

# US students and workers rally to support immigrants: “Hitler started with mass deportations”

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Across the US, protests by students, educators and workers are mounting against Trump’s scapegoating of immigrants, mass deportations, arbitrary arrests, brutal assaults on migrants and violations of longstanding democratic rights.

On Tuesday, January 28, hundreds protested outside an Oklahoma State Board of Education meeting. The board, in alliance with Trump acolyte Oklahoma State Schools Superintendent Ryan Walters, unanimously endorsed a new rule demanding proof of citizenship or immigration status from families in public schools.

The measure is a blatant violation of the Fourteenth Amendment and the 1982 US Supreme Court decision in *Plyler v. Doe*, which requires states to permit children of undocumented immigrants to attend public schools on the same basis as the children of citizens.

Walters further fueled anger by publicly welcoming Trump’s Executive Order of January 21, saying he would help the administration in “any way they see fit” to carry out immigration enforcement, including ICE raids in schools. “In Oklahoma,” he said, “we’re going to work with law enforcement. We are going to work with the Trump administration.”

Students from U.S. Grant and Capitol Hill high schools organized the rally and an earlier school walkout on January 17.

The students, joined by parents, educators and community members, chanted, “From Palestine to Mexico, all the walls have got to go,” and “Immigrant children are children.” They carried homemade signs, including, “Families don’t have borders,” and “Mi papa trabaja mas duro que tu president” (My dad works harder than your president). Other signs included pointed statements like “Hitler started with mass deportations” and “Being Mexican does not make me a criminal.”

Fernando Baquera, an educator, reported that many students say they may not come back to school for a month or so. “These are my kids. I’ve spent time with them, I’ve educated them. I’ve watched them grow. I watched them learn English. That affects me in a negative way that I couldn’t stand still. I couldn’t be quiet. That’s why I’m here.”

High school student Thomas Suarez expressed his outrage over Walters and other state school officials during the public comment portion of the Board of Education meeting. “The idea that a child wanting to pursue an education must be profiled before learning is distasteful,” Suarez said. “It is sad that you, Mr. Walters, stand here pretending to care about the students while at the same time advocate for the blatant discrimination of Latino students like me.”

Lawton High School English teacher Angela Baumann also opposed the demand for information on immigration status from teachers. “I can tell you that their citizenship makes no difference to their needs,” Baumann said. “They need to be loved and cared for by people that are in a safe environment with them ... and they don’t need to feel ostracized by a community because they may not be from here.”

These sentiments speak to the deep-seated democratic feelings of millions of workers and young people. However, neither the Democratic Party nor the trade union apparatus has any interest in mobilizing against Trump and the billionaire oligarchy that dominates both US political parties. Far from it, Democratic Party politicians, from California Governor Gavin Newsom to New York City Mayor Eric Adams, are rapidly accommodating Trump’s fascistic attacks on immigrants in the hopes of maintaining their positions.

The unions have worked to block mass resistance to Trump. In this vein, American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten wrote a sniveling letter to Trump, saying, “We agree that our immigration system is broken and badly in need of reform...” and “respectfully” ask to reinstate sanctuary protections.

The trade union bureaucracy cannot and will not offer an oppositional, much less a fighting, program as it is organically opposed to the class interests of workers and young people. This highly-paid apparatus rightly fears the consolidation of working class anger against anti-immigrant attacks, austerity and war into a politically conscious and anti-capitalist movement.

Therefore, it is no surprise that these demonstrations are youthful, include a growing number of educators, and occur independently of the teachers’ unions. It should be recalled that the teachers’ strikes of 2018-19 during the first Trump administration, including a powerful 10-day strike in Oklahoma, were also conducted independently and in opposition to the American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association.

## Laredo, Texas

On Monday, January 27, young people organized a protest via Facebook in the border town of Laredo, Texas, directly across the Rio Grande River from Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. *The Laredo Morning Times* (LMT) reported that a more significant protest is set to take place this weekend.

Judith Dominguez told the LMT, “Children have nothing to do with these political issues. The idea of raiding schools is especially troubling. Above all, don’t target children or hardworking immigrants.”

Her friend J. Ramirez carried a sign, “Keep ICE out of schools!” and said she lived without documentation earlier in her life. Now residing legally, she said, “I know the struggle. ... I know what it feels like going to the park and always having to watch your back, making sure nobody knows about it. I have family members who wanted to be here today, but they can’t because they’re scared. I do it for them. I do it for everyone.”

Noting the cold weather, Ramirez said, “Honestly, it could be snowing, and I’d still be here because we do this for those who can’t. I’m going to sleep tonight knowing that I did something about it and didn’t just stay home. This is worth it.”

## **Dallas, Texas**

About 1,000 protesters gathered near Dallas’s Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge on Sunday, January 26. Speaking to the *Dallas Observer*, Jaqueline Castillo said, “I am here for everyone who can’t be, including my parents who mean the world to me,” Castillo told the *Observer*. “Here together, it gives me strength.”

Emma attended the rally to oppose the Trump Executive Order rescinding “sanctuary” protections in schools and churches. She said she opposed Trump’s entire plan but was totally outraged by the attacks on children. “They are children, how could they possibly have done anything to warrant that disruption to their education? I think it’s quite frankly fascist to have cops go into schools,” Emma said. “We already have so much fear in our schools because of unregulated gun violence, and to now have to worry that the government is going to come in and take you away is heinous.”

Corinna Ramirez emphasized that it is not just Latin Americans who are targeted. “It starts here, but it feels like it could snowball,” Ramirez told the *Observer*. “Yes, right now we’re very focused on the Hispanic community, but it’s not just us. It’s not just Hispanic brown people, it’s going to impact other brown people, and other marginalized groups. So if we can try to impede it as much as possible now, it would be a great start.”

## **East San Jose, California**

On January 28, upwards of 500 people protested and blocked the intersection at Story and King in East San Jose, California, several hundred of whom were students from Overfelt High School.

Among the signs were “No Human is Illegal on Stolen Land,” “I.C.E! Hands Off Our Kids!” and “School is for Education, not Deportation.” The Santa Clara Rapid Response Teams confirmed to news media that two raids had been conducted in the area.

“As the daughter of immigrants, it made me feel very overwhelmed and upset,” said Liza Morfin to KRON 4 during the protest. “They are targeting all these spots where they know there’s a lot of Hispanics around.” The protest reportedly started with a few dozen people, and then hundreds walked out of Overfelt.

“If we built this country, we deserve to be here, right?” said protester Rafael Recendez to KRON 4. “So, we need to protect our farmworkers. We need to get ICE out of here; they are not solving any problems.”

Overfelt High School principal Vito Chiala explained his support for the protests, telling KRON 4, “I can’t be prouder than I am of these students right now. My belief is that education is to empower young people so that they can make the world a better place than the one that we created for them. And that’s what these students are doing right now. There’s fear over the immigration statements and the outright hate coming from the White House.”

## **Phoenix, Arizona**

In Phoenix, Arizona, on Sunday, January 26, dozens of youth and workers protested at a busy intersection. They were confronted by police in riot gear.

Speaking anonymously to FOX 10, one protester who held a sign, “Don’t bite the hands that feed you,” said, “I grew up here, we went to school. My sister graduated. I’m so glad to be here, so I don’t want my parents to leave.”

Incredulous that hard-working people were being rounded up, she said, “The people who are not doing anything and are just hard-working, why are they doing this to us?”

Another said, “There are people who can’t speak. There are people like me that can. Our parents came here to give us a future, a future they couldn’t have.”

## **Other protests**

Hundreds of protesters rallied on the steps of the Iowa capitol on Saturday to oppose the ICE raids and on Sunday in the southside of Omaha, Nebraska. Luz Helena Farias, a registered nurse, told a protest in Lexington, Kentucky, “Our undocumented population is not made up of gang members, rapists or criminals that come here to break the law. It’s hard-working people that have built our cities, our states and our nation.”

Other demonstrations took place in Chicago, St. Louis, Missouri, and no doubt other places as yet unreported in the media.

As the Socialist Equality Party’s statement on January 28 said:

The weeks and months ahead will produce immense outrage against the crimes of the Trump administration, but what is required first and foremost is a political program.

The SEP is calling for the development of rank-and-file committees in neighborhoods, schools and workplaces to “prepare, educate and organize workers and their families” to fight the coming assault. These committees will serve as hubs “for the dissemination of information and as the platform for mobilizing the population against Trump’s dictatorial efforts to break apart families and eviscerate democratic rights.”

The committees will:

[B]ring together teachers, students, parents, workers and concerned neighbors of all backgrounds to plan lawful public responses to attacks on members of the community under the principle: “An injury to one is an injury to all.” Wherever they function, committees will strive to break down all efforts by the two big business parties and the trade union bureaucracies to divide workers along immigration status or national background. They will expose the xenophobic lies of the corporate media by waging a campaign of mass political education aimed at rendering the population “wide awake” to the threat against democracy.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) will provide advice and support to such committees and will be actively involved in fighting to build committees and link them across school, workplace and national boundaries in a powerful network of correspondence and

collaboration. The IWA-RFC will strive to introduce into the struggles ahead a political program aimed at connecting the defense of immigrants to the fight to defend the basic democratic rights of all.

History has proven that only a program based on the class struggle is capable of uniting workers of all backgrounds and vanquishing political backwardness and state repression. On this basis, the IWA-RFC will fight to transform the defense of immigrant workers into a counteroffensive by the international working class against capitalism, which is the source of social inequality, poverty and fascism.



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