

Protesters denounce Trump's repeal of DACA program

Our reporters
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Demonstrators marched throughout the United States Tuesday to protest the Trump administration's decision to repeal the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and to defend an estimated 800,000 children of undocumented immigrants who could face deportation.

Hundreds of protesters in Washington, DC gathered in front of the White House and then marched to the Department of Justice, where Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced "an orderly and lawful" wind-down of the program. In a right-wing rant, Sessions denounced DACA recipients as "mostly adult illegal aliens" who had "taken the jobs of hundreds of thousands of Americans."

Outside the Trump Tower in New York City, around 400 protesters blocked a stretch of Fifth Avenue. Demonstrations were also held in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, Nashville, Tennessee and scores of other cities.

Walkouts in Denver and Phoenix were part of a wave of walkouts by high school and college students on the first day of classes. In Phoenix, more than 500 students walked out of South Mountain and North high schools and marched more than a mile to local police and Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) headquarters to protest the anti-immigrant attack and heavy-handed police presence in their schools. Many students chanted, "Trump is not our president," as passing cars honked in support, according to local media reports.

In Denver, hundreds of students at several schools walked out of classes shortly after Sessions' announcement. Other DACA rallies were held in Colorado Springs, Longmont, Glenwood Springs and Boulder.

WSWS reporting teams spoke with protesters in several cities.

New York City

Protests took place throughout the day in New York City, home to some 30,000 immigrants in the DACA program, and additional protests are expected this weekend. Around noon, hundreds of protesters blocked 5th Avenue and 57th Street by Trump Tower. New York Police Department officers, including Counterterrorism officers, arrested 34 people. One of the participating organizations, Movimiento Cosecha, tweeted that nine of the arrestees are DACA enrollees, also known as DREAMers.

Protesters chanted slogans in English and Spanish, including "Aquí estamos, y no nos vamos" ("We're here and we're not leaving") and "When DACA is under attack, what do we do? Stand up, fight back!"

Fidel, a cook who is saving money to go back to college, told the WSWS, "We are here to fight for our rights. I am protesting for DACA not to be eliminated because it has changed my life since I got it.

"It opened doors for me to education and to work, and to getting a driver's license. School means everything. I went to regular high school in New Jersey, and I learned English. Without it you are in trouble, and when I came to this country, I couldn't even say 'Hi.'

"When I learned the language, I could apply for college. I want to get a degree in mechanical engineering. I was working as a cook while I was studying. DACA opened the door to getting a driver's license to drive without fear to school and to work. It would have been much harder to go to school and go to work without a valid driver's license and a car.

"All my friends from high school are being affected by this attack on DACA. One was here with me this morning, and got arrested."

"I think they should pass a law so that there are equal rights for all.

"I don't trust Trump, and with the Democrats we have to see. I know what Obama did to be called the 'Deporter-in-Chief.' Right now, the government of this country is so messed up.

"We are here fighting for our rights, and we are not going anywhere. We are going to stay here fighting."

A young woman holding a homemade sign stopped briefly on the side of the march to tell the WSWS: "I don't agree with the decision that was made by Trump. My family is affected, my sister-in-law. I am here to support them. The government needs to provide a legal path for DREAMers. These people are helping to provide for the country."

Detroit

In Detroit, a couple hundred protesters gathered in Clark Park in the southwest side, the home of large Hispanic and Arabic communities. Students from Western International High School joined the afternoon protest when their first day of classes let out.

The rally was organized by the immigrant advocacy group Michigan United, which includes sections of the trade union bureaucracy, including the United Auto Workers, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the HERE hotel workers union. While there was a spirited participation of some neighborhood residents, the official speakers, including a representative from Mayor Duggan's office, encouraged illusions in the Democrats, even though under

President Obama more immigrants were deported than any previous administration.

Juan, who came to the United States from Mexico when he was one, is part of the DACA program and could now face deportation. “I could lose my job, my house, my car and my family and be sent to a foreign land I don’t know. I was born in Mexico and I’m proud of it, but I was raised in southwest Detroit. My dad worked here with a visa, he was legal. He decided to bring his family here. Three of my siblings were born here, and are all citizens. But my sister and I were born in Mexico and we both face the same threat.

“DACA was never meant to be permanent. I want to be an American citizen. I’m speaking out because I don’t want to live in the shadows. We are all living in anxiety. In Houston, immigrants are afraid to appeal to the authorities for help because they could be deported. There was a case of an undocumented worker who was out saving other people and was swept away and killed. The government wouldn’t let his mother in to bury her son.

“Trump is feeding his base. Everything Sessions said today was a lie. He said DACA had caused the humanitarian disaster with the surge of Central American refugees in 2008. But DACA wasn’t signed until 2012. Sessions never mentioned the US-backed wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala that was the real cause.”

Adam, a retired industrial worker, said, “It’s not fair to young people who were brought over many years ago and know the US more than their original countries. They came over from Third World countries and had to overcome a lot to adjust, and they adjusted well. Now they could be thrown back into countries they don’t know. Trump is doing what the rich have always done. They turned the black against the white, the native-born against the immigrant. It’s to divide and conquer.”

“It’s horrible what is going on,” said Michele, a worker from the east side. “This country is made up of immigrants. Michigan is a diverse society, and everything we build or consume in Detroit and Michigan is touched by immigrant workers. Our future depends on immigrant workers and Dreamers.

“It’s a lie to say immigrants are stealing jobs. These are the worst jobs—the hours are horrible, the pay and conditions are horrible. It’s capitalism, not immigrants, that’s at fault.”

Nashville, Tennessee

Between 300-400 people gathered at Nashville’s Centennial Park to hear a few speakers before marching along one of the city’s main thoroughfares, West End Avenue.

Randy and Wesley, both university students, said they had come out to show their support. “I have met a lot of DACA students and seen them do awesome things,” Wesley said. “I think it is important to be standing in solidarity with people who are having a hard time.”

Randy said he had met and knew DACA students and it was time for the US Congress to pass a law approving the program. “That would be a solution but I don’t have much hope.”

Asked about a socialist solution to abolish borders and give workers the same right as capital to go wherever they choose to earn a living, Randy said he was uncertain. Asked what is necessary if Congress balks at preserving the DACA program, he responded, “That’s hard to say (and) that’s the problem. That’s why I’m here today because I

don’t know.”

But Wesley added, “I think we have a duty to accept people.”

Charles, a junior and international business student at a local college, said he had grown up in a mixed cultural environment and “built bridges” during that time.

“I have a lot of undocumented friends, and they have benefited from DACA. I have seen the contributions they have made, I’ve gone to their homes and seen the sacrifices they have made. I appreciate that and what they have had to endure. I am supporting them now like they have supported me.”

New Mexico

In New Mexico, where over 7,000 students and workers could be affected by the DACA phase-out, high school and college students across the state left their classes to participate in protest actions. Students and faculty at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque gathered to protest in front of the university bookstore in the morning.

Hundreds of students at several Albuquerque high schools walked out after lunch, chanted and marched. According to a KRQE report, “A lot of the students are not DACA recipients, but they know plenty of kids who are.” Student protesters decried the measure. One Albuquerque High student, Rowan Ortega, told reporters, “Immigrants are allowed here. You do have a right to be here. No matter where you come from, you have a right to be who you are.”

Many of the students then joined immigrant and native-born protesters later that afternoon at the downtown Civic Plaza, where speakers, some of them DREAMers, denounced Trump’s decision, but avoided mentioning the attacks on immigrants by the Democrats, especially the deportations of nearly 3 million immigrants during the Obama administration. Their advice to the protesters consisted mostly of urging them to contact elected officials and to hold more protests.



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