

Royal Oak High School students in Detroit suburb walk out to defend immigrants

Shannon Jones, Noah Prince, Valery Tsekov
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Students at Royal Oak High School in suburban Detroit staged a protest against ICE raids Monday morning, as school walkouts continue across Michigan and nationwide against the anti-immigrant campaign being carried out by the Trump administration.

Students have shown significant determination in the face of threats of discipline from school officials and even the possibility of direct physical violence from right-wing elements.

More than 50 Royal Oak High School students assembled during morning break and marched to a local park. They wore pins and held signs reading, “No one is illegal on stolen land,” and “We are not animals, we are not aliens, we are all humans.” Chanting “Abolish ICE,” students expressed outrage over ongoing enforcement actions across the country, including the killings of anti-ICE activists Alex Pretti and Renée Good in Minneapolis. Several students said they come from immigrant families and fear for the safety of relatives.

ICE operations have targeted workers and students in the greater Detroit area. Last week, agents detained a man at the Amazon fulfillment center in Hazel Park, adjacent to Royal Oak.

In December, 17-year-old Santiago Jesus Zamora Perez, an 11th grader at Western International High School in Detroit, and his mother were detained after police in the suburbs stopped him for allegedly driving too slowly and alerted ICE. Just weeks earlier, ICE detained two 16-year-old students from Western during a pre-dawn raid. The youths and an adult family member were seized and taken to the notorious ICE South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas.

One Royal Oak High School student, who identified herself as a sophomore, told *World Socialist Web Site*

reporters that she was protesting because ICE is “hurting and killing people in broad daylight. And that’s just wrong, no matter how some people try to spin it.” She and several other students expressed concern about possible retaliation from school officials.

Scarlett, a student spokesperson, told the WSWs that students wanted to show support for immigrants. “These people are feeling real pain and are unable to get what they need or want because they’ve been sent back to places they never came from.

“As a country built on freedom, we need to stop taking away people’s freedom just because they look different.

“My aunt lives in Minneapolis with my cousins, and she told me she saw one of her neighbors taken by ICE. It is absolutely frightening to me. I feel like nothing else in this country is as terrifying right now. I think everyone needs to step back and realize that what’s going on is wrong, and we need to stop it.”

Asked about the concentration of wealth among a small number of billionaires in the United States, she added, “What they’re doing is starving children; they’re making everything worse for ordinary people and pretty much ruining the economy.”

Referencing the Trump administration’s actions toward Venezuela, including efforts to seize its oil, Scarlett pointed to what she described as a double standard. While the administration criticizes immigrants for allegedly draining resources, its position, she said, amounts to: “Let’s take all of theirs. I feel like that’s so hypocritical and just evil.”

Another sophomore said his family immigrated from Latin America. He noted, “Trump doesn’t want us in this country, but technically we were here first, before they took over.” Speaking about Minneapolis, he added, “It should never have happened. If Trump

hadn't taken over the city, those people wouldn't have died," referring to Good and Pretti.

Last fall, students at Royal Oak High School, with the support of many teachers, protested the establishment of a chapter of Turning Point USA, founded by Charlie Kirk, at the school.

A WSWs reporter contacted the office of Royal Oak Schools Superintendent Dr. John Tafelski regarding possible disciplinary measures related to the protest. As of this writing, there has been no response.

The protest in Royal Oak is one of many that have taken place in Michigan in recent days, including walkouts at schools in Ann Arbor, Plymouth-Canton, Berkley and Pontiac.

On Friday, students at L'Anse Creuse High School in Macomb County were joined by community members in staging an off-campus protest against ICE raids.

L'Anse Creuse and Dakota school officials said last week that planned walkouts were "disruptive to the learning environment." Superintendent Keith Howell warned in a statement last Thursday, "Any student who leaves class or campus without permission will be addressed under the Student Code of Conduct and attendance policies."

In a separate statement posted on Facebook, two school board members said they opposed the protests and expressed support for federal law enforcement efforts to "remove illegal violent criminal aliens that reside in our communities."

In addition to Minneapolis, high school protests have taken place across the United States in cities large and small, including walkouts in Portland, Oregon; Baltimore; Atlanta; Lincoln, Nebraska; Dallas and Houston; the greater Miami area; and many other locations. In the Salt Lake City area, hundreds of students from at least 15 high schools participated in protests last week, with some converging on the state capital.

In Buda, Texas, south of Austin, a man assaulted a female high school student participating in an anti-ICE protest. A Johnson High School student who took part in the walkout told CBS Austin that an argument began with a man in a truck who "got mad." He exited his vehicle and "came straight toward a girl and started to attack her. He got on top of the girl and started hitting her." Other students were able to intervene and stop the attack.

At South Side High School in Fort Wayne, Indiana, dozens of students held a walkout Friday to oppose ICE actions. Ruby Steele, a Fort Wayne student, told local media, "A lot of people are scared and worried about themselves and their families. I feel as students it is important to make our school and our community a safer place for everyone."

The Socialist Equality Party and its youth organization, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), urge students to turn to the working class, the only social force that has the power to defeat the Trump administration, its Democratic Party enablers and the oligarchy that controls both political parties.

The defense of immigrants is a key part of the broader struggle to protect social rights, including access to education, healthcare, jobs and decent living standards. In this fight, all working people—regardless of race, ethnicity or immigration status—must stand together.

Young people interested in becoming involved or learning more about the IYSSE are encouraged to complete the form below.



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