

Students and workers denounce bipartisan attacks on immigrants

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9 February 2018

In recent weeks, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) has held public meetings on the defense of immigrants at several universities across the US. WSWs reporters have spoken to immigrants, workers and students across the country on the bipartisan conspiracy to militarize the southern border and expand the powers of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Since the latest government shutdown, the official debate on immigration “reform” has taken a sharp turn, with the White House proposing a virulently anti-immigrant policy and the Democratic Party remaining virtually silent on the issue. The night before Trump was set to deliver his State of the Union address, which included an elaboration of the reactionary plan, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer wrote an op-ed article in which he stated that that the issue he most hoped Trump would address was infrastructure spending, making no reference at all to the legal status of hundreds of thousands of immigrants, or to Trump’s latest reactionary demands.

The silence of the Democratic Party is particularly cynical, given that the latest government shutdown came about as a result of a Democratic Senate filibuster, whose ostensible aim was ensuring provisions in the budget resolution to protect the 800,000 immigrant youth covered by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. The DACA program is set to officially end in March. Less than three days into the shutdown, the Democrats backed down, based on the empty promise by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell that a debate on a future DACA bill would take place.

The events of the last few weeks have exposed the Democratic Party as an enemy of immigrant workers. It has no genuine interest in mobilizing support for

immigrants facing persecution, and seeks instead to direct popular anger at Trump into its own reactionary avenues. As Trump and sections of the Republican Party seek to militarize the US-Mexico border and deport immigrants on an unprecedented scale, the Democrats’ focus is passage of legislation to protect Special Prosecutor Robert Mueller as he investigates Trump and his circle on suspicion of alleged collusion with the Russian government in the 2016 election. Last weekend Senator Schumer released a statement to this effect, following revelations that President Trump had planned to fire Mueller last year.

In contrast to the conflicts and maneuvers within the ruling class and its political establishment, working people increasingly believe that undocumented immigrants should be given pathways to citizenship, especially immigrant youth covered by the DACA program. Gallup Polls at the beginning of Trump’s presidential campaign in 2015 showed nearly 65 percent of Americans supported citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Sympathy has only grown after a year of Trump in office, with the figure now standing at nearly 80 percent.

Detroit

Rachel, a psychology student at Wayne State University, attended an IYSSE meeting on immigration because she is the granddaughter of Mexican immigrants. “I also have a couple of friends who are recipients of DACA. I have one friend whose family came here when he was three years old. He’s been living here his whole life and is no different than you or me but he’s just not an American citizen.” Commenting on the political situation facing immigrants, she said, “I don’t like the idea of having to grant concessions. Why should people have to give up some important things just to have other important

things they need for life?

“I came to this meeting because I like to try to be open-minded. I grew up in a sort of conservative background but I feel estranged from right-wing politics. The meeting opened me up to ideas I didn’t consider before. For example, before this meeting I kind of blindly agreed with the whole #MeToo campaign. But this meeting made me really think about it a lot more critically. I had not considered the question of due process or democratic rights before.”

Danielle, a student in Art History, said, “I agree with what the presenter was saying about internationalism... I think it’s important to clarify that the roots of racism and sexism are in the capitalist system itself.” In regards to immigration and the Democratic Party, she said, “I think the Democratic Party is bourgeois but then what powerful party in the US isn’t? People think the Democratic Party is an activist party but it’s not. And in regards to Sanders—I don’t think it’s possible to become a high-powered politician in Washington without being a nationalist.”

San Diego

Giovanni, a political science student at San Diego State University, denounced the actions of the Trump administration, saying, “The scapegoating of immigrants is being used to divide American and immigrant workers.”

Commenting on a recent statement by Bernie Sanders in support of heightened border security, Diego said, “It’s surprising to see the ruling class move closer to authoritarianism and fascistic methods right before our eyes. Even the way they speak becomes more openly dictatorial.”

New York

Diego Jose, who became a freelance journalist for local newspapers after graduating a year ago, has been reading the *World Socialist Web Site* and came to the meeting at New York University with friends. “One reason I wanted to be here is because I am an immigrant. My parents brought me to the US when I was young, from the Dominican Republic. The meeting brought up a lot of good ideas. Capitalism uses ways to divide the working class, especially immigrants. There are many in New York who are affected, such as Salvadorans and Haitians. I liked the point made of how the WSWs has used videos to tell stories, like the ones from Puerto Rico and of the Albanian immigrant

family.

“I think it is necessary to unify the workers—immigrants and workers in general—so we can get to the goals of opposing war and fascism. I am for socialism, but have questions, as were discussed here, over racism. Socialism is about unifying people for the goals which will benefit the most. We need to move beyond race and unify.”

Aliyah, a student at NYU, told the WSWs that she has a friend who is undocumented and afraid of being deported. “It seems that there’s a lot of fear.” She expressed support for the IYSSE’s program of uniting the working class, saying, “I think a lot of problems have stemmed from division in the working class.”

Joseph, a teacher, said that the meeting was “extremely appropriate for what’s been going on in terms of current events. You can see the results. I work in a school so I see it every day, but in other aspects it seems clear that a topic like this is relevant to what’s going on.

“The attacks on immigrants isn’t something we’re just seeing in the United States. Basically the whole world is doing this and it only takes someone reading a little bit of history to know why these types of things happen—the scapegoating, trying to direct attention from the real socioeconomic problems of the nation and dumping them onto a group that can’t necessarily defend themselves.

“The attacks against immigrants have to do with dividing people who have common interests, which is one of the reasons why it’s happening. It seems obvious that instead of further division you would call for some sense of solidarity.”



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