

May 1ST 2008 Tens of Thousands March, Walk Out, Strike

Defiant Marches for Immigrant Rights

At a time when the government is conducting a vicious anti-immigrant campaign of massive raids and roundups, tens of thousands of immigrants and supporters marched in cities around the U.S. on May Day. Last year alone, more than 275,000 immigrants were deported from the U.S. by ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). On the border with Mexico, new walls and other "security" measures are being set up, where already hundreds of immigrants die each year trying to make the crossing. Extremist vigilantes like the Minutemen are stepping up anti-immigrant activity.

The immigrants who took the streets this May 1 were going up against all that and more. Many of the marchers have seen family members and friends snatched away by armed immigration police. A 20-year-old Latina marching in Reno, who said her family is struggling after her father was deported, said, "They're separating families, and they don't realize how bad that is. We're all human beings. We should be treated equal."

In Los Angeles, 10,000 people marched to demand rights for all immigrants and an end to the ICE raids. Two marches converged downtown—one starting near the district where garment factories are concentrated, and the other starting from MacArthur Park, where on May Day last year the LAPD violently attacked the march for immigrant rights and brutalized many protesters. Latino immigrants—including a group of workers from a Van Nuys factory that was recently raided by ICE—marched alongside immigrants from South Korea, the Philippines, and elsewhere. Students at several L.A. area high schools walked out in support of the march—some of the students have family members who have been deported by ICE. A young Salvadoran at MacArthur Park said, "Last year the police beat people up for demanding to be treated like any human being should be treated—with dignity. I heard a lot of rumors that ICE might show up to the marches and I think people are scared and maybe that's why many people aren't here now. But we need to face what's happening and act to stop this. We are not in the wrong, the authorities are."

In the San Francisco Bay Area, more than 10,000 people protested in various actions. Over 2,000 marched from Dolores Park in San Francisco's Mission District to City Hall. Over 600 students at San Francisco State University walked out of their classes and blocked traffic to protest education cuts and then joined the immigration march. In San Jose about 5,000 rallied and marched to the Civic Center. In Oakland several thousand marched along International Boulevard for a rally downtown. In Santa Rosa in Marin County, north of San Francisco, an estimated 2,500 marched, including hundreds of students from Piner High School who walked out of school. There were also rallies in support of immigrant rights at UC Berkeley and UC Santa Cruz.

In Chicago, some 15,000 people (according to an Associated Press report), including immigrant workers from the surrounding suburbs and many high school students, marched and then rallied at the downtown Federal Plaza. May Day immigrant rights protests also took place in Milwaukee, St. Paul, Detroit, New York City, Washington (DC), Charlotte (North Carolina), Miami, Tucson, Albuquerque, Dallas, El Paso, Houston, Seattle, Salem (Oregon), Reno, Fresno, San Diego, and other cities.



Chicago

Photo: Li Onestof/Revolution



San Diego

Photo: brimc/Infocbay



Berkeley

May 7

Photo: Elaine



Los Angeles

Venice High School students

Photo: Marcus



Los Angeles

AP photo

Workers in the factory district that has been hit hard by ICE raids greet the marchers.

Dock Workers Shut Down Pacific Coast Ports on May Day in Protest of U.S. Wars



Port of Oakland

AP photo

On May 1, International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) shut down all 29 West Coast ports. More than 25,000 ILWU members refused to report for work, demanding an immediate end to the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Jack Heyman, a member of the ILWU executive board and an Oakland Port worker, told Democracy Now! that this was the first work stoppage where workers were "withholding their labor...and demanding an end to the war and immediate withdrawal of troops." The workers went up against the shipping companies and port owners who tried to have the strike declared illegal and an arbitrator who sided with the owners. Heyman said that to carry out the strike, the ILWU members also had to defy their own union officials.

Marches and rallies in solidarity with the ILWU were held up and down the Pacific Coast. One thousand people rallied and marched in Seattle. In San Francisco, where 1000 marched, speakers at the rally included actor and activist Danny Glover, Cindy Sheehan, and former Congressperson Cynthia McKinney.

In solidarity with the ILWU, the General Union of Port Workers in Iraq stopped work for one hour on May Day in the ports of Umm Qasr and Khor Al Zubair. In a statement to "Brothers and Sisters of ILWU," the group said, "The courageous decision you made to carry out a strike on May Day to protest against the war and occupation of Iraq advances our struggle against occupation to bring a better future for us and for the rest of the world as well." The statement from the Iraqi dock workers spoke to the meaning of the U.S. occupation of that country: "Five years of invasion, war, and occupation have brought nothing but death, destruction, misery, and suffering to our people."



Chicago

Photo: Li Onestof/Revolution

Boldly Spreading Revolution and Communism

Revolutionary communists were out among immigrant rights marchers, striking dock workers, and more broadly in society, widely distributing the May 1 issue of *Revolution* newspaper and the pamphlet *Revolution and Communism: A Foundation and Strategic Orientation*, which had just hit the streets that day. This was a great way to mark the revolutionary new beginning symbolized by May 1st! The pamphlet speaks powerfully to why communist revolution is not only necessary but possible—and how it could be made. A team that sold several dozen pamphlets at the support rally for the striking longshore workers in San Francisco reported: "There was a lot of debate and wrangling. Many wanted to see a revolution but had questions about whether communism was possible when the revolutions in the Soviet Union and China had been reversed. A Black worker said he was angry but thought that the system wasn't working the way it was supposed to. Off of this there was discussion about whether our goal should be to make the system work the way it is supposed to or to overthrow the system." Another correspondent, who went out to an immigrant rights march in the San Francisco Bay Area, wrote, "Some Chicano youth bought copies of the pamphlet. They said that they hate the way that society is always treating them like the enemy. They wanted revolution and to understand more what it is all about and what a strategic and scientific approach to revolution was all about. Two students from a Catholic university, one of whom had a red star on his cap, said that they had always been attracted to communism. One question they asked was how the new synthesis was different than what Stalin did in the Soviet Union." A comrade who took papers and pamphlets out to the march in Chicago wrote, "A retired immigrant worker told us what is needed is a revolution because the problem is U.S. capitalism, and spoke of the need to help people break with religion. 'We need a change for people all over the world,' he said."

Revolutionary May 1 in Berlin

According to a May 5 report from A World to Win News Service, "Many sharply contested battles occurred around the world on May Day this year. In Hamburg and Nuremberg, Germany, there were counter-demonstrations against neo-Nazi National Democratic Party rallies, which ended in cars being set ablaze and stones and bottles hurled as the police attacked with water cannons and pepper spray. Some 7,000 and 1,000 people took part, respectively." And in Berlin, several hundred people rallied and marched through the working class and immigrant neighborhood of Kreuzberg to celebrate revolutionary May 1. In the days leading up to the march, there was "a political campaign to promote revolutionary consciousness among secondary school and university students and the lower strata of society living in the immigrant and working class neighborhoods. Around 30,000 leaflets of the call for the May 1 demonstration were distributed among these sections of the people." At the May 1 rally, "The multinational participants chanted slogans for the overthrow of the worldwide imperialist system through



Berlin

Photo: Getty Images

revolution. They declared their international solidarity with the people of Palestine, and condemned in particular the U.S., UK, Germany and France for their imperialist collaboration and aggression. They also clearly stated that there is "No Liberation without Revolution."

Berkeley/Oakland Students Protest ICE Threats



Oakland

May 8

Photo: special to Revolution

Four days after many students in Berkeley and Oakland walked out of school for the May 1 immigrant rights marches and one day after Cinco de Mayo celebrations, ICE agents spread fear and panic at Berkeley High School and Stonehurst Elementary in East Oakland. On May 6, ICE vans were seen driving around these schools. At Berkeley High, teachers hid students, parents frantically rushed to the school to pick up their kids, and many tears were shed. The Berkeley and Oakland school districts sent out directives to not let ICE agents cross onto school grounds. Berkeley High reportedly arranged for rides home for some students. Although ICE agents did not enter school grounds, they arrested a family of four close to Berkeley High and a woman in East Oakland near the elementary school.

On May 7, 50 Berkeley High students protested the ICE threats. The next day, 100 students from Oakland High took to the streets in protest against ICE. Black and Latino students joined together in these protests. A statement against the ICE raids by an Oakland High student said in part, "I believe this is all similar to World War 2, in the way that these immigrants are in the same situation as the Jews where they sit in fear, just waiting out every day until the Nazis come for them."