

IYSSE holds rally at University of Michigan to defend Chelsea Manning

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality at University of Michigan
14 March 2019

On Wednesday the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and its student and youth wing the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) held a rally at the center of the University of Michigan campus which called for the immediate release of the courageous whistle-blower Chelsea Manning. Manning was imprisoned last Friday for refusing to testify before a secret grand jury that is drawing up fabricated charges against WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange.

The event is part of a series of rallies and meetings organized by the SEP and IYSSE throughout the US and around the world in defense of Manning and Assange.

Wednesday's rally advanced an international strategy to mobilize youth, students and the broadest layers of the working class against the imprisonment of Manning and the witch-hunt against Julian Assange.

The opening speaker, *World Socialist Web Site* writer Andre Damon, spoke to attendees about the brave and principled stand Manning has taken by refusing to testify in the Star Chamber proceeding against Assange, who remains effectively imprisoned in the Ecuadorian embassy while the United States and Britain plot to have him evicted and extradited to the US to face espionage and/or conspiracy charges that could result in his execution.

"The imprisonment of Chelsea Manning is cruel, criminal and totally unjustifiable. The White House wants to set a precedent for jailing whistleblowers and journalists who publish information critical of the military and state apparatus."

Damon reviewed the heroic role played by Manning: "In 2010, Manning made public, via WikiLeaks, the 'Collateral Murder' cockpit video of the July 12, 2007 US helicopter airstrike in Baghdad that killed 16 unarmed civilians, including two Reuters journalists, in

cold blood.

"Nine years after the start of the war in Afghanistan and six years after the invasion of Iraq, Manning made the courageous decision to expose to the public these and other war crimes that had been covered up by the Bush and Obama administrations with the aid of the corporate media."

Damon went on to explain the criminal role played by the Democratic Party in the persecution of Manning and Assange. He noted that the Democratic Party has used the unsubstantiated allegation, denied by both Moscow and Assange, that WikiLeaks collaborated with the Russian government to publish emails hacked from the Democratic National Committee and the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign as the central rationale in its drive to censor the internet.

Noting the silence on the jailing of Manning from many political tendencies that posture as left, Andre declared, "While the organizations of the affluent upper-middle class have made clear their indifference to fundamental democratic principles, the real force capable of defending Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange is the international working class."

Following Damon's comments, Socialist Equality Party member Carlos Delgado spoke on the significance of the revelations by Manning and Assange in the fight against war. He explained how Manning and Assange were targeted because, "they represent genuine anti-war courage, rather than the pathetic bending to the will of power so common in the upper middle class today."

He continued, "As an intelligence officer, Chelsea Manning had access to classified documents which detailed the crimes being committed by the United States. She knew that she could not sit idly by while entire societies were being systematically destroyed, so

she ripped away the veil of secrecy and brought these crimes out into public view.”

Delgado concluded with a powerful call for students and youth to turn to the working class to fight against war: “The fight to defend Chelsea Manning, like the fight against war, requires the political mobilization of workers and youth independently of all the organizations of the capitalist class, Democratic and Republican alike.

“This fight must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war. Above all, this fight must be international in scope, mobilizing the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism.”

The next speaker, Sam Wayne, president of the IYSSE at University of Michigan continued on this theme. Wayne pointed the way forward in the fight to defend whistleblowers and other class war prisoners, “What is required is the building of a mass movement of workers and young people from below with the recognition that the attack on Manning is a threat to the rights and freedom of workers and young people around the world.”

“This working class is, in fact, the stirring giant of world politics, and the working masses all around the are beginning to find their feet and our mobilizing in opposition to social inequality with an increasingly critical perspective of the whole capitalist setup.”

Wayne reviewed the wave of working class struggles which have erupted throughout the last year and a half from the strike movement of sweatshop workers in Matamoros, Mexico earlier this year which saw 70,000 workers walking off the job to the on-going teachers strikes across the US.

“If we are to defend Manning and Assange” he concluded, “we must recognize that there is no appealing to the oppressive apparatus of the capitalist state. Instead, we will turn to the billions strong international working class to raise the demands of social and democratic rights... and to build a movement for socialism.”

The final speaker, Genevieve Leigh, National Secretary of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality in the US, concluded the rally with a call for the new generation of youth and workers to

learn the truth about Manning and Assange and take up a fight for their defense.

“An 18-year-old today was just nine or ten years old in 2010, when WikiLeaks published the US army’s Iraq and Afghan war logs, and hundreds of thousands of diplomatic cables. They were only 12 years old when Assange was forced to seek asylum in Ecuador’s London embassy.

“But those of us who were politically engaged when Manning and Assange carried out their heroic work, will never forget.”

She went on to condemn the actions taken by the Obama administration at the time,

“We will never forget how the Obama administration oversaw her torture, including stuffing her into an outdoor cage, and, for almost a year subjecting her to solitary confinement, forced nudity, and harassment by guards...We are here today to make sure a new generation of youth and workers knows the names Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange as the names of heroes.”

Leigh, like the other speakers, insisted that the fight to defend Manning and Assange required the mobilization of the working class in a fight for socialism. “Genuine socialism must be advanced clearly and with great determination...We insist that genuine socialism is based on a defense of Democratic rights. Assange, Manning and all class war prisoners must be released and given a hero’s welcome.”



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