

“The great powers are playing checkers with the lives of real people”: University of Michigan students speak out against war

Tim Rivers, James Langley
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Supporters of the IYSSE are campaigning at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan to build support among students and youth for a mass movement to stop the war in Ukraine.

On December 10, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality held an online rally to launch the global struggle against the conflict instigated by the US and NATO. Campaigners distributed copies of the IYSSE statement, “A call to youth throughout the world: Build a mass movement to stop the Ukraine war!”

The initiative won broad support among UM students, the vast majority of whom have never known a day when the US was not at war.

Lola, the daughter of Russian immigrants, said, “There are so many students from immigrant households here, we need to have this discussion on war.”

“When the war first erupted, we opposed it immediately,” she added. “We all agreed, ‘This is brother against brother.’ But now there are arguments at my house every day. We have to be careful about protesting because our family members who live in Russia could be threatened.”

A colleague who has family members living in both Russia and Ukraine added, “From my experience among the people of both countries, neither wants a war. At the end of the day, they want to find a peaceful resolution, which the United States is *not* attempting to find right now.” The vast Russian land mass contains reservoirs of many strategic minerals and resources of energy. He said, “The reason this is going on is about money and how they can spin a narrative to maximize a profit.”

Harrison from Ludington, Michigan agreed. “I oppose war in general as an exploitation of the working class.” He referred to political leaders in both parties who have made their political careers endorsing, funding and supporting one war after another. “But they are not the ones dying,” he said. “The workers are the ones who are getting killed. And we have millions of others who are dying from COVID, and it’s not getting much press coverage.

“It’s frustrating for my generation of the working class to not have access to basic things like education and being able to afford a place to live,” he continued. “Everything is so expensive, and there is a housing shortage here. I have two jobs and student loans as well.” He explained the reality that exposes the university’s claims of assisting disadvantaged students. “I come from a working class family, and it is still not affordable.”

Campaigners discussed the geopolitical, historical and class background of the conflict, cutting through the US-NATO propaganda that the war is being waged on a humanitarian basis.

A number of international students from China stopped at the table to discuss different aspects of global crisis and burgeoning threat of world war.

Claire declared that she would definitely attend the upcoming meeting. She said that the ostensible purpose for the formation of the European Union in the aftermath of World War II was to prevent the return of world war, but that was being repudiated. “I wrote my final exam on the ‘zeitenwend,’ the turning point in European politics. The whole point of European integration following the Second World War was to prevent war in the future. the Russian invasion of

Ukraine has changed all that. I am very interested to attend your meeting.”

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Viveka is a pre-medical student from Detroit who has worked in the Emergency Room department of Sinai Grace Hospital in Downtown Detroit. “The war is horrible. Innocent people are dying on both sides of the conflict. It has affected the world food supply, and millions more will suffer because of it.”

Krista said, “The war was popular for about five minutes. Then the reality set in. I will attend this meeting because I need to learn more about the causes of the war. I’m smiling because we are building a world movement to stop the war.”

Harry studies human rights throughout the world. “This war is horrible for human rights for mankind everywhere. This is threatening the outbreak of world war. The great powers are playing checkers with the lives of real people. I do not agree with that. This is impacting normal people in both Russia and Ukraine, who have no impact on geopolitics. That is really sad.

“The expansion of the US is really alarming. Especially the way in which it dominates the world culturally. There are movies that are funded heavily by US interests. It is alarming to me that the State Department has a huge wing that is dedicated to ensuring that *Top Gun* is militarily accurate and promoted globally. That is really alarming to me that the media is so directly connected to the state.

“If you are a journalist and you go out and criticize in the state, you are silently removed from that political, journalist workforce. It is especially concerning in my experience that power has been incredibly consolidated within the United States. And it is very scary right now that power has been consolidated in the hands of a very small group of people.”



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