

United States: Huge Women's March Against Trump Attacks

Wednesday 25 January 2017 (Date first published: 25 January 2017).

The first thing to note about the massive women's march on the day after the inaugural of Trump was that while it centered on fighting against his agenda to roll back women's rights and dignity, it also expressly included fightback against his anti-Black, anti-Muslim, anti-Native American, anti-Arab, anti-immigrant, anti-Latino, anti-climate change, anti-LGBT, anti-health care etc. policies he championed throughout his election campaign. [\[1\]](#)

The second thing to note was its size. While initially projected as a March on Washington, solidarity demonstrations were held in 600-700 cities and towns across the country. In Washington the police estimated over 500,000 took part. From a list compiled by experts that included only a fraction of those places, and which had estimated figures (low and high), and looking at only places that had 1,000 demonstrators or more using the low estimates, I counted over four million and one hundred thousand participants.

This demonstration was the largest in U.S. history.

The majority of marchers were women, with a significant minority of male supporters. Many interviewed by news media indicated that this was their first protest, ever.

Marchers were angry and determined to oppose Trump's agenda on many different issues. Some utilized satire. Many women came with homemade knitted hats that featured cats' ears. Household cats are called "pussycats", and this was a reference to Trump's infamous remarks that his exalted status entitled him to grab any women by the genitals. Posters and speakers alluded to the same reference. Some speakers identified themselves as "nasty women," a reference to Trump's misogynistic attack on Hillary Clinton as a "nasty woman."

Speakers hammered away on particular issues, from healthcare to trans rights. All noted the huge size of the demonstrations and how they and everyone present felt greatly empowered by seeing so many others who felt as they do. Different speakers addressed through their own personal experience the issues raised in the "Defining Vision."

Another major theme was that the energy of the action should continue in the days ahead, through local organizing, discussion and reaching out to new people.

The march was projected by a few women on social media the day after the election, and kept snowballing. Young women of color were in the lead. This recalls the leadership role of young women in the Black Lives Matter demonstrations. The leadership was broadened out to include women leaders of all races and from many organizations, who issued the Guiding Vision for the march.

The *New York Times* earlier interviewed some white women who pulled out of the march because the "Vision" included "race." Nevertheless, large numbers of white women joined.

White women predominated in the Washington march and the other cities, although women of all

races participated. While this fact demonstrates the need to reach out better to women of color, there is another important side.

These white women marched together with Black, Brown and Yellow women. They cheered the many women of color on the stage. They cheered the Muslim women in hijabs who spoke and chaired, the Black trans woman who spoke, as well as the speakers from the other categories of women the "Vision" listed. These white women came out and demonstrated against Trump, whatever they thought about all the demands.

There is no question that all of these white women, including those for whom this was their first protest, were exposed to a great educational experience, and they learned a lot from whom they were marching with, and from the explanations from the stage. The same is true of many of the Black and other colored women present.

All the women on the demonstrations also learned that the best way to fight for whatever particular issues they were most concerned about is to unite with all women under attack by the Trump authoritarian administration. Trump was the great unifier of this historic action.

The "Guiding Vision and Defining Principles" moved well beyond narrow "identity" politics to an understanding that all forms of oppression in this society are related. To fight one aspect means to fight on all these fronts. This statement compliments the platform issued by Black Lives Matter some months ago.

Marxists have an important role to play in this discussion. We can explain how all these forms of oppression have their roots in the history and functioning of U.S. capitalism, and their relation to the fundamental division in capitalist society between the ruling capitalist class and the exploited working class. Our vision of a working class revolution to overturn capitalism is not a narrow one of simply ending the exploitation of the working class, but ending all forms of oppression, injustice, humiliation, violence and war - to be a champion of all and every fight against all the wrongs of this capitalist society.

Given the very low level of working class struggle in the U.S. at present, this can appear as very abstract. But it charts a road forward, as we participate as the best fighters we can be in the immediate struggles ahead.

This leads to a final point, unfortunately a negative one. While some unions, especially teachers, endorsed the Women's March, the majority of unions did not, and that includes the AFL-CIO, the major union federation.

Marxists have a role to play in our unions, too, to fight against this self-defeating trend and bring into all these struggles the power of organized workers - a big job. But a necessary one. If the present unions do not reach out to support all the oppressed, they will continue to shrivel and be less and less a factor in U.S. politics - let alone win support for their own struggles against the bosses and the bosses' government, now personified by Donald Trump.

Barry Sheppard

Footnotes

[1] See ESSF (article 40025), [Women's March on Washington: Guiding Vision and Definition of Principles](#).