

# Anti-Trump demonstrations continue in Portland

A WSWS reporting team  
15 November 2016

In the wake of last Tuesday's election results, thousands of people have been involved in a series of protests in the city of Portland, Oregon, with the protests reaching their fifth consecutive day on Sunday.

The first four nights, protestors congregated in Pioneer Square to listen to speakers, after which they marched through the streets shouting chants such as "Not my president," "No Trump, No KKK, No Fascist USA," and "The people united will never be divided."

The protests have continued despite statements by leading Democratic politicians including President Obama, Hillary Clinton and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders pledging to work loyally with a Trump administration.

On Wednesday and Thursday nights, marchers took over several city blocks as they crossed the Morrison Bridge and the Hawthorne Bridge from Pioneer Square to the Moda Center on the east side of the Willamette River. Hundreds blocked bridges and interstate highways, bringing public transportation and vehicle traffic to a halt.

The protests attracted broad layers of the population with a strong presence of students and young people. The crowd overwhelmingly rejected the reactionary positions promoted by Trump during his campaign, calling attention to the US-Mexico border wall as well as his verbal attacks on gays, women and Muslims.

The protests have been largely peaceful; however, the Portland police have been deployed in force using the acts of vandalism by small bands of self-declared anarchists as a pretext. The police used flash-bang grenades and pepper spray against the protesters on Thursday and used rubber bullets and tear gas on Friday.

Thursday night, police arrested 25 after announcing that what had, up till then, been a peaceful protest was

now a "riot." Police ordered protesters to leave the area at 8 p.m., and responded with rubber pepper balls—a "less lethal" projectile, containing a chili pepper dust. A total of 113 people have been arrested so far.

On Saturday night, Portland Democratic mayor Charlie Hales and Police Chief Mike Marshman issued warnings to the protesters as a whole, declaring the protests "unlawful" and once again deployed police against protesters, including large numbers of heavily militarized police.

The protests reflected the heavy influence of various pseudo-left groups that sought to channel the genuine opposition and outrage of workers and young people behind the Democratic Party. As in many other cities, they blamed Trump's triumph on an alleged resurfacing of racist and sexist tendencies among the white working class.

The main organizers of the protests are behind the local group Portland's Resistance (PR), a liberal outfit in the orbit of the Democratic Party. The group has offered a list of demands—"an end to police brutality, clean air and water, open and accountable elections"—directed to the very political structure responsible for these regressive policies.

The politics of PR are focused on pushing the Democratic Party to the left. Its spokesman, Gregory McKelvey, revealed this perspective in an interview with the *Oregonian* newspaper, saying, "I think protesting is one of those angles [of change]—there's nothing more patriotic than using your first amendment right to push for change." He states that, with enough support for these demands, Portland can become a "beacon of light for the rest of the nation."

In fact, Democratic Party politicians have dominated Oregon state and local governments for decades, a period in which inequality, poverty, hunger and

homelessness have become entrenched. Oregon has one of the highest rates of inequality in the nation. Homelessness has exploded, with spontaneous tent cities popping up on public sidewalks and under freeways. Figures from the city's web site—not updated since June of 2015—show 4,000 homeless individuals on any given night with another 12,000 “doubling up.” Hunger is endemic, with nearly 20 percent of Oregon's population on food stamps. Meanwhile, Oregon's corporate tax rate is the lowest in the nation, with both corporate giants Nike and Intel receiving special tax cuts from former Democratic governor Ted Kulongoski in 2013.

No tendency outside of the Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social (IYSSE) Equality offered a cohesive political perspective. SEP and IYSSE supporters explained that Trump's election was not the product of a “racist” white working class, but reflected the political bankruptcy of the Democratic Party. Clinton's appeal was not directed to the working class, but to wealthier layers of the upper middle class based on race and gender issues. Clinton lost because millions of workers—black, white and immigrant—were disgusted with the Clinton campaign, which advanced a program of war, while not concealing its subservience to Wall Street.

The Portland chapter of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) attended every night of the protests to distribute flyers for the upcoming public meeting (see below) on November 15th with speaker Joseph Santolan from the Socialist Equality Party.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with rally attendees at Waterfront Park on Sunday. An estimated 500 to 600 participated. While mostly young people were in attendance, a cross-section of society—workers, middle class and students—were present. A number expressed illusions in the campaign of self-proclaimed democratic socialist Sanders, who sought to channel opposition to the right-wing Clinton campaign back into support for the Democrats.

Meredith Jordan, an unemployed graduate student in environmental science, referring to Trump's anti-climate change position, said, “With Trump in office, there will be no science whatsoever. I was shocked and very surprised at his election. I was living in an echo

chamber of my friends and community that he was unelectable.”

Mikaela Rodriguez is a first-year medical resident at Oregon Health Science University. “I was shocked and stunned and in disbelief at Trump's election. I was working the night shift, glancing at the TV monitor, watching state after state go red. I felt that Bernie [Sanders] better reflected our values. I was a lot more politically involved when I was younger, but Bush's second term hit me hard.”

Ashley Wagar and her friend Ellisa told the WSWS, “I'm here because the world is watching what we do here. Trump's election is obviously a global issue and we have to show the world that our protest is not just a bunch of ‘liberal sore losers’ as the right says. It isn't a small matter, we are part of a much larger issue.”

The WSWS also spoke with a group of young people, most in high school. Lloyd said, “I have been at every protest every night. I was unable to vote even though I will be personally affected by Trump and the Trump presidency.” Hugo added, “They are upset with the political system, but it is terribly complicated, the Electoral College of faceless voters determines the president. It is not the decision of the popular vote.

“The Electoral College was designed to protect the slave states, and these states are holding the rest of the nation hostage. Also, ID laws are used to prevent the poor, people of color and trans people from being able to vote.”

#### **Socialist Equality Party/IYSSE Public meeting:**

“The Trump Presidency and the Danger of World War”

Tuesday, November 15, 7:30 p.m.  
Portland State University  
Smith Memorial Union, Room 238  
1825 SW Broadway



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**