Voices of the March for Science

Our reporters
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Dozens of scientists, students, workers and other supporters of science spoke with Socialist Equality Party supporters during marches on April 22, in protests that took place in hundreds of cities and towns. Today and tomorrow, the *World Socialist Web Site* will publish a selection of their comments.

Boston

Emily said, "I'm a retired science teacher and from what I've seen from our politicians, who claim ignorance of science and therefore ignore science, it's got me really worried. Because they're making decisions that are going to harm the environment and harm human health as a result.

"So, for some reason, there's this feeling that we can just put our heads in the sand and ignore what we have learned through the scientific process, and investigating and experimenting. And those things can't be ignored, they are real, and even if people don't believe them, they are real and we will reap the results of our actions."

New York City

James, a history teacher from Brooklyn, said, "I am concerned that [Trump] lacks objectives other than his own power. I think he could be using war in order to rally support behind him. We have many examples of governments supporting jingoism in order to rally people behind them. Mussolini and other fascist groups of course come to mind, but also Clinton bombing other countries to distract from the Lewinsky scandal.

"All the posturing and publicity for Syria and North Korea are about rallying people behind this. They have no ideological goals."

David Poeppel, a neuroscientist at New York University, said about the attack on science, "My main concern is the attack on evidence-based inquiry. There is a move against the Enlightenment, and as one Enlightenment thinker said, to 'have the courage to use your own mind.' This is the notion that there are facts. As scientists, we have to believe that there is an objective truth.

"There is also a move to end government funding for research, and to only have business-supported research."

Jenn Ross, a designer, said, "I am a strong supporter of science. I do believe in climate change. This administration is opposed to scientific rationality, which is the closest thing we have to objective truth. The current immigration policy is even hurting the sciences because scientific development has to be an international effort."

Asked her thoughts on the growing danger of war, Jenn added, "That would be an issue whether Trump or Clinton won the election. The Democrats and Republicans represent big business. They don't care about the environment and are only interested in their own profits."

Zoe, an NYU student, explained why she came to the rally: "I am a scientist. I study biology and focus on rice domestication, and I want my research to benefit society. Fundamental research is important. Trump has an actively anti-science agenda with climate change. He is denying the scientific method."

Barbara Burghart, an environmental advocate, explained why she was at the march: "I am an anti-capitalist. We are here to raise our voices, to be seen and heard. They will hear us only if we attack them at the dollar level. The cause of the attack on science is greed and the division into socio-economic classes. There is a growing chaos. Science can bridge that, for example, with cell phones. Everyone has that, in the Amazon rain forest, Tibet, the far corners of the world.

"One thing the election did is there is no more apathy. The US is so used to getting its own way. But I read how in five years, one in five people may not be able to afford clean water. We should share our resources with each other. It may be simplistic to put it this way, but we learn in kindergarten to share."

William Hawkins, a radiologist, said, "I am here because of the complete disdain of Donald Trump towards science. Cutting back on the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] is directly related to the air we breathe and the water we drink. He has said science is a hoax. However, he tweets on a cell phone, which is using science. Science is a fact. It is made political when it is not. It is all about the money. They don't care."

Karina Cuteo was at the Science March with her two children. "I am in educational publishing. Anything to do with education or science is important to me. The new regime puts at stake everything to do with science and education. I am worried about many things but very much about climate change. This government are deniers of climate change.

"I am from Peru. We have seen this in South America where they use populism to get into power and mostly become dictatorships. Greed and power is the problem. They become egocentric, like Trump. They are just in power to make money. The don't care about the people." At this point, the march reached the Trump Hotel at Columbus Circle and the marchers all started to boo.

Karina continued afterward: "I don't think the Democrats would solve the problem. The Democratic Party is all over the place. There are many new small movements. I don't think the US is ready for that. I would like to see if they could be brought together in the Democratic Party. But my whole family is socialist, from the APRA party in Peru. When it started, it was beautiful. But then the APRA was jailing people. My grandfather went to prison. This was

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happening in other countries in South America, too. Trump could be like that."

Syracuse, NY

Around 2,000 people attended the March for Science in Syracuse, New York. They marched past a well-known local landmark, the "Jerry Rescue" monument, which commemorates the day in 1851 when local people freed an escaped slave named "Jerry" from being sent back into slavery in the South, under the Fugitive Slave Act.

One of those marching was Chris Thomas, a SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry student investigating renewable fuels and chemicals, who said of possible cuts to research, "All of our grants are based on investigating renewable sources, and we're expecting a crackdown, that they will not need renewables and move toward a policy of oil."

Pittsburgh

More than 2,000 scientists, students, professionals, and workers attended the Pittsburgh March for Science, largely held on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh.

Asked why she attended, Jaime Sedani, a public health researcher who focuses on smoking prevention, responded, "Just to march for science. I'm a researcher, and I feel like science is not given the respect that it should be, especially lately. My main concern is the budget that's been proposed, and that there could be cuts to NIH funding in particular, which obviously funds a lot of what we do."

Nancy Ott, a technical writer and editor, and Tom Vielott, an aspiring policy researcher, both from Pittsburgh, discussed their reasons for attending the march.

"I am very concerned that the importance of research, and in particular fundamental research, is really being denigrated in this country," Nancy explained. "I feel that scientific research is really the backbone of America's prosperity, and to have this really dismissive attitude, to cut it because it's supposedly not important, because it's not going to pay big dividends in the next quarter, is the equivalent of the farmer eating his seed corn.

"We as a nation are the beacon of research at the moment. Our universities and research institutions attract the brilliant minds from across the world. These people come here, and they are a benefit to our society, and they are a benefit to the world. We facilitate them making discoveries that improve everyone's lives. To just throw it away, that's madness. And that's why I'm here. To show my support for science, and for research, and for free intellectual inquiry."

Tom continued: "For me, I'm a little more directly concerned with the fact that there seems to be very little support among our government officials for finding out anything based on reason and scientific discourse. It's impossible to remove politics from politics, but the fact that our legislators, the fact that our president is so woefully uneducated about the issues is unacceptable."

Asked about the attack on science education, and public education in general, Nancy responded, "I am the product of public education. I feel like our public schools should be the bedrock of our society. That they should be the place where everybody has a chance to develop their mind as much as they can, and learn about science, learn about math, learn about literature and the arts, to become a well-rounded person. I feel like, again, this is viewed as being unimportant now. It's extremely upsetting."

Tom added, "To me, the public school is where you begin with an informed electorate. Without public schooling, there is no way that everyone can even begin to think about all of the issues that we face. So for the future of a democratic society, there is no future without public education."

Annie and Steve, neuroscience graduate students at University of Pittsburgh, explained their reasons for attending.

"We have been really concerned by the administration's treatment of science and scientists," Annie said. "This prevailing trend that is really anti-intellectualism, and anti-knowledge. We're concerned that science is coming to be seen as something that is not rigorous, and is a conspiracy by the left."

Steve added, "It's scary stuff. Why is knowledge becoming a political issue? I'm concerned about how misinformation is being used to promote conservative agendas, to chip away at environmental regulations, to chip away at sources of funding for basically all women and their health care needs. We're scared, and we're upset."

Annie continued, "Research isn't a political issue for us. We're data-driven, we're not politics-driven, we're not opinion-driven. To see data be twisted, to insinuate that it's somehow false or fake is really scary."

Stephanie, another neuroscience graduate student, explained her concerns: "I study the structure of the calcium channel in the peripheral nervous system. I'm here today because I think that it's a serious problem that science is being politicized, and the way people are denying factual information that is relevant to us not going extinct as a species.

"Growing up, I remember being told by authority figures that global warming was a liberal conspiracy that was made up because liberals hated business or something. I would like people to take the facts as they are, and act on that, instead of self-deluding."

Speaking of those who deny the existence of climate change, Stephanie continued: "I understand that they don't want to make changes, but they're pretending that there isn't even a need for them, and that's what upsets me. If you want to make some argument that overall we're better served by taking a different approach to addressing climate change, I'm willing to hear people out on that. But it's wrong for people to say it's not real, it's fake, just so they don't have to engage the issue on a meaningful level."

When a WSWS reporter argued for the replacement of capitalism with socialism, Stephanie responded, "I am definitely interested in that way of thinking. I have been starting to think that a society that's based entirely on the profit motive is not the best way. If you have a bunch of companies competing, and one of them sacrifices a value, then if any of them doesn't do it, they die, they go out of business."

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