

Protests throughout the US held against attack on immigrant rights

Our reporters**11 September 2017**

Thousands of people in the US participated in demonstrations over the weekend in response to the Trump administration's decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. The action marks a new stage in the administration's attack on immigrant workers and youth.

DACA is an Obama-era program that provides limited protection from deportation without citizenship rights to 800,000 immigrant youth who arrived in the US as children. It was implemented in 2012 in part to provide cover for the Obama administration's own attack on immigrants, including a record number of deportations.

Trump's decision means that the Department of Homeland Security will not accept any more applications for deportation protection. Those already enrolled will begin losing coverage in six months.

Demonstrations were held in New York City; Washington, D.C.; Boston, Massachusetts; Los Angeles and Oakland, California; and many other cities. The WSWS spoke to many of those who attended, and distributed copies of the Socialist Equality Party statement, "Unite all workers against the attack on immigrants! For a socialist policy of open borders!"

Washington, DC

About three hundred people gathered at the White House on Saturday afternoon. There was enthusiastic support for the protest on social media, with over five thousand people interested in attending the event on Facebook. Due to unexplained circumstances, Facebook canceled the event, which likely reduced participation at the rally.

Myles, from Memphis, Tennessee, came to the protest because "these people had no choice of whether or not to come here. You cannot punish children. They deserve the same right to education as American citizens."

When asked what he thought about a socialist policy of open borders, he said: "I think it should be quick and easy to get into countries, one month at the most. I know someone who has been trying to get into Canada for two years to see his wife." When asked about social conditions in the US, Myles responded: "If you spend billions of dollars on war, I should never see homeless people in the street. Everyone has the right to a comfortable life."

Ramiro, a DACA recipient in Washington, DC, said: "We're here because this program gave us opportunities to get an education. Without DACA we would lose our jobs and our schools. This could also lead to attacks on other groups that oppose Trump."

When asked what he thought about the Democratic Party, Ramiro said: "Obama used DACA as a campaign strategy. He is known as the Deporter-in-Chief. Politicians have their own interest. They can shift their support at any point, we need to rely on working people."

Firdous, a biology major at George Washington University, told reporters that she had many friends on DACA. "It's not affecting one person or a group," she noted, adding that she believed everyone had a human right to an education. "I'm originally from Somalia, so I can understand people fleeing from their home countries due to war and poverty. It isn't fair that millions of people have had their homes destroyed only to be kicked out of countries they've come to seeking refuge, this is definitely a global problem."

Georgia, a teacher from a nearby private school, came with friends and family to the rally to express her solidarity with DACA recipients. "I think it is cruel and inhumane and an embarrassment to do these things to children," she said.

"Borders and banks and Wall Street money" along with "too much power in one place" were the key reasons for the crisis facing immigrants in the US, she said.

Kareem, a student, told the WSWS that the rescinding of DACA was "morally reprehensible." He said that many of these young people have done all they could to be productive members of society: "As an immigrant myself, I can tell you that when they say, 'working within the system is easy,' that isn't the case. It takes a lot of processing, meetings, paperwork. It takes forever [to be admitted into the country]."

New York City

Several thousand participated in the demonstration in New York City.

Philip is a student at Stevens Institute of Technology. "I'm here today to support my girlfriend who is from Mexico and my

family,” he said. “I am from Haiti. The US has invaded and stopped any struggles for change we wanted in Haiti. I want to change things here. Trump’s rescinding of DACA is terrible. It is fear inducing, terrible and cowardly.

“The Democratic Party and the Republican Party are supporters of capitalism. They both will do anything they can to defend capitalism as a system and divide the working class.”

Rachel works at an immigration think tank. She said: “Trump rescinding DACA is terrible. It is not just the 800,000 DACA recipients who will lose their ability to stay, study and work. There are 1.2 million who could have registered for DACA, and they won’t come forward because there is no protection now. They all are now faced with more fear about trying to get needed government resources, education and jobs. They will be more compelled to take under-the-table type of jobs.

“When Obama announced DACA it was problematic because this was not an overhaul of the whole immigration system.”

Two New York City school teachers came to the protest with homemade signs. Ibeth explained her sign: “I’m fed up with the whole system, and the way it treats people. It is unfair to the human population because all they do is attack us. Now they are attacking our children.

“There are a lot of DACA children in the New York City public schools. At least one of the schools has over 90 percent of its student population who are immigrants. These students are heartbroken and filled with fear.”

Luli, the other teacher, added: “The teachers support DACA because they support education. We have immigrant students who have 3.0 averages or higher who do really well academically. They were raised in America. What is their future now?

“This has always been the policy to scapegoat the immigrants and divide the working class.”

Los Angeles, California

Several thousand protesters gathered at MacArthur Park in Los Angeles.

Hilda, a waste management worker, came to support her two daughters, who came from Mexico at four and five years of age. “The US is their country, they know no other country. They grew up here, and without at least DACA we are left with nothing.

“It’s unfair that my daughters were educated here, they contribute to this country and they have nothing. One of them is a blood analyst, she’s mortified about her position at work. The other one works and studies. We want immigrant rights, we can’t continue living like this. I’ve seen my daughters suffer enough and it has to stop! Republicans and Democrats are playing with this hot potato, passing it to each other leaving us with no dignified solution.”

Alina, a science researcher and PhD student at the University of Southern California, came to the demonstration in support of immigrants. “As a high-school and college student, I had a lot of friends who were supported through DACA. I’m here in show

support and solidarity. To me, immigrants are what makes this country so great, in terms of economy and diversity. It’s crazy the president is focusing so much on breaking that down.”

Asked what she thought of pursuing a political struggle by workers that is independent of both Democrats and Republicans, she said: “I think that’s a great mission! I am here in support of all those who come here and try to forge a better life for themselves and their families.”

Paulina is from Tijuana, Mexico and living in San Diego. She is an advocate for immigrant groups and said that “it’s inhumane to cut these youth from the society to which they contribute so substantially. Their families need them and we fight to keep them here. In fact, we fight for all immigrants, against any attempt to divide us or to use DREAMers [DACA enrollees] as a bargaining chip.

“Without a doubt, Obama deported so many immigrants. Many would have qualified as DREAMers but are now on the other side [of the border]. Most immigrants aren’t here because they wanted to, but because of the situation they confront in many Latin American and Third World countries, a situation caused by international capitalism, foreign interventions and exploitation. Think of the wars that US capitalism caused in Latin America. Migration is the result of this.”

Eric, a social worker, expressed his solidarity to immigrants: “Our founding fathers came from different lands to make a better life for themselves. No reason to stop that now. I’m here to show support, defend this right for anyone who wants to come here.

“I can’t think of a good reason why borders exist. They’re about control and money. If it were up to me, borders should cease to exist. And as much as the current administration is especially brutal and blatant, I don’t think it’s just a Republican issue. Democrats have moved so far to the right and they don’t see that we’re becoming aware. Democrats take money from Wall Street, while on the surface they might even be marching here today. Both parties are involved in the deep-rooted issues that are destroying our world. A third party is much needed.”

With regard to capitalism, he said: “I don’t understand how the concept of capitalism can be accepted. Corporations will do anything to maintain their profits: destroy the environment, cut wages, and take advantage of vulnerable sections of the population. I personally like socialism: we gather our resources for everyone’s benefit. I don’t want my money to be used to fund these wars. Instead, elected officials who are bought by the corporations are responsible for those decisions.”



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