

# Hundreds of thousands rally in Chicago to oppose Trump

**Our reporters**  
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An estimated 250,000 people participated in the Women's March in Chicago on January 20. Protesters came from all parts of Illinois and from neighboring states to voice their opposition to the Trump administration. They marched through the streets of downtown Chicago, holding signs and posters carrying anti-Trump slogans and references to women's rights. Quite a few showed clear support for former Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, others for the Green Party.

Attendees marched to Columbus Drive in downtown Chicago to gather and listen to the scheduled speakers. However, the speaker systems were not gauged to the size of the crowd, which exceeded organizers' expectations, and many found it difficult to hear what was being said.

The Democratic Party dominated the event, and speakers included Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, daughter of Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan; Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle; and several city councilwomen, trade union leaders, religious leaders, and heads of various organizations with ties to the Democratic Party. The Chicago cast of the musical "Hamilton" performed.

The political orientation of the rally organizers was clear from the near-total lack of discussion on class and inequality in the US. Speakers homed in on issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and "hate" as problems of individual prejudice, obscuring the origins of the political reaction personified in the figure of President Trump.

Aislinn Pulley, lead organizer of Black Lives Matter Chicago, called for opposition to Trump's presidency and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, not because of the class interests that they defend, but based on their race and gender.

Eman Hassaballa Aly, a Muslim activist from the TRUST collective, stated that she was "tired of being defined by what I wear" and that "Muslim women intersect with every other group." However, she had nothing to say in support of the democratic rights of Muslim women in countries that the US has bombed under both Bush and Obama.

Many of the speakers called for more women and minority groups to be elevated to positions of power. Jean Albright, a retired sergeant of the US Air Force, called for more women to "rise to their abilities" and enter the military, and for President Trump to support the US military.

The most right-wing comments came from Lifted Voices Collective leader and direct-action organizer Kelly Hayes. She said that "white supremacy is the structural harm at play here," and that white communities are the source of racism, which was met with some applause. Her comments, characteristic of reactionary racialist politics, served to completely obscure the issue of class.

The sentiments motivating many of those attending transcended the pro-Democratic Party politics of the organizers and speakers.

Nicole, an art teacher in the Milwaukee Public Schools system, said of Trump's pick for education secretary, Betsy DeVos, "I taught education for over 10 years. She's absolutely unqualified. Under her, public schools will suffer, tuition will never be affordable; she has no frame of reference for anything. She has never taught a day in her life. How can she tell us as teachers where my children go or how we spend the money?"

"Public education in Wisconsin has really suffered. The education department has been crippled over the last year because of the defunding at the UW [University of Wisconsin] school system with Scott

Walker, our governor. My son's elementary got cut \$27,000 last year, my daughter's school got cut \$32,000 last year. And I'm going back to school at UWM [University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee] and it will take a year and a half to graduate because programs got cut back.

"Charter schools will be the death of public education. Privatization of education is not something we should have in the US. Under the Trump administration, I see a lot of cuts ahead, including to the arts. DeVos has no frame of reference for regular families and the pipeline from school to prison will continue by keeping children ignorant."

Speaking on the question of the Trump's cabinet of billionaires and generals, she added, "The Trump cabinet represents ignorance. ... We will probably be at war. We are not crying because we lost, we are letting you know that we are here.

"As far as the Democratic Party, money still controls it. I was a Bernie supporter, and I thought he was robbed. But the billionaires run our society and both parties. Our election goes to show that voting doesn't stop this."

Students from the University of Chicago spoke to reporters on a range of issues, particularly on education and immigration. Richard, a political science student, said, "DeVos wants to privatize education and create more charter schools. When she was asked about the difference between public education and charter schools, she couldn't even answer. When you are the secretary of education, not only is it your job to take care of the public education system, but to make sure that these kids have a fair shake and a secure future.

"We have a society controlled by the oligarchs. Right now, I'm a liberal, and I think to stop Trump, we have to reform the Democratic Party. They need to coalesce around a progressive leader, maybe the Bernie wing of the party. But they don't want to. It's money and the big donors the Democratic Party as it is. ... Of course, I don't think that the Democrats really speak for the interests of most people."

Maya, another student said, "We need education and not deportation. We need to recognize that all the issues that are coming up are affecting the poor and immigrants. We have to work on all these issues. Obama was the deporter-in-chief, and now Trump wants to deport more people. My grandparents are

immigrants. Immigrants support our economy. They are people. It doesn't make any sense. I just moved to Chicago and immigrant communities are targeted despite being a sanctuary city.

"I want to go into education when I'm older, and I think that's the only way out. Education needs to intersect with health care and our social system to help build whole communities."

Mink, Tiffany and Kevin were at the rally with a larger group. Tiffany said, "I feel that [the country] is even less of a democracy now. It's going to be more about what he thinks and his few supporters think. About war, I'm nervous myself ... I am not a supporter of war, I understand security, but I usually think the United States is sticking their nose where it doesn't belong. Before Trump's election, I was worried that Russia would see us as weaker because he is so ignorant and uneducated. He's taken down from the White House web site the pages on climate change and on LGBT issues!"

Mink said, "I think we just get so caught up in our idea of America, our conditions, we just don't think about the rest of the world. A lot of people don't even know what's happening in the rest of the world. We're just here worried about our problems, and I think that is what led to this [election outcome]."

Erin said, "When it comes to trade I feel like Trump has no idea what he's talking about. So sure, I am scared of war, but I'm terrified across the board. I'm not as afraid of Trump as I am about his cabinet appointments of rich and military leaders."

"It's all so embarrassing," Rachel said. "I did not want to watch the address, because I cannot stand looking at him. But I am very worried because I feel he is going to do whatever he wants and I definitely think he'll be pushing some kind of war either way."



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