

Undocumented protesters drive Nancy Pelosi out of her own press conference

Evan Blake**19 September 2017**

Roughly 40 undocumented immigrant protesters took over the stage at a pro-Democratic Party press conference in San Francisco Monday morning, causing House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Reps. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.) and Jared Huffman (D-Calif.) to end the event early and depart.

The protesters, who did not claim affiliation with any organized group or party, sharply denounced the sordid deal being prepared by Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer with the Trump administration to maintain the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program while further militarizing the border, as well as the anti-immigrant record of the Democrats during the Obama administration. They descended upon the stage near the end of Pelosi's remarks, which centered on the recent efforts of the Democrats to draft bipartisan immigration legislation with the deeply reactionary and anti-immigrant Trump administration.

Protesters held signs reading, "DEMOCRATS ARE DEPORTERS," while protest leaders led a series of call-and-response chants, declaring, "We are immigrant youth! Undocumented and unafraid! We are the immigrant liberation movement of directly impacted youth!"

In video footage of the event, Pelosi is visibly shaken and can be seen nervously speaking with her aides, prompting a protester to address her directly, saying, "Nancy Pelosi, we're speaking to you, please pay attention."

The first protest leader led the group in chanting, "We, the undocumented youth, will not be a bargaining chip for Trump's xenophobic agenda, deporting millions of people and further militarizing the border!"

She then noted, "Democrats created an out-of-control deportation machine and handed it over to Trump! We demand accountability! Democrats are not the resistance of Trump! We are!"

The second protest leader put forward a somewhat sharper denunciation of the Democratic Party, describing the reign of terror imposed on immigrant communities during the Obama administration.

He began by calling out Pelosi for her duplicity, chanting, "Congresswoman Pelosi! You called this press conference in our name, to defend the so-called Dream Act! But you've already traded in our parents in our name! First you said you supported a clean Dream Act, and then last week you announced that you had agreed with President Trump, and I quote you, 'To work out a package of border security.' Your words, or were you misquoted?"

He continued, "We cannot say, however, that we are surprised. We remember all too well, how for eight years the Democrats laid siege to our communities, raiding and deporting nearly 3 million people, our family members and loved ones. Where was your resistance then? Ms. Pelosi, did you think we would forget?"

The second speaker closed by calling on all undocumented immigrants to unite against the deportation policies of Trump and the Democrats, saying, "We send a clear message to our fellow undocumented youth and communities: We are the resistance to Trump! Not the Democrats! We extend our arms in struggle to our parents and our loved ones. With you we are prepared to struggle, side by side in this fight. You have sacrificed everything, how could we forget? We are not alone in this fight!"

The political perspective of the protest group was contradictory, vacillating between sharp denunciations of the Democrats and appeals to these same corrupt politicians to make a political about-face and begin defending immigrant rights.

Both protest leaders referred to the prospect of the Democrats creating a "clean bill" that introduces comprehensive immigration reform, with the first chant leader directly appealing to Pelosi and other Democrats:

“We demand a clean bill that protects immigrant youth without hurting our families!”

Later, this same leader led a chant directed toward Pelosi, saying, “We, undocumented youth, demand your commitment in fighting for all 11 million!” This was in reference to the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the US, of which DACA enrollees comprise roughly 800,000.

Part of the way through the second speaker’s chants, Pelosi and attendees at the press conference began interrupting the chanters, and a back-and-forth between Pelosi and the protesters began.

At one point, the protesters shouted, “You have the audacity to tell us that you have been fighting deportation?!”

Pelosi replied, “Yes, yes, yes, yes I am, yes I am,” with the crowd responding, “You are a liar! You are a liar!”

After roughly 30 minutes, Pelosi and the other Democrats left the press conference. Outside the venue, Pelosi told reporters, “We want comprehensive immigration reform. I’d rather have that of course than just one piece of it, the Dream Bill, but we don’t have that opportunity right now.”

A protester told a Channel 4 News reporter, “Democrats continue to only push for Dreamers, which is only about 800,000 of us. We are 11 million, we’re not 800,000. We are much more than that. We have our parents, our community members, everybody.”

Despite lingering illusions in a legislative path to “immigration reform” through pressure on the Democrats, the protest as a whole struck a sharply anti-Democratic Party chord. In this regard it indicates the form that future struggles will take, as the working class begins to break the decades-long stranglehold of the Democratic Party and chart an independent path fighting for its own interests. The only way forward for workers—immigrant and native born—is through an independent, international mobilization, in opposition to the entire capitalist system.



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