

The mass protests against dictatorship in the US and the way forward in the fight against Trump's coup

Patrick Martin
16 June 2025

June 14, 2025, is a nodal point in the development of the political crisis in the United States, the greatest since the Civil War of 1861-1865. While millions protested against the right-wing policies and dictatorial methods of the Trump administration in more than 2,000 locations and in every one of the 50 states, the US president brought tanks and thousands of troops to the US capital in a show of force directed against this outpouring of popular opposition.

The size and scale of the protests against Trump rank them among the largest, if not the largest, single-day protests in American history. Estimates of total participation range from 5 to 11 million. The higher figure would represent approximately 4 percent of the entire adult population of the United States.

The size of the protests is all the more significant in that they were not endorsed or promoted by any of the official institutions of American politics and were largely ignored or boycotted by the trade union apparatus.

Hundreds of thousands marched in New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, and other major metropolitan areas. Boston saw as many as 1 million participants, as the massive “No Kings” march—in the city that gave birth to the American Revolution against King George III—merged with a large gay pride celebration. Significant protests also took place in smaller towns and cities, including many that voted heavily for Trump but now saw thousands taking to the streets against him.

The “No Kings” theme of the demonstrations resonated widely with participants, many of whom carried handmade placards referencing the American Revolution and denouncing Trump's drive to establish a quasi-monarchical dictatorship, with himself on the throne.

There was a widespread mood of hostility to both corporate parties—Trump and the Republicans were hated for their vicious attacks on immigrants and democratic rights, while the Democrats were despised for their refusal to mount any serious opposition and for their enthusiastic support for Israel's genocide in Gaza.

The size of the demonstrations was a cause for extreme nervousness within the Democratic Party and political establishment. There is a virtual blackout in the media. While

publishing an initial article on the front page of its print edition, the *New York Times* removed any reference to the demonstrations from the front page of its website less than 24 hours after they occurred, setting the tone for the media as a whole.

Prominent Democrats were notably absent from the protests, including the so-called “left” wing of the party. Senator Bernie Sanders addressed a rally of just 500 people in Stowe, Vermont, evidently choosing a location that would have as low an attendance as possible. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, spent Saturday at a fundraiser for fellow DSA member Zohran Mamdani, who is running in the June 24 Democratic Party primary for New York City mayor.

In the face of the mass outpouring, Trump's military parade held the same day in Washington D.C. was a dismal flop. Despite the mobilization of 6,000 soldiers, hundreds of tanks, armored vehicles and helicopters, along with lavish funding from the arms industry and corporate giants, the event failed to intimidate the American people.

The small turnout, estimated at less than 20,000, and palpable lack of enthusiasm underscored Trump's isolation and the widespread revulsion he provokes among the vast majority of the population.

Trump addressed the crowd from the reviewing stand near the White House. This was only a few hundred yards from where Trump rallied his fascist thugs on January 6, 2021, before sending them to storm the Capitol. The crowd was so thin that the US president, aware of the poor “optics,” spoke for only eight minutes and then sat down.

The actual base of support for the fascist president was expressed Saturday in a series of violent attacks by far-right elements. In Minnesota, an anti-abortion fanatic assassinated a state legislator and her husband, while also shooting another lawmaker and his wife. In Culpeper, Virginia, a driver rammed his car into a group of protesters—evoking the 2017 neo-Nazi attack in Charlottesville.

In Los Angeles, where ICE raids had sparked mass outrage, the “No Kings” demonstrations were cordoned off from

National Guard and Marine units deployed by Trump. But by late afternoon, police under the authority of Democratic Mayor Karen Bass attacked demonstrators outside the Federal Building with stun grenades, rubber bullets and tear gas, injuring at least six and arresting dozens.

The immediate response from Trump to the demonstrations was to post a fascist rant on Truth Social, ordering ICE to carry out “the largest Mass Deportation Operation of Illegal Aliens in History.” He demanded that ICE and federal agencies focus on “crime ridden and deadly Inner Cities,” concluding with an open call to “GET THE JOB DONE!” This statement is a declaration of war on immigrants and the working class and a direct appeal to the repressive apparatus of the state to enforce Trump’s drive toward dictatorship.

Millions of people made important political experiences on June 14. The demonstrations were an objective answer to the claims, peddled by the Democratic Party, the corporate media and the unions, that Trump is all-powerful, widely popular and impossible to resist, let alone defeat. While the media has quickly dropped any reporting or analysis of the rallies, working people and young people, and all those genuinely committed to the defense of democratic rights, should reflect on the lessons of this day.

The demonstrations shocked not only the Trump administration but its nominal opposition in the Democratic Party, which like the Republican Party is a faction of the ruling oligarchy. The Democrats and their political apologists in the pseudo-left, like the DSA, spread pessimism and discouragement because they are far more afraid of the eruption of a mass movement of the working class than of Trump’s fascist attacks.

The millions who marched were not embracing the slogans of identity politics and the use of race, gender and sexual orientation to split the working class. They were advancing broad demands for the defense of democratic rights, including the defense of immigrants, who are among the most oppressed sections of the working class.

The Trump coup d’etat is not a one-day event but the culmination of the protracted decay of American democracy. It is half a century since President Richard Nixon was forced out of office when his conspiracy against democratic rights and the constitutional checks on executive power came to light in the Watergate scandal. Even then, Nixon resigned only under threat of impeachment.

Nixon’s ouster came at a turning point in the development of American imperialism. The United States was losing its dominant position in the world economy, signaled by the collapse of dollar-gold convertibility in August 1971, and suffered its worst-ever military debacle in the humiliating fall of the puppet regime in South Vietnam.

Fifty years later, the decline of American capitalism and the erosion of its world position are irreversible. The US ruling elite sees no way out except imperialist war, directed against

Russia, Iran, China or even the former US allies in Europe and Asia. As Trump demonstrated in launching his tariff war, every country in the world is a target for American aggression.

Such policies cannot be carried out democratically. The vast majority of the American people oppose war and will not sacrifice for it, no matter how many parades Trump puts on. And they will fight against the austerity measures backed by both capitalist parties and the ruling class as a whole, aimed at making the working class pay for the crisis of capitalism.

The scale of Trump’s conspiracy is far beyond what was attempted by Nixon a half-century ago, but no Democrat has demanded his removal from office. That demand arises inexorably out of the mass resistance to the fascist policies of this administration. The working class must take the lead of this mass movement, advancing the demand for a general strike to force out the Trump-Vance government and building an independent political movement to replace it, based on a socialist program.

The Socialist Equality Party held a meeting, titled, “Trump’s Coup and How to Stop It,” elaborating a perspective to oppose the drive to dictatorship. In summing up the lessons of the mass mobilization the day before, David North, national chairman of the SEP, declared:

What we are witnessing is the breakdown of a social order that is incompatible with the development of the productive forces on a global scale. We are in a revolutionary period. But social consciousness lags behind social being. We fight to align the social consciousness of the working class with the social reality they confront.

Taking note of the incessant attempts of the corporate media to gloss over the significance of Trump’s policies, North concluded, “Fascism is being normalized. Our task is to normalize the struggle for socialism.”



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact