

Hands off international students! Oppose ICE deportation of foreign college students!

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As the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for US president, I denounce the Trump administration's attempts to terrorize international students in the US amidst the expanding coronavirus pandemic. The SEP insists on the right of students, youth, and workers to study wherever they choose regardless of nationality.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) threatened on Monday to strip residency rights from nearly 900,000 holders of student study visas. The new measures bar entry to or deport holders of F-1 and M-1 student visas if they are unable to attend in-person classes this fall. Many schools are not planning on holding online classes due to the pandemic.

If a university does hold in-person classes that are then postponed following a COVID-19 outbreak, students will be forced to leave the country or transfer to another college with in-person classes. These measures will apply to both graduate and undergraduate students, including those who work while they study.

If these measures are implemented, hundreds of thousands of students will have their lives upended under conditions of an international health emergency.

The ICE announcement is particularly aimed at Chinese students. While the latest measure affects all international students holding F-1 visas, 370,000, or 41 percent, are Chinese nationals.

The ban on F-1 visas comes after the Trump administration's move to ban at least 3,000 Chinese graduate students from studying in the US. In 2018, Trump's fascist chief adviser Stephen Miller proposed to ban all Chinese nationals from studying in the US.

The latest move, moreover, comes as the Trump administration is escalating its efforts to blame China for the spread of the coronavirus, in order to deflect responsibility for the escalating pandemic in the US

from the administration's own criminal policies.

Trump is also hoping to pressure universities, which rely on the tuition paid by international students, to reopen in the fall. The opening of schools and colleges is a central pillar in the wider campaign to force American workers back to their jobs despite the uncontrolled spread of the virus. Many states are now mandating that schools reopen, including Florida, which recorded its highest-ever number of new cases on July 6.

The ICE announcement comes as Trump is intensifying his demand that schools must reopen in the fall. "We're very much going to put pressure on governors and everybody else to open the schools, to get them open," Trump said at a forum at the White House on Tuesday. "So, we're going to be putting a lot of pressure on: Open your schools in the fall."

The White House has made clear that there will be no retreat from the homicidal back-to-work campaign, which has already produced a sharp spike in cases of COVID-19 throughout the country. The campaign is driven by the imperatives of the financial oligarchy, which is demanding that workers produce profits to pay for the trillions of dollars handed to Wall Street.

Both the anti-immigrant policies of the Trump administration and the back-to-work campaign have been facilitated and supported by the Democratic Party.

The election of Trump in 2016 was followed by mass protests against his fascist and reactionary policies. However, the Democratic Party worked to channel this opposition behind its own anti-Russia campaign, reflecting the interests of powerful factions of the military and intelligence agencies.

Under conditions of growing popular opposition, the Democrats have dropped even their nominal criticism of Trump's xenophobic policies, including the mass

detention and deportation of immigrants. They have also signed on to the efforts to blame China for the coronavirus, while intensifying their own efforts to force the White House to adopt a harsher line against Russia.

The anti-immigrant record of Trump, moreover, is a continuation of Obama-era policies that saw huge increases in ICE funding and record numbers of deportations.

The defense of international students must be connected to the political mobilization of the working class, independently of the Democrats and Republicans, against the financial oligarchy and the capitalist profit system.

Both the back-to-work campaign and the xenophobic policies of the Trump administration are driven by class interests. The ruling class is seeking to deflect social tensions outward as it implements policies that will produce a vast increase in death and misery.

The working class will have its say, however. The multiracial and multiethnic demonstrations against police violence have been fueled by much deeper social anger. As the pandemic spreads, there is a growing movement among autoworkers and other sections of the working class against unsafe conditions and the back-to-work campaign.

It is to this social force that those seeking to defend international students must turn. A socialist leadership in the working class must be built. We call on all students and young people to take the decision to support our election campaign and join the youth movement of the SEP, the International Youth and Students for Socialist Equality (IYSSE).



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