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Thousands protest immigrant concentration camps at vigils across the US

Two days before the largest immigration raid in US history, thousands of people in over 700 cities held vigils and protests yesterday to voice their anger at the mass imprisonment and brutal treatment of immigrants at concentration camps. The vigils were an international event, with at least one event taking place in every US state and across five continents.

The protests show that there is broad popular opposition to Trump's fascistic attacks on immigrants. They were organized after reports of standing room only cells, Customs and Border Protection officials denying children toothbrushes and diapers, and the drowning of a father and his young daughter at the US-Mexico border sparked international outrage.



Lights for Liberty protest in Washington DC

Recent reports have revealed that Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials not only knew of, but actively whipped up anti-immigrant sentiment among immigration officials. After a *ProPublica* **exposé** uncovered a secret Facebook group with Border Patrol agents making racist and sadistic jokes against immigrants, on Friday *The Intercept* revealed that the head of the US Border Patrol, Carla Provost, was a member of this group.

The same day as the report by *The Intercept*, Vice President Mike Pence traveled to migrant processing facilities in Texas. Pence claimed: “Every family that I spoke to told me that they are being well cared for. Our customs and border protection are doing their level best to provide compassionate care to these families.”

On Sunday, these “compassionate” agents will be processing thousands of people in the aftermath of ICE military-style arrests in major cities across the US, which will target any undocumented individuals living in the selected address for a “collateral arrest.”

The Democratic Party is complicit in the attack on immigrants. Just two weeks ago, Democrats voted to overwhelmingly for a bill that funds Trump’s concentration camps.

Campaign teams for the *World Socialist Web Site* attended the “Lights for Liberty” vigils across the country to provide attendees with an international socialist perspective. Several members of the Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality addressed the crowds.

Eric, a member of the SEP, addressed a rally in Detroit: “For 30 years, the Democratic Party has been responsible for passing every major piece of legislation making asylum more difficult,” he said. “I don’t think that the appeal should be to the elected representatives. I think that the appeal should be to the working class.

“The Socialist Equality Party demands open borders, the immediate liberation of all immigrants detained, the building of a mass movement of millions of workers in the cities, factories, and warehouses, on the basis of the fight for socialism.”

In Ann Arbor, Carlos, a member of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, told a crowd of 500 people: “The Democrats cry crocodile tears at Trump’s concentration camps, and then vote to fund them. They claim to support immigrants, then denounce foreign workers as the source of social misery. They pretend to care about the plight of refugees, while supporting the imperialist wars that created the refugee crisis...

“We declare that the right of workers to live and work in whatever country they choose is an unalienable social right. We reject a social order that allows capital to move freely

around the world, while workers, the producers of capital, are herded into cages like animals.”

Across the country, reporting teams for the *World Socialist Web Site* distributed the statement “**Trump’s raids and the stench of fascism**” to hundreds of participants across the United States.

In Washington, D.C., about 2,000 workers, professionals and young people rallied in Lafayette Square Park across from the White House.

Emma, a survivor of the Holocaust, said that like Trump, Hitler had appealed to the employment problems facing Germans and talked about “crime.”

“I’ve seen this before,” she said. “Whenever these people say words like ‘patriotism,’ what they really mean is ‘nationalism.’”



Lucile, Ernest and Paul in Boston

In Boston, the WSWS spoke with Lucille and Pau, who are originally from France. Asked if he thought there are similarities between what is happening in the US and in France, Pau said, “Yes, there is a kind of race for which is going further. What’s going on here in the camps is really scary—knocking on doors and kicking you out of the country.”

“It’s not really new in France,” Lucille said. “It’s been going on for a least a decade. They used to have administrative centers where they’d hold the people, exactly the same way as here, even under Sarkozy. Like with the Calais immigrant situation; these things date back

at least two decades.” Both referred to the situation in the Mediterranean, where hundreds of refugees are drowning.



Thor

Thor, a recent college graduate, spoke to the WSWS in Detroit, Michigan: “I came to the demonstration today because I feel that we need to take a stand and be a part of a bigger movement against what is being done to the immigrant population.

“The actions of the Trump administration are abhorrent, but the Democrats are responsible as well. I am not a supporter of the Democratic Party and don’t feel they are an alternative. They developed some of these camps and let them go on for years.

He added, “I agree with you that the issue is not one of reforming the so-called ‘liberals’ or pushing this rotten party to fight but of making a complete break. Here in Michigan, the police were protecting the Nazis during the gay pride parades and everything was caught on video.”

“It is analogous to what is happening with the Democratic Party. You can say that Democrats like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and some of the other ‘progressives’ are protecting the Trump administration while they carry out these vicious attacks. The two of them are working together.”

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