

Student protests against ICE re-emerge as the war on immigrants escalates

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The opening weeks of the 2026–2027 school year have brought a renewed eruption of student protests against the immigration Gestapo, as the mass deportation operation extends its reach directly into the nation’s schools and campuses. Statewide walkouts in Colorado, a campus confrontation in San Diego, and a federal court fight in Miami mark the resumption of a movement that first exploded last winter in response to the murder of working class people by ICE and Border Patrol agents.

On September 4, students from more than 200 schools across Colorado staged a coordinated statewide walkout, with hundreds converging on La Alma-Lincoln Park in Denver. The immediate triggers were the federal rescission of the “sensitive locations” doctrine that had nominally restricted arrests at schools, and the spread of automated Flock license-plate surveillance, which demonstrators correctly identified as a tool for locating undocumented students and their families.

The Denver rally escalated when counterprotesters carrying pro-ICE signs confronted the crowd; demonstrators tore down the signs, and one counterprotester was struck with a metal container. Police declared an unlawful assembly and dispersed the crowd. Denver police reported five assaults, with three people transported to hospitals. US Representative Jeff Crank (Republican) has since demanded a Department of Justice investigation into the student organizing networks—revealing the real function of such “investigations” as instruments for criminalizing youth opposition.

In San Diego, more than 150 students, faculty and community members rallied at San Diego City College on September 9, after ICE agents boxed in a car at the campus perimeter and arrested Renatho Kemsley

Casseus, a Haitian man identified by college officials as an enrolled student, although the Department of Homeland Security disputes his enrollment. A second student fled on foot into campus corridors, pursued by an agent until the property line. The protest, organized by the campus chapters of MEChA and Students for Justice in Palestine, challenged the district’s claim that its “non-cooperation” policy offered any real protection.

In Miami, seven undergraduates at Florida International University secured a preliminary federal injunction on August 23 blocking the university from punishing them for a silent protest against its adoption of an ICE Section 287(g) agreement, which empowers campus police officers to perform federal immigration-enforcement functions. The students had been ordered to submit video-recorded “compliance confessions” affirming that they would comply with university policies, under threat of diploma holds.

The protests express the genuine and deepening anger of youth at the terror inflicted on immigrant workers and their families. But the political questions confronting the movement are posed with new urgency: whether this opposition will be organized as an independent struggle of the working class, or channeled once again into the dead ends of the Democratic Party, the identity-politics pseudo-left, and the courts.

The demonstrations follow directly on the mass walkouts of January and February 2026, when the killings of Renée Nicole Good, a Minneapolis mother of three, and Alex Pretti, a nurse and union member shot by Border Patrol agents, brought 100,000 people into the streets and set off walkouts across the country. On February 6 alone, nearly 12,500 students walked out of more than 85 Los Angeles schools.

What the press presents as a conflict over

“immigration policy” is in fact the spearhead of a police state directed against the working class as a whole. Fifty-two immigrants died in ICE custody in the first 500 days of the second Trump administration. Since the murders of Good and Pretti in Minneapolis, immigration agents have killed Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, a construction worker who had lived in the United States for nearly 35 years, in Houston, and left Joan Sebastián Durán Guerrero to bleed to death in front of his family in Maine. A force that can murder a worker on his way to his job and face no consequences can and will be turned against strikers and demonstrators.

The targeting of schools is not an excess of enforcement but its logical extension. ICE arrested parents and students at schools across Southern California at the beginning of the previous school year, terrorizing entire communities. The “sensitive locations” protections now rescinded were always a fiction—arrests took place within steps of school grounds even when the doctrine nominally remained in force. The same applies to the “sanctuary” and district “non-cooperation” policies the current protests largely demand: The 287(g) program now encompasses 2,485 agreements across 39 states and two US territories, converting every encounter with a police officer into a potential kidnapping under a federally financed bounty system.

The decisive political fact is that the apparatus now wielded by Trump was constructed on a bipartisan basis. Section 287(g) was enacted in 1996 under Bill Clinton. Obama expelled more than three million immigrants. Biden maintained the concentration camps and deported more people in his final year than in any single year of Trump’s first term. After the Minneapolis killings, the Democrats did not oppose the raids—they supported *increasing* ICE funding—while Minnesota’s Democratic governor deployed troopers to shield agents from the population. Most decisive was the betrayal of the trade union bureaucracy, which refused to organize even a single work stoppage amid growing calls for a general strike.

The current protests are organized, in significant part, by organizations advancing this same political orientation. MEChA, Students for Justice in Palestine, the Brown Berets and the 50501 coalition are not instruments of working class struggle but vehicles of

identity politics, cultivated by the ruling class to divide workers along national, ethnic and religious lines and channel their opposition into the Democratic Party. The demands of the current protests reflect this orientation: written “non-cooperation policies,” enforcement of district procedures, a First Amendment lawsuit through the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). None of these demands touches the deportation machine itself.

The FIU injunction is a genuine and useful defense of democratic rights, and the students’ courage deserves every support. But it must be stated plainly: the demands of the working class will not be realized through the courts or the Democratic Party. No judge will abolish ICE or hold accountable the agents who murdered Renée Good and Alex Pretti.



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