busy intersections and commercial areas.

Students and youth, along with sections of the middle class, predominated. No unions or labor organizations were present. These organizations are apparently following the lead of the AFL-CIO, which pledged to work with Trump.

In general, concerns over basic democratic rights dominated the protests, with signs denouncing sexism, Islamophobia and racism. Posters with written slogans such as "Love trumps hate" and "Not my president" were seen lifted in the air. Anti-fascist signs were also seen throughout, with some holding posters comparing Trump to Hitler and others holding signs with the word fascism crossed out.

Michael, a public school teacher, told WSWs reporters, "I'm here because I'm a public school teacher and I had students asking me after the election if they were going to get deported."

When asked what he thought Trump represents, he said, "I think he [Trump] represents a lot of different things for different people. For a very radical fringe group, I think he represents white nationalism. But then for others—I mean I am from Indiana, from a small manufacturing town that voted for him, so I know he also represents people's discontent with those who lost manufacturing jobs. But, unfortunately, I feel like he was elected for his racist and xenophobic tendencies."

In fact, data shows that Trump received fewer votes than they did for any other Republican nominee since 2000. Trump, through demagogic and populist appeals,

addressed economic grievances affecting millions throughout the country. Hillary Clinton's campaign, based upon identity politics, did not. The sharpest expression of this was the decline in votes for Clinton.

The WSWs reporter said the racist narrative was aimed at concealing the class character of the Clinton campaign, and that all workers, black, white and immigrant, had the same interests. Michael responded, "I agree. The economic question is the bedrock of these issues."

Jibrail, originally from the Appalachian region, travelled from La Crosse, Wisconsin, to attend the protest. He said, "I'm here for the future, for my kids, for other people's kids. I think we don't need to take 10, 15 steps backwards. With a Trump victory only in the Electoral College, and with Hillary winning the popular vote and getting screwed like in the 2000 election, I'm looking at some chilling things."

Jibrail expressed concern over Trump's xenophobic rhetoric, saying, "I'm a Muslim, so I'm fearful for my mother, who wears a hijab, for my sisters. I've been reading Twitter feeds of people writing very nasty things against not just Muslims, but women, blacks, Hispanics, and I don't think that's the America I was born into. This is supposed to be an inclusive country and everyone is supposed to be able to be who he or she is. But I feel that Trump and his message made it okay to be a bigot."

When asked what he thought about the Democratic Party moving quickly to unite behind a Trump presidency, Jibrail sought to justify their actions, while nevertheless pointing to the real underlying aim. "I think they have to do that legally. And I understand that, you don't want civil war in the streets, or for protests like this to actually turn violent, because people feel robbed. A majority of Americans, if they

actually voted, didn't vote for Trump; they just didn't go out and vote. So [the Democrats] have to keep with the political system. If President Obama hadn't had a reconciliatory tone, then I think we would be facing something different today."

While supporting the actions of the Democratic Party following the elections, Jibrail expressed conflicting views about the record of the Obama administration. "I feel saddened. I expected more from '08. But I don't blame him totally. On domestic issues, I think he was stopped for six years by the Republicans and the Tea Party. But on an international stage, I wish he had taken a better approach than drones, bombing US citizens, killing innocent civilians, and wielding power that way."

Claire also travelled from Wisconsin, where she is a journalism student at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Referring to the Democratic Party's declaration that they would work with Trump, she said, "I feel like what choice do we have really? We had a chance I think with Sanders to change the system a little bit more. But this [Trump's victory] is what happened and this is what they have to deal with, so what else are they going to do?"

Although she had supported Sanders in the primaries, Claire asserted that there had been no alternative to supporting Clinton following Sanders' defeat, saying, "A third party or a write-in was never going to work. There were a lot of people who were the 'Bernie-or-bust' thing, and I think that was a good sentiment, but a third party was never going to win. So if you didn't want Trump, you had to just go with Hillary."

Another protester, David, said, "We have at best elected our [former right-wing Italian Prime Minister Silvio] Berlusconi, and at worst, we've elected something much, much worse—and that is terrifying.

"The obvious worst case comparison is Hitler when we're talking about registering Muslims, we're talking about a rhetoric of fear, of 'us versus them,' of capitalizing on legitimate economic concerns that have been ignored for, well, a couple generations at this point. But then focusing that through rage, demonizing intellectualism, demonizing the press, threatening to remove those sorts of rights. I mean, the First Amendment ain't looking too hot right now. It's a laundry list."



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