

IYSSE at Geneseo protests attacks on immigrants

Our reporters
31 March 2017

The Geneseo chapter of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, the youth group of the Socialist Equality Party, held a protest on the campus of the State University of New York College at Geneseo (SUNY Geneseo), in which about 70 students participated.

SUNY Geneseo, a small public college south of Rochester, New York, was the site of a spontaneous protest after last week's arrest of an extended family of eight people, five of whom are US citizen children. Two of the family members were processed by immigration officials and may face deportation, which would tear the family apart, and another was already in the immigration system. (The *World Socialist Web Site* has extensively covered this outrage, including in a photo essay.)

Despite being organized on such a short notice—less than a week after the arrest of the family—there was a significant response from students, as well as some professors and other area residents. Several IYSSE members spoke during the protest, which also included a portion where students could speak against the anti-immigrant measures.

Josh, an IYSSE member, told the assembled crowd: “Immigrants have been among the first targets of the Trump administration. They are our friends, our family, our co-workers, our classmates. But Trump, the conman, says that they're criminals.”

He continued: “Who are the real criminals? A family escaping Guatemala, where the US backed a genocidal junta? Or the Border Patrol officers who tear apart families? Who are the real criminals? Workers trying to make ends meet in a new country? Or the US government, which killed over 500 civilians in an airstrike in Mosul last week?

“Who are the real criminals? People falsely accused

of ‘stealing jobs?’ Or the Congress that just voted to steal from *you* your Internet privacy? Who are the real criminals? People dislocated by gang violence? Or a government that has deported almost 3 million people since 2008?

“We say the real criminals are not those who work on farms in Livingston County, but are in the White House and the Pentagon!”

Josh then led the crowd in chanting, “An injury to one is an injury to all,” which has long been a slogan of the workers' movement.

Eric London, who writes for the WSWs on immigration issues, told the crowd: “When a peasant from El Salvador or Guatemala, whose parents may have been killed by right-wing militia, death squads, dictators backed by the CIA and the US government, comes here, they're thrown in jail, separated from their children and then, if they're lucky enough to get out of immigration court, they live in poverty in America working every day just so that they can send their children to school. That is life under capitalism.”

After an interruption by applause, he continued, “In the US...20 percent of married couples include at least one person who is an immigrant. In Europe, the figures are similar. Humanity is breaking down, through the process of its organic social development, the national boundaries that stand in the way of our development...as a human race.

“What purpose do these borders serve? Think about it. The Democratic and Republican parties always tell us that it's for ‘national security’ that we have to monitor immigrants. It's always ‘national security.’ Whenever the rich want to do something bad, they call it ‘national security.’ You ever notice that? Does anybody think that these two Guatemalan mothers and their children—including a three-month-old baby, who is

just as much of an American citizen as those of us here who are American citizens—does anybody think they are a national security threat? Does anybody here think that family is a threat to the national security of the United States?”

To both questions, those in attendance responded with loud shouts of “No!”

London cited the demands of the IYSSE and SEP to dismantle ICE and the CIA and nationalize the banks, to further applause from the crowd.

After the protest, London addressed a meeting on the history behind the Trump administration’s attacks on immigrants, which are an escalation of anti-democratic measures by previous administrations, particularly Obama’s, as well as the political strategy necessary to fight back and defend immigrants’ rights.

Billy, a SUNY Geneseo student who attended the protest, told the WSWS, “I think it’s important to defend immigrant rights because the circumstances of your birth shouldn’t determine the circumstances of the rest of your life.”

Bree, another student who attended the protest and meeting, told the WSWS afterward why she thought it was important to defend immigrant rights: “I believe it is important to stand up in opposition against social injustice. If we don’t act, then we are taking the side of the oppressor. It is up to each of us, no matter what point of life we are in, to provide a voice to the voiceless.”

She continued, “The meeting that followed the demonstration emphasized Marxian principles of the corruptness of capitalism. By accepting a system that allows a small number of individuals to possess a vast amount of wealth while others are forced to live an impoverished life, we are allowing the decay of our society.”

She concluded, “I believe the time is now to collectively fight against the system in order to promote an egalitarian society.”



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