Reports on the Resistance: Hundreds Rally to Support Muslim Immigrants

written by Dan La Botz | February 10, 2017

Hundreds of Brooklyn area residents crowded the Brooklyn Museum auditorium on the freezing cold night of the February 9 blizzard—a storm that had closed the City University system, the public schools, and disrupted public transportation—to hear leading figures, principally from the Muslim wing of the immigration rights movement, analyze Trump's immigration policy and propose measures to resist.

The speakers fiercely defended immigrant rights and criticized "broken windows policing," the two-party political system, and capitalism to the enthusiastic applause of the diverse audience.

Linda Sarsour, known for role in organizing the Women's March in Washington, D.C. against Trump's policies, talked about short-term and long-term solutions to the immigration issues. In the short-term she said, we have to win back support from the legislative branch, while in the long-term "we need to crush the two-party system" because neither major party will resolve these problems.

"We need a new party that puts the marginalized at the center. And, pardon me Brooklyn," she said, "but I don't mean the Green Party."

Others asserted that, beyond electing other officials, communities needed to fight for themselves.

In an opening round of discussion speakers told how moved they had been to see the the Women's March and the January airport protests against the Muslim ban and in general mass support expressed for women's and immigrants' rights.

What's a Sanctuary City?

One speaker said, "We have to take back the meaning of 'sanctuary city.' Other speakers rejected the notion that New York and other cities could be called "sanctuaries" while the authorities engaged in practices such as "broken windows policing," which led to harassment and arrest of many immigrants.

One example of a problem was that when an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) official appears at a school, rather than being shown to the principal's office they should be barred from entering the campus.

Carl Lipscomb of the Black Alliance for Just Immigration discussed the persistence of racism in our society and the relationship between racism and immigration.

Community leaders emphasized that real sanctuary means knowing your neighbors land building solidarity with them.

Billed as Defending Immigrant Rights: A Brooklyn Call to Action, and co-sponsored by the Brooklyn Community Foundation, the speakers at the event included Linda Sarsour, Arab American Association of New York; Murad Awawdeh, The New York Immigration Coalition; Carl Lipscombe, Black Alliance for Just Immigration; Lisa Schreibersdorf, Brooklyn Defender Services; and Nayim Islam, DRUM – Desis Rising Up & Moving.

The discussion was moderated by Cecilia Clarke, President and CEO of Brooklyn Community Foundation. Opening remarks by Bitta Mostofi of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. Panelists represented community-based organizations funded through the foundation's newly established Immigrant Rights Fund. Presented in collaboration with the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art.