

“This is like the 1930s. We have to come together and oppose it”

Protesting workers and youth defend immigrants

Our reporters
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More than 75,000 people protested President Donald Trump's immigration policies in Los Angeles on Saturday. There was wide interest in the statement distributed by members of the Socialist Equality Party, calling for the mobilization of the working class as a class to defend immigrants and oppose the repressive policies of both the Trump administration and the Democratic Party.

Many demonstrators gave their views to the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Zachary Johnson Dunlop is a lighting designer and technician living in Los Angeles. He said: “I wanted to lend my voice and my support for fighting the current crisis as a result of both the Supreme Court's decision on the travel ban and the policy of separating children at the border, which is a bipartisan problem. While this is now a crisis under the Trump administration these are issues that go back to laws passed in the 1990s by the Clinton administration.

“Pragmatically borders are not needed. They only exist for political reasons. We exist as a united world. Corporate interests are allowed to act without borders and go wherever they have the best tax incentives. I think people should be able to trade, move, and interact, and exchange the product of their labor across all borders.”

Gwyn is an entertainment insurance broker in Los Angeles. She came to the rally “because it's time for our country to change ... we cannot continue to run this country in a manner that is taking us back in time. Where it is more divisive, where we do not have respect for one another, where you cannot even afford to live and make a decent wage. The hatred, the vitriolism, this has got to stop.

“We have a broken political system that has got to change. We cannot continue to allow the status quo. We have to make a change now.”

Asked about the two major parties, Gwyn said she is not confident in either: “I am definitely not a fan of the Republicans by any stretch of the imagination. I am also disappointed in my Democratic Party right now. I do not see a future plan for the younger generation or even my generation. We have got to come together and figure out what works for

this country and if that means we change things entirely than we need to do that, but we have to start somewhere and now is the time.”

Donna is a former school teacher in the Los Angeles suburb of Culver City. She said: “I'm here first and foremost, to protest against families being ripped apart. In terms of whether or not the Democrats can do anything about this, I have a lot of doubts. It is worse here now than ever before. Things have never been so bad and I don't see the Democrats fighting for us.

“We have to learn from history. This is exactly in my mind like the 1930s and everyone needs to come together and oppose it. I am afraid that many in the population seem to be apathetic but demonstrations like this are very heartening. There are thousands upon thousands here in Los Angeles and it's taking place across the country. I hope more and more people continue to stand up until this barbaric policy ends.”

Jay is a software engineer originally from Taiwan. He had not been aware of the demonstration until he encountered the protest downtown and decided to join it.

“I fully agree that this policy of separating families needs to be stopped,” he said. “Many immigrants work very hard and only want to contribute to society and make a good life for themselves and their families. What is wrong with that? Nothing. They are not responsible for unemployment and poor paying jobs. It is the rich, the capitalists who put profit above people's lives, who are responsible.

“For immigrants, they say that it's about obeying the law. What does that matter though when Trump ignores the law himself? He said he wants to move refugees and immigrants out of the country right away with no courts and no judges. He believes he's above the law. Well then, the people are the ones who should make the law.”

In Washington, DC, many demonstrators endorsed calls by the Socialist Equality Party to abolish ICE and break from the Republican and Democratic parties.

Rhys Baker, a local independent journalist, told the WSWWS that the Democratic Party and Hillary Clinton were “responsible for a lot of this,” recalling that while Clinton was

the US Secretary of State under Barack Obama, she had engineered the coup against democratically elected government of Manuel Zelaya in Honduras, destabilizing the region and leading to the mass exodus of unaccompanied youth from Central America in 2014. “Then she told the media that the United States had to send these kids home,” he said.

Referring to the Republican and Democratic candidates facing off in the November elections, he said: “We’re talking about two right-wing parties with vastly different views from you and I about to treat human beings. I believe we need a revolutionary party, one which is independent of corporate interests.”

Kantrelle and **Larisa** came to the rally with their daughter. Larisa is an immigrant from Bosnia who came to the US to escape the country’s war and persecution. Larisa said: “I am here because I believe that families belong together and what is happening now is beyond a person’s choice of what party they want to belong to. This is not a matter of what is legal or not, it is a matter of morality. Keeping families separated, ripping children out of parents’ arms, is inhumane and it is not something that I am going to tolerate for myself or for any family. As an immigrant myself, as a mother, and as a human I will not settle for this.”

Kantrelle added: “I’m here to support. I’m married to an immigrant, my child is born to a mother who is an immigrant. This is supposed to be the American Dream: immigrant mother, black father. This is what American is supposed to stand for. ... Now it’s immigrants. But 50 years ago we would be talking about the same thing against my people. ICE are the modern Gestapo. In the 1930s and ‘40s, it was the Jews or with the black people. We continue to progress, but we regress and do the same thing to another group of people.”

When asked about the role of the Democratic Party in the current immigration crisis, **Nathaniel**, another demonstrator in Washington, said: “This is the very continuation of policies that we’ve seen since Bush created ICE. Part of the reason the situation is so bad is the deportation machine that Obama created. It made the current policies possible in the first place.” He spoke about the role of US-backed interventions in the refugee crisis: “Imperialism created the situation that we are facing right now. The US overthrows a government in Latin America at even the slightest indication that it is moving to the left.”

In New York City, **Susan Merson**, an artist, told the WWS: “I’m here because there is no choice. Our democracy is in peril. As a Jew, I would be remiss to avoid protesting. The kids’ concentration camps are a signal for the attack on immigrants, minorities, women and the poor. There is no choice but to stand up. We can’t pretend it is not happening here. And I say this as a person whose favorite book when I was growing up was *It Can’t Happen Here*.”

Maya Ventura, a homemaker, explained to the WWS: “I am here because I have children, and I can’t imagine being

separated from them. And I am horrified to see the government immigration policy. I want to see the families reunited and not in jail.

“Unfortunately, the blame for this is not just with Trump. I was not happy with Obama’s deportation policy or his acceleration of deportations. The Democrats have failed. To say the Democrats will do something to protect immigrants now is to ignore all the harm they have done in the past. The Democrats are failing workers as badly as everybody else.

“I have mixed emotions about Sanders because I have loved him for a long time, but the people on the Sanders left, to show how tough they are, they are using the rhetoric of the right. This idea that we can’t let people into the country is nonsense. The fact that we can’t grant amnesty and are putting people in concentration camps when they are coming into this country after their homeland has been attacked or oppressed by the US is just wrong.

“I think the two-party system is a failure, and it is just a race to the bottom. Each side is trying to outdo each other in getting money out of the corporations. I feel this administration is without shame, and you can’t shame them out of their policies. My husband’s union is SEIU 1199, but it has basically rolled over and gone belly up. The union leaders have been in politics so long that they are out of touch and won’t defend anyone.”

Paula, a first-generation immigrant, said: “I’m disturbed by the rhetoric on immigration now. My family works hard here and we came here for a better life. The way immigration is raised now is blatantly racist or ignorant. People come here to seek asylum. They aren’t stealing, they are seeking sanctuary.

“We claim to be a country of immigrants and we should be leading the way. But, we take in less refugees than almost any country. ... It isn’t good enough to call yourself a Democrat and not sympathize or do anything anymore.”

Tess, another demonstrator, said: “I came out today around because I feel like not saying ‘no’ is like saying ‘yes’ to what is going on, especially if you are in the majority. We all have to stand up to the thuggish plutocratic minority that runs everything.

“This is really caused by imperialism and colonialism setting the stage for problems in other countries. There is a whole idea that our own security or freedom can only be established through witch-hunting other people.”

To be continued tomorrow



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