

Walkouts spread as students protest ICE and Border Patrol raids in North Carolina and Oregon

Jane Wise
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More than 56,000 students walked out across North Carolina last week to oppose sweeping immigration raids, and the protests have continued into this week as youth demonstrate against the growing presence of ICE and Border Patrol in their communities.

The walkouts were sparked after CBP and ICE agents descended on the state's largest city last week, sweeping up nearly 400 people and driving as much as 20 percent of the student population into hiding while the raids continued.

Student protests have spread well beyond Charlotte, into Wake County and the wider Raleigh–Durham metro, a fast-growing region now numbered at about 1.6 million residents. In the city of Raleigh, North Carolina alone roughly 13.4 percent of the population, some 63,000 people, were born outside the US.

Wake County, northeast of Raleigh, saw a coordinated wave of student walkouts on November 21. At Rolesville High School, approximately 200 students walked out during lunch after a viral social media post called for solidarity with immigrant communities.

That same morning, about 175 students at Heritage High School in Wake Forest marched to Forestville Road carrying signs that read “Break ICE Not Families” and “Push ICE.” Some parents joined their children in the protest and denounced the climate of fear created by federal agents operating openly in their neighborhoods.

Later that day, Wakefield High School in Raleigh saw hundreds of students rally at the school entrance, denouncing Border Patrol operations and speaking openly about the devastating impact of the raids on working-class families. Students explained that many parents had already lost a week of income because they

were too afraid to leave home.

“We have people whose parents are missing out on a whole week of working in this economy,” Christopher Rivero Pantoja, a senior and Vice President of the Latino Student Union, told ABC 11. He added, “Most of our people here are first generation Americans. Our parents immigrated, however they did...I don't like to use the term ‘illegal aliens.’ We are all humans. We all should be. Even if we're here illegally, we are here for a reason. Most of us are contributing towards our economy in our society.”

On November 22, in Durham County, high school students protested across the city, conducting a walkout after lunch. Hundreds of students marched and converged in downtown Durham at CCB Plaza, where they climbed onto the iconic bull sculpture and chanted against the raids. By evening, the demonstration had expanded into a larger community gathering, with hundreds of workers and residents joining students for speeches and traditional performances.

The ongoing raids in North Carolina have turned neighborhoods into ghost towns. For more than a week residents of Charlotte, Raleigh and Durham went into hiding as armed federal agents prowled streets, parking lots and shopping centers.

The terror unleashed in the last year as part of Trump's mass deportation operation has fallen heavily on children. In Charlotte, many immigrant families kept their US-born children at home to prevent the family from being split up. Children who did go to school often arrived with passports to prove their citizenship, while others wear tags that read “I am a US citizen.” In order to warn other children and parents, some kindergartners have begun carrying whistles to blow if

they see immigration agents.

On the Monday after the raids began, more than 20 percent of students in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg district stayed home. Over 25,600 children were kept home on Tuesday, and the number rose to 27,200 by Wednesday.

In Wake County, nearly 19,000 children stayed home on November 19, almost eight thousand more than on a typical day. Teachers reported half-empty classrooms, with immigrant students absent for days because their families were too afraid to leave home.

At Heritage High School, more than 200 students were kept home, and at Rolesville High School, over 440 children were missing. In Durham, the school system collapsed to pandemic-era attendance levels, with Superintendent Anthony Lewis reporting that 29 percent of students were kept home by Thursday.

The growing student resistance is not confined to North Carolina. On November 24, about 300 students at McMinnville High School in Oregon walked out after Christian Jimenez, a 17-year-old US citizen, was kidnapped by ICE during his lunch break. Video of the incident shows Jimenez telling agents repeatedly, “I am a US citizen, I am a US citizen.”

ICE thugs, after smashing the drivers’ side window replied, “I don’t care.”

The incident drew widespread outrage, forcing McMinnville School District Interim Superintendent Kourtney Ferrua to release a statement confirming that the student walkout was “in response to the ICE activity in our community last week,” referring to four US citizens who had been detained in Oregon by ICE that same week.

The student protest and walkouts represent an important and politically advanced response. Young people, many of them immigrants or the children of immigrants, have shown that they will not be intimidated by state violence. Their walkouts point to the emergence of a new social force prepared to defend democratic rights.

But walkouts by students, no matter how numerous, cannot alone stop these raids. The defense of our immigrant brothers and sisters requires the conscious intervention of the working class, the producers of all of societies wealth. Rank-and-file committees must be built in every workplace, school and neighborhood to organize collective resistance and actions. These

committees must demand the release of all detainees, the immediate end to all deportation operations, and the abolition of CBP and ICE.



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