

IYSSE campaigns for student senate at Eastern Michigan University

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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at Eastern Michigan University (EMU) in Ypsilanti, Michigan, 30 miles west of Detroit, filed over 120 signatures on Monday to qualify for a spot on the ballot in upcoming elections for student government. Mitch Abrams, a student in the School of Education, is seeking a senate seat in the student government in elections that will be held at the end of March.

The campaign at EMU is part of the IYSSE's global fight to unite the working class of all nations against capitalism and war. The IYSSE club campaigned actively during the national elections, building a basis of support among hundreds of students who receive the IYSSE newsletters, some of whom were able to attend a number of meetings on campus last year with Socialist Equality Party US presidential candidates Jerry White and Niles Niemuth.

On a few occasions, members of the IYSSE clashed with campus Democrats who were defending the right-wing, pro-war, identity politics of Hillary Clinton. Others who had supported Bernie Sanders in the primaries wanted to know why our campaign was so sharply critical of his.

The mudslide of right-wing diktats flowing from the Trump White House has further politicized a layer of students at this largely working class campus, which offers major concentrations in medicine, social work, education, arts and business, among others. One can also sense the weight of a large foreign student population in the response of students to the witch-hunt that has been launched against immigrants.

Jazi is a new student from Flint, Michigan, where the entire water supply was poisoned when a conspiracy of local, state and federal officials switched the water supply from the Detroit Water Department to the

polluted Flint River and covered up the deadly effects of lead in the poisonous mix.

Her mother had legally immigrated to the United States from Nigeria more than 10 years ago and holds American citizenship, but she was prevented from driving the 40 miles from Flint to Ypsilanti to visit her daughter this past weekend because of police state measures implemented on President Trump's executive order.

When local police working with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents set up checkpoints along local roadways, the freshman told her mother not to make the trip.

"My mother lives in Flint," she told the *World Socialist Web Site*. "When I found out about the police and ICE checkpoints between here and home, I told her she could not visit me this weekend."

"I am not a big fan of Obama," she said. "He bombed a lot of countries where I have family members and friends. Yemen and Libya are examples. He destabilized a lot of countries in the region." Jazi studies creative writing and business with the intent of opening a publishing company.

In many ways, the devastating crisis of education in Michigan hit close to home. "I attended public school before they all closed," she told us. "But I had to join the schools of choice and travel half an hour each way for four years of high school. There are no extra curricular activities. Our school did not even have a music program. Now my siblings are doing the same thing."

She denounced Betsy DeVos, the Michigan billionaire and lifelong opponent of public education who was appointed Trump's secretary of education. "She wants to cut the free and reduced cost lunch program. There were many times for some of my

friends when that was the only meal they got.”

“I don’t think she knows anything about public education,” she continued. “The free breakfast is a cup of cereal and some fruit. Now she wants to cut that.” In response to the IYSSE campaign for open borders and for the full rights of immigrants to study and work freely wherever they want, Jazi explained the widespread impact at the university of Trump’s threats to deport millions. She is acutely aware of the cowardly response of the school’s administration.

“There are many Middle Eastern students on the campus and many of them are directly impacted by the ban,” she said. “The email that the administration sent around to students was really wordy. They tried to make it seem as if they were in solidarity. But they explicitly said they would not defend us. If asked, they would provide all our information.”

Like many students, she explained that she had come to university to get an education and prepare a life for herself without intending to become political. But that was becoming impossible. “My existence is political,” she said. “My rights as a human being are political and always have been.”

Kya is studying to become a medical doctor. She agreed right away to sign the petition to place the IYSSE on the ballot.

“Affordable tuition is the main reason that a lot of people don’t go to college or won’t finish,” she said, “especially from Ypsilanti and other low income areas. This is supposed to be the land of the free, but what does that mean if you can’t get an education?”

“I’m a Bernie Sanders supporter,” she said. “I agree with a lot of his points about a good life for Millennials who are looking for jobs.” When we asked if she was aware that Bernie Sanders agreed with Donald Trump on the fundamental question of economic nationalism, she responded, “I had no clue.”

When we said that we advocate open borders, and that everyone should be able to live, and work, wherever they want, Kya said, “I agree. For a country that was built and constructed by immigrants—and whose economy was driven by immigrants in its workforce—I think it’s unfair to say that they cannot come into that country which they helped to advance. It is supposed to be based on equal opportunity. You cannot give everyone equal opportunity if we are not allowing them to come in.”

Victoria volunteers at the campus soup kitchen. “Students can pick up groceries,” she said, “like bread, for example, milk, tuna, macaroni. It is like a regular grocery store.

“The little restaurants here in the student center are very expensive, and you can’t even get basic groceries at decent prices on campus. Peanut butter is just an example. At the Market Place here on campus it costs \$6.00 a jar. At Walgreens it is \$3.58.

“It’s outrageous that they make money off the students. If you don’t have a car, Ypsi is very spread out, and you just can’t get to a regular grocery store. There is not really any Kroger, Meijer or Walmart that is local within walking distance. They can raise prices however they want, because students still need food to eat.

“I agree the working class worldwide needs to unite.”



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