

Hundreds attend IYSSE rallies to defend immigrant rights in New York and San Diego

By our reporters
3 February 2017

Students and workers at San Diego State University (SDSU) and New York University (NYU) rallied Thursday afternoon to defend the rights of immigrants and refugees and to voice their opposition to the Wall on the Mexico border, the deportation of tens of thousands of undocumented workers, and the massive expansion of the border security force and internment camps.

The demonstrations were called by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE). About 200 to 300 students attended the rally in San Diego, with about 40 participating in the rally in New York.

IYSSE leaders who spoke at the rallies provided an international socialist perspective, emphasizing that Trump's attack on immigrants is part of an attack on the entire working class supported by both Democrats and Republicans. Speakers reviewed the danger of war, the terrible social conditions facing workers and youth and the need to break with the Democratic Party and build an independent party of the working class.

In San Diego, where there are many students who are immigrants or the children of immigrants, participants loudly applauded the call for the unity of workers of all races, ethnicities and nationalities.

Kevin Martinez, a member of the IYSSE and SEP addressed the crowd. "As we speak, countless families are being torn apart by Donald Trump's vicious ban against immigrants from seven Muslim-majority countries. Our club has spoken to students whose livelihoods are threatened with deportation, and I'm sure many here today on campus can share similar stories of heartbreak and tragedy."

Martinez warned that Trump was making good on his campaign promise to build a wall between the US and Mexico and was deporting immigrants and banning

refugees, while preparing the country for war in the Middle East and confrontation with Russia and China, two nuclear-armed powers.

Martinez stressed the need to break with the two-party system and denounced the Democrats for approving Trump's cabinet of billionaires and ex-generals.

"Trump attacked immigrants as 'criminals, rapists, and drug dealers' but the real criminals...are to be found in the White House, Congress, the Pentagon, the CIA, the FBI, the NSA, the Department of Homeland Security, the Border Patrol, ICE, Wall Street, and every major police department in this country." This part received the largest applause and approval from the audience.

Emanuele Saccarelli, who teaches political science at SDSU, blamed the capitalist system and the whole political establishment for the rise of Trump. Saccarelli said that Obama, who started out as the candidate of "hope and change" and won the Nobel Peace Prize, continued all of George W. Bush's wars and started new ones in the very countries Trump has now sought to ban from receiving refugees.

Saccarelli pointed out that Obama oversaw the greatest transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich in US history. "Of every dollar made in the recession, the Obama 'recovery', 94 cents went to the top 1 percent of society." Saccarelli livened up the discussion by asking metaphorically, "How would aliens react if they landed on planet Earth, and we told them 8 people control more wealth than the bottom half of humanity?"

Following Saccarelli's contribution, SEP member Zac Corrigan stressed the need for young people to study the lessons of history and cited the experience of the Obama years. "Obama, with the help of Hillary

Clinton, completely discredited this party before the working class and paved the way for the hated Trump to take power. And then [Obama] had the audacity to tell us they were all on the same team all along!”

After the IYSSE speakers, many youth and students at the rally took the opportunity to speak.

Manny, an immigrant rights activist, drove from Los Angeles to attend the meeting. He spoke to the international situation facing immigrants including the recent *gasolinazo* protests over the hike in fuel prices in Mexico. He agreed strongly with the call to unite Mexican and American workers across the border and implored the audience to follow what is happening “only 20 minutes from this campus.”

Another student at SDSU and a refugee from Syria spoke about the precarious situation she finds herself in after Trump’s recent executive orders, which have jeopardized her ability to stay in the country and continue her education beyond this Spring term. She thanked the IYSSE for holding a rally in defense of immigrants and refugees. She said she feared that she would soon become a refugee herself.

Liana, who just recently joined the IYSSE at SDSU, spoke of the need to break with the Democrats and Republicans. “I come from a working-class family. I know people who voted for Trump and voted for Clinton. But ask yourself, is life any better than it was eight years ago? No! The Democrats and Republicans don’t represent us.”

Nicole, a student at SDSU, said after the meeting that she was particularly happy to hear about the IYSSE’s affiliation with the SEP, stating that the two-party system was a dead end. “You know, we have never had a poor president,” Nicole explained, adding, “What do they know about the interests of the poor?” Nicole told reporters that she believes the way forward is to build a political party that represents the interests of the working class.

Several dozen students remained after the rally to discuss politics, and many copies of Marxist and socialist literature were sold. Dozens more signed up to join the IYSSE email list and wanted to join the club on campus.