

Australian teachers' defence of Julian Assange welcomed by WikiLeaks supporters

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The *World Socialist Web Site* published on December 6 an article, “Meeting of Australian teachers passes resolutions in defence of Julian Assange,” which detailed the important stand taken in defence of WikiLeaks publisher and journalist Julian Assange by a group of teachers and support staff at Footscray City College, a public high school in the Australian city of Melbourne.

The educators’ support for Assange—who has been targeted for his exposure of US war crimes—and their decision to form a committee to help take forward the defence campaign, has met with an important response.

US comedian Jimmy Dore discussed the initiative on the December 19 edition of his “Jimmy Dore Show Podcast.” Dore is a well-known, stand-up comedian, and more recently left-wing political commentator, with a broad following in the US and internationally. His YouTube channel has 655,000 subscribers.

Dore’s co-host and spouse Stef Zamorano opened the discussion (available only to the podcast’s paying premium members) by referring to her own 20-year experience as an educator, including as a former high school teacher. She explained: “The most powerful thing you can do as an instructor in the classroom is to make the connection of what is happening in real life to what you are teaching.”

Zamorano said she wanted to highlight the WSWs article explaining the Footscray City teachers initiative, and proceeded to read the entire article for the podcast’s listeners.

She was clearly moved by the development, and emphasised different parts of the article, including the following: “[SEP member and teacher Will] Marshall noted that the motion in defence of Assange, the first to be passed by teachers in Australia, came from rank-and-file teachers, not the education trade unions.

“The unions had remained silent on the plight of the WikiLeaks editor, in line with their refusal to defend any

democratic rights and their decades-long collaboration with governments in the gutting of education and the destruction of social rights. This underscored, he said, the fact that a movement to free Assange must come from below.”

After finishing reading the article—including the appeal for workers to hold meetings in their workplaces, pass resolutions demanding Assange’s freedom, and participating in demonstrations against his threatened extradition to the US—Zamorano said, “We do what we can do, [but] when I read this article about teachers coming together and forming a coalition in support of freeing Assange, it does give me hope.”

Dore, who said he was a regular reader of the WSWs, responded: “I was in Melbourne recently, and you know that is a part of the world that really has their ear to the ground on this stuff. Actually, I saw a couple of Assange murals when I was walking through downtown Melbourne, I got a picture of me and Caitlin Johnstone with an Assange mural behind us.”

After noting the failure of the media to properly cover the US vendetta against Assange, Dore continued: “It’s pretty brutal what’s going on, and that’s putting it gently. But some people are speaking out. I think on the ground, around the world and among people, as this article says from the ground up, people are starting to pay more attention.

“So, there are things that people can do—there’s actions for Assange going on, online and around the world, and I encourage people to get involved. Especially in the holiday season, because we know that Chelsea Manning had a birthday recently, it was likely not a very good birthday for her. Julian Assange likely is not going to have a very good holiday season, neither is Chelsea Manning, neither is Edward Snowden. And it’s one of those things, we have got to keep making noise about it, because the corporate media and the powers that be are

complicit.”

Additional messages of solidarity with the Footscray City teachers were recently sent from two WikiLeaks-Assange support groups in Australia.

Louise Bennett of the Bring Assange Home Campaign wrote:

Please pass on our thanks to the fabulous group of teachers and support staff at Footscray City College.

We could not be prouder or more grateful for their strength to stand against the human rights abuses, not only of Julian Assange but of those whose suffering he exposed.

Please keep fighting for our sovereignty and democracy. Keep educating students to question and hold power to account.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

On behalf of Melbourne4WikiLeaks group, Raine wrote:

Dear staff and teachers of Footscray College,

We are delighted and thrilled to see you taking initiative to form a committee and pass resolutions in defence of our Australian award-winning journalist Julian Assange and courageous American whistleblower Chelsea Manning. We know this is no easy feat and like us, you have probably copped some flack for standing up against the persecution of these two human beings, particularly Julian.

I know when I read the article in WSWS my heart swelled. Here is another group of concerned citizens standing up not just for Julian and Chelsea, but for all of us. To see this band of educators, one of the most important professions in the world, uniting for this incredibly important cause is encouraging and inspiring.

This paragraph in particular really stood out:

“Marshall insisted that the fight to free Assange ‘will only be taken forward if there is a grassroots movement.’ He made a particular appeal to the educators present. He stressed: ‘As teachers, we all want the children we teach to be critical thinkers. But how can this happen when

governments hide what they are doing? How can anyone make informed decisions when everything is hidden?’”

As parents and carers for children, we have seen the lack of critical thinking in the current education system. We have seen funding cuts and teachers overworked and treated as if they are a lesser important part of this society. In fact, teachers are one of the most important. They are helping us prepare our children for adulthood. Educating the most important beings on this planet, our kids.

We agree with Marshall, that the way forward is a grassroots movement.

Melbourne4WikiLeaks is also a grassroots group. We seek to draw attention to the persecution of Julian Assange and use peaceful protest and civil disobedience to endeavour to stop it. We stand by Footscray City College staff and thank you all for taking this stand to the public and to other schools around the country. We hope to see more committees formed and encourage the hashtag #Teachers4Assange to spread the word. We shared the WSWS article on our Facebook page. There have been loads of encouraging comments. Please let us know if we can be of assistance. Keep up the great work. Together, we can bring Julian home.

Julian Assange’s life remains in grave danger. The WSWS reiterates its appeal to working people and all defenders of democratic rights to actively participate in the fight to secure his freedom—contact us to discuss how meetings can be organised in workplaces, schools, and universities, and rank-and-file committees formed to take forward the campaign to end the US-led persecution.



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