

Candidate for Student Senate, Mitch Abrams, speaks with international students

## IYSSE defends immigrant rights at Eastern Michigan University

Tim Rivers  
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IYSSE candidate for the Student Senate at Eastern Michigan University (EMU) Mitch Abrams spoke with international students on Sunday about the threats that they and all immigrants face because of the Muslim ban, the border wall and the anti-immigrant hysteria promoted by the chauvinist rhetoric of the Trump administration in its first weeks in office.

EMU students from India described a mood of shock and horror among international students of all nationalities and religious backgrounds at reports of families being ripped apart in brutal deportations at the hands of agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) acting on the initiative of President Donald Trump's executive orders.

The students had made arrangements to meet with the IYSSE at the EMU Student Center when they found out that that the club's campaign opposes the policies of President Trump and the Republicans as well as the Democratic Party, with the demand for open borders and full rights for students and workers of all countries to live and work wherever they want.

They were surprised to learn that the Democratic Party and trade unions had set the table for Trump by advocating economic nationalism and chauvinism over the course of decades. Abrams informed the students that the Obama administration expelled more than 2 million immigrants in an effort which exceeded that of all previous administrations combined, and Bernie Sanders pushed economic nationalism and militarism during the 2016 election campaign.

Rajkumar, president of the Indian Students Organization and vice president of the International

Students Organization at EMU, and another graduate student Mahesh, also from India, explained to Abrams that the political crisis in the United States has provoked a sharp decline in the number of students who come to the United States from other countries. In only two years' time the number of Indian students at EMU has declined from more than 500 to just 130.

"Our web site here used to be very busy with students from India who wanted to come here to study," Mahesh reported, "but that has completely changed." Explaining further he noted, "This is not only about India. It affects foreign students from everywhere.

"The visa process is changing," he continued. "There are a lot of obstacles. There are new limitations on the program through which students who are seeking occupational training can qualify for the H1-B visa. The new rules will require a minimum annual salary of \$130,000 which is very rare. What happens to the student who just wants to get an education?"

Rajkumar described the chilling impact of the anti-Muslim ban. "That affects not just the countries that were targeted. India has one of the largest Muslim populations in the world, 14% of a population of 1.2 billion. By this ban Indian people are thinking we could be victimized as well."

Mahesh added, "They are separating families. My Iranian friends here cannot go home and come back. Crime is everywhere, but the new crime is racial crime. You hear, 'Get out of my country.' You risk your life to come here."

Rajkumar noted, "A lot of students do not know what actually is happening," and appealed to Abrams as a

candidate for Student Senate to assist in explaining the political situation and defending the rights of foreign students on campus. “First we must inform the students. We can be together in this fight,” he said.

“The IYSSE campaign is the only way that all students can defend their democratic rights,” Abrams explained. “They can expect no defense from the Democrats or the EMU administration. There is no other party representing the interests of workers and students regardless of their nationality outside of the SEP and the International Committee of the Fourth International of which we are a part.”

Abrams addressed the policy of the university noting that in an email titled “Support for International Students and Scholars at EMU,” university President Dr. James M. Smith wrote, “The university does not provide information on a student’s immigration status to anyone, except when required by law.”

Students should rightfully view the president’s offer of support with grave suspicion, Abrams warned. “In other words,” he explained, “they will open up the university to ICE agents just so long as they have a legal fig leaf. Students will find no defense of their rights on the basis of this policy.

“With regard to following the law,” he continued, “we could be living under a regime in which police and immigration agents are routinely demanding, ‘Papers, please,’ like they did in Nazi Germany. A genuine defense of democratic rights can only be waged by turning to the international working class. Democratic and social rights are the products of the class struggle of the working class in the first place and can only be defended by the revival of that struggle.”

Rajkumar, Mahesh and Abrams also discussed the lessons of India’s history including the struggle against colonial oppression, the massive upheaval against imperialism which followed World War II and the role of religious pogroms in blunting and dividing that movement into the partition of the Indian sub-continent.

Abrams observed that in whatever form historically, nationalist and racial politics have always been designed to divide the working class in preparation for new wars to divide the world for capitalist plunder. The politics of racial, religious and national prejudice, Abrams concluded, must be rejected in order to unite the workers of all nations in a new anti-war movement

as the essential preparation for world socialist revolution.



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