Voices of the June 30 protests: Stop Trump's persecution of immigrants!

A reporting team
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In one of the largest demonstrations in the US over the weekend, over 50,000 rallied in Chicago in defense of immigrants on Saturday, according to crowd estimates by the city police department. Braving intense and dangerous heat, wide layers of the population—high school and college students; immigrants and their families; teachers, nurses, and state workers; and sections of the middle and even upper-middle class—turned out to express their opposition to the Trump administration's barbaric anti-immigrant policies.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and Socialist Equality Party (SEP) distributed nearly 1,500 copies of the statement "Mobilize the working class against the bipartisan attack on immigrants!" to those attending the demonstration. The IYSSE's campaign table—which featured placards calling for open borders, an end to the American Gestapo and immigrant detention centers, and a break with the Democrats and Republicans—attracted substantial interest.

Destiny, who studies at University of Illinois at Chicago, attended with her friends Emily and Citlali, who are going to school in California. "I think that every day that I woke up and saw images of kids in cages in my newsfeed, I didn't feel like I could be 100 percent with myself until that was over," Destiny said.

When a reporter for the WSWS said that social inequality was incompatible with democracy, Destiny responded, "Exactly." Told that the Socialist Equality Party calls for open borders and the abolition of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and their network of detention centers and concentration camps, she replied, "I agree completely with what you just said."

Destiny said she had become interested in socialism after studying the civil rights movement. "I'm interested because I know that when the civil rights movement was first going on, a lot of the people who were involved were socialists. I just don't feel like I know enough about socialism, and I would like to."

Mike and Linda said they were attending the rally to support their co-workers. "We are here because a lot of the immigrants that we work with get taken advantage of because they have to take lower wages than someone who is here as a citizen," Mike said.

Linda added, "If they don't accept whatever they are given in our job, they'll be deported."

"They'll lose their visa," Mike explained. "That's abuse. If you come here to live, I'm all for that. We're a nation of immigrants. My parents were immigrants."

Asked what she thought about the Democratic Party's response to the Trump administration's anti-immigrant policies, Linda said, "The two-party system absolutely does not work anymore."

Mike added, "The Democrats and the Republicans support one thing, and that's capitalism. There's a thought in capitalism that you don't matter because you're a worker, and you don't have a say. Because your lives are decided by the executives."

Meg, a college instructor from Iran, said that her family could no longer visit her in the United States because of Trump's anti-Muslim travel ban, recently affirmed by the Supreme Court. "The policies that Congress and the president and everyone who is involved in the government are passing right now are against humanity."

Nora came to the rally with her daughter and partner. "The parallels between now and World War II are really scary," She said. "I think we need to open our borders. If people need to come here, they should come here."

Nora also expressed her support for the struggles of teachers. "I support the teachers because they are in charge of educating the next generation of leaders. Many of them are underpaid and the schools are underfunded, and that's not right."

Jennifer attended the rally with her son. "I'm a peaceful person, but this makes me really angry," she told WSWS reporters. "I'm living in a country that is putting children in concentration camps, and it's beyond anything that I could have ever imagined. It's like 1933," she said, referring to the year that the Nazis took power in Germany.

Melissa, who workers in higher education, said she came to the rally to support the students she works with. "I work with students who come from all over the world. Some are asylees, refugees, or undocumented students. Like my sign says, no one is free until we're all free, so I'm fighting for them."

Speaking about the anti-immigrant measures under the Democratic Party administration of Barack Obama and previous presidents, she said, "This isn't new. Those detention centers didn't go up overnight."

Melissa agreed that the attacks on democratic rights was connected with the growth of social inequality. "I think everyone's paying more and more attention to the disparities in this country. Those at the top have billions and billions of dollars, and all of us are just fighting to survive, living paycheck to paycheck."

Boston

Organizers of the Boston demonstration estimated that 15,000 people gathered at Government Center "Together & Free: Rally Against Family Separation." SEP campaigners took up a collection for placards printed up for the event, with one reading "Abolish ICE, the American Gestapo" being among the most popular.

Calls for votes for the Democrats stood in contrast to the mood of the crowd angered by the Trump administration's policies of separating parents from children and locking up children in cages in detention camps.

WSWS reporters spoke with protesters at Boston Common. Jami is a third-generation immigrant whose family came from Costa Rica, while Peter had German ancestors who fled the Nazis.

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Jami said, “The people that are getting locked up with their families getting taken away, they’re just seeking asylum. They’re just looking to get away from a lot of gang violence in Central America. I understand why the families have to come here, so and that’s why I’m here.”

Comparing Trump’s policies to those of the Nazis, Peter said, “We see where this is going, and it needs to stop. People do not need to be put in cages … your tax dollars are going towards this. Whether we want to or not, we’re paying for it.”

Mink, a librarian, and Andy also spoke to the WSWS. When asked whether they think that the problem started with Trump, Andy responded: “Trump is a symptom of the problem, not the source of the problem.”

On fighting Trump’s immigration policies, Mink said: “There’s a lot to do right now in terms of public defense … Boston is in the 100-mile border zone.” She said it was important to be “ready to help support people who may be getting detained by immigration in my everyday life and making sure people know what their rights are as immigrants and how to protect people around them in their daily life.”

Pittsburgh

Between 1,500 and 2,000 people protested Trump’s immigration policies at a rally in downtown Pittsburgh on June 30. The crowd included of workers, students, youth, professionals, and families with young children. In stark contrast to the pro-Democratic Party politics of the organizers, rally participants expressed opposition not only to family separation, but to the entire inhumane US immigration system, perpetuated by Republicans and Democrats alike.

Dave, who works with adults with special needs, spoke out against the Trump administration’s immigration policies. “I am very opposed to not only separating families, because that’s immoral, but the idea of borders, because that’s just a construct. Why do we have that in the first place? Why is this person illegal because they’re crossing this specific set of land. This whole idea that immigration is bad. If for sake of argument you say that immigration is bad, America created that problem by overthrowing democratically elected socialists in Central and South America. American death squads have always been on the wrong sides, supporting the capitalists and more fascist regimes, causing more chaos. It is a problem we created, but it’s also not really a problem to begin with.

Dave noted that, “Obama is not innocent of anything. Obama still supported the same imperialistic policies that the past president had. He just made it all go down smooth.”

Alex Osgood, a restaurant manager, spoke in support of immigrants. “For me, it’s all connected. Gaza, the Rio Grande, borders, walls. People move. That’s historically what people have done, and we’ve set artificial boundaries that deny people their right to free movement across the world. This is just an extension of a fascist regime that puts children in jail, that puts mothers and fathers in jail. It’s the American Gestapo and we have to stop it, so that’s why I’m here.”

“The Obama administration was a wolf in sheep’s clothing. Our current immigration policies can be traced directly back to what was started under the Obama administration. They didn’t call him the ‘Deporter in Chief’ for nothing. American imperialism has never ended and won’t end until we destroy capitalism. It’s all linked together.”

Asked her reasons for attending the protest, Billie, a 15-year-old high school student, explained, “Obviously, the immigrant families and the separations of the kids and the parents. Also, I recently learned that toddlers are defending themselves in court, and that was absolutely insane to me. That’s why I’m here.

“First and foremost, I think they need to reunite the kids with their parents. That’s the most important thing to me right now. I think once that happens, we should go from there, but separating families is definitely not the answer.”

Billie spoke out on the police killing of East Pittsburgh teenager Antwon Rose. “That is, again, a very scary situation. I knew a lot of kids who went to school with him. They said he was one of the nicest kids they had ever met. He was going very far, compared to some of the kids who were at the school with him. He actually had goals that he wanted to achieve. That was really important to him. He was a very nice kid.”

Birmingham, Alabama

Workers and young people who attended the protest in Alabama’s largest city drew an unprompted parallel between their own precarious social conditions and the internment of immigrants.

Rosy and Governor are a married couple, each born in Alabama's black belt. Rosy said she was moved to come to the rally because it resonated with the stories of slavery passed down in her family, and her belief that if anyone could be imprisoned and have their children removed because of unjust government, That everyone is in danger of losing their liberties.

Governor spoke about how Marengo County, where he grew up, remains impoverished, and stated that the same politicians who refuse to address poverty in his home region that has existed "as long as anybody can remember." He stated that he is on disability, since a heart condition forced him to stop working in a plywood factory in Thomasville, Alabama seven years ago. He said that the Trump administration is attacking everyone who is vulnerable, whether they are immigrants or poor people depending upon a disability check to survive.

Courtney came to the rally late at the urging of a friend who told her about children being separated from their families. She said she came because she found it "disturbing" and "heartbreaking" for any child to be torn from its parents, especially when the families were coming to the US to flee violence or poverty. Her companion, Abraham, agreed with her. They both expressed disappointment that Obama not only failed to abolish ICE, but that he actually deported so many immigrants.

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Thousands of people attended an anti-Trump rally in downtown Albuquerque’s Civic Center. None of the speakers made any reference to the 2.7 million deportations carried out by the Obama administration—indeed, the Democratic former president’s name was not mentioned—while they urged the assembled protesters to register to vote in order to “take back Congress.”

A *World Socialist Web Site* reporter spoke with Bianca and Giselle, daughters of a native-born mother and immigrant father who has a green card and is attempting to gain citizenship. Bianca said, “Our parents helped us to become better people. Without them, I wouldn’t be here. My mom does a lot for our community, and because of them we try to be better people.” Giselle denounced attempts to demonize immigrants as drug dealers and gang members.

The reporter asked Giselle about what she believes should be done. “I just think that they shouldn’t be separating families. My dad actually crossed the border to be here and met my mom and my mom got his green card and my mom and dad both had to work their butts off to be where they are now and just to have my parents be separated, that would ruin

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everything for us; we need to keep them together…

"I feel that immigrants, we work harder than the people that are here. We took ESL classes to start with—Spanish is our first language—and many of us who are born here want to get an education. Their families come here because they want them to have a better life because Mexico is a whole other world. When we go to Mexico, we see kids that are younger than us working, cleaning vehicles… we see kids sleeping outside because they don't have a home to sleep in.

"I read about a boy who stayed in a detention center for nine months and he was traumatized by the experience, and he was just trying to find a better life in the United States… Some kids think that their parents have abandoned them because they were separated from them.

"I've been preparing for this protest for about a week now, and reading a lot about it. We can't imagine being separated from our parents."

Salt Lake City, Utah

In Salt Lake City, Utah, the demonstration was held on the steps of the state capitol building.

Judith, who lives in Ogden, Utah, immigrated from El Salvador. She expressed her outrage at the brutality of the Trump administration's policies: "We disagree about what happened. Families have to be together. They have to realize that people who come over here come for a specific reason: If they are applying for asylum, it's because they need it. If this is the land of opportunity and the people are looking for this, why are they treating them this way?

"I applied for political asylum 28 years ago. It took a long process, but I got it. I am a citizen and I completely disagree with how this government is leading everything—Trump is being like a Hitler. His ideas are like a Nazi's ideas. What he is doing with the kids right now is what they did in Germany a long time ago."

The WSWS also spoke to Kimberly, Judith's granddaughter, who became emotional as she spoke: "I think it's really messed up. I come from a family of immigrants. My grandma was running from the war and she didn't want me growing up there. They wanted to make a better life than what they had, have their kids have a better life than what they had.

"I don't think there should be borders, because people move throughout lands—it's our nature, we move, we look for better, we move to where we feel like we're safer—not just because we want to go there, no, we're looking for something better."

The WSWS also spoke to Dani Abbot, a student from Provo, Utah, who said, "My dad immigrated from Mexico when he was 16. It was legal, but the process for him to become a citizen was impossible—he got it 16 years later. These people fleeing these horrible situations—why not be able to come to this country? It's unfortunate that we've turned our back on them—that our president turned our back on them, because I don't believe these people here have.

"When Obama did it, it was wrong, when Clinton did it, it was wrong, and when any president before them did it, it was wrong, and now we're waking up and realizing this isn't good. As a working class person, I will never be where my parents were. But I don't know where I stand, I think I need to be educated more."

Ariel, from Salt Lake City, expressed her anger over the political situation: "What is happening is atrocious. People don't deserve to be treated the way our country has historically treated people they exploit and oppress. It has never been okay to intern people, it has never been okay to treat people as less than human. Any time that you have a group restricting peoples' rights – freedom of speech, freedom of movement—that is innately fascist. And seeing camps? We're right back to what we did to people of Japanese descent, we're right back to what people were doing in Germany, we did this to native Americans. It is fascism "

Alec, from Salt Lake City, was holding a sign that read "Abolish Borders." He said, "I think that the free movement of people is a basic human right that, unfortunately, too many governments fight up against. I wrote 'Abolish Borders' on my sign because I believe that by defining nations, by defining borders, we create nationalism and racism. I know it's considered more of a radical idea, but if we're going to radically change these deeply entrenched awful values, then getting at the root cause of it is a powerful step. People all around the world want to move freely and move safely and be united together, not divided by the imaginary lines drawn on the ground that nations have created. Capitalism has fueled the fascist movements, the nationalist movements—there's money behind it."

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