

Reports on the Resistance: Not-My-President Day, Day without Immigrants, and More Protests Planned

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Protests against Trump continue even as new ones are being planned for the future, from the recent Not-My-President Day and Day without an Immigrant protests, to the International Women's Strike planned for March 8.

Thousands of protestors in New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Los Angeles, and some two dozen other cities marched on Monday, Feb. 20 in opposition to President Donald Trump and his policies on what is usually called "President's Day" but on this occasion was marked by many as Not-My-President Day. On what was in the Midwest and the East a beautiful spring-like day—thanks to climate change—protestors marched to protest Trump's environmental and immigration policies and just about everything else that the new president stands for.

Chanting "No ban, no fear, immigrants are welcome here," and other slogans, marchers in various cities carried signs reading "Not my president! Nyet!" or "Happy President's Day, President Putin!" an allusion to suggestions that Putin is Trump's puppet-master. There were also signs referring to "President Bannon," meaning the alt-right ideologue Steve Bannon who others think pulls Trump's strings. In Chicago some signs read: "Hands off our EPA," "Black Lives Matter," and "I stand with Planned Parenthood."

Sayief Leshaw, a twenty-two year old protestor in New York, told the media, "I'm really concerned for where our country is headed. We've sold out to corporate interests, and Donald Trump's policies are downright offensive."

President's Day was originally known as and is still legally called George Washington's Birthday though in the late 1960s it was combined with Lincoln's Birthday and moved to a Monday to create a three-day weekend. The day, combining a celebration of the founding father Washington, a slave-owner president, with a commemoration of Lincoln who led the United States through the Civil War to abolish slavery, illustrates the deep contradictions of American society around the question of race.

Until this President's Day it had not been associated with a sitting president and was not a day of opprobrium.

A Day without Immigrant

Only four days earlier, on Feb. 16, thousands of immigrants in cities across the country took the day off work to protest President Trump's policies on immigration and refugees. Some employers, either because they are immigrants themselves or because they are sympathetic to the immigrant cause, shut their businesses so that their workers could participate. In other cases immigrant workers simply didn't show up for work in what was in effect an immigrant worker strike, and at least 100 in different cities were fired for their participation.

The Day without Immigrants had its greatest impact on restaurants, where many immigrants work in the kitchens washing dishes, preparing food, or serving customers. Latino immigrants in particular, and Mexicans who form the majority among them, played an important role in the protests. In Washington, D.C. some 50 restaurants were closed, including six in the Pentagon. In some cities parents kept their children home from school or older students stayed home on their own initiative.

In some cities, such as Milwaukee, the Day without Immigrants involved mass demonstrations of thousands of immigrants and their supporters who marched to protest Trump's policies.

While important symbolically as a statement against Trump and his policies, nowhere did the Day without Immigrants have a serious economic impact. Some organizers hope to build toward another immigrant worker protest on May 1, International Labor Day, which is celebrated in most countries of the world.

The name Day without Immigrants goes back to Sergio Arau's 2004 film "A Day without a Mexican," which imagined that a pink fog led to the disappearance of all of the Mexicans in the California economy, bringing the state to a halt.

In 2006 some immigrant rights organizers picked up the phrase "day without a Mexican" and suggested that the immigrant rights protests of the spring and summer of that year should culminate in a general strike by immigrant workers. The proposed immigrant strike of 2006 never took place, though the protests in Los Angeles and Chicago, where as many as one million workers took part, did in fact lead to the voluntary or forced closing of many businesses.

Resistance Everywhere, All the Time—and the Women's Strike

While the Not-My-President Day and Day without Immigrants were the two largest and most visible protests nationally, hundreds of protests of all sorts have been taking place across the country over the last two weeks. These include turning out voters for town hall meetings with their representatives, protests over climate change, immigration policy, and many other issues.

Documentary filmmaker Michael Moore has established The Resistance Calendar to keep activists informed of coming activities. Moore wrote on his Facebook page that The Resistance Calendar will be, "A 24/7 clearinghouse of the already MASSIVE resistance to Trump, to the Republican Congress, and, yes, to many of the spineless Democratic politicians out there. We welcome all resisters across the movement to use this tool. It's completely free. There's no big "funder" or group behind it. There will be no ads, no commercialization, no fundraising lists — all the stuff we hate. Just you, me, the volunteers donating their time to keep it going and the World Wide Web. BOOM!"

Among planned protests for the future, a group of feminists is organizing for an International Women's Strike. They write,

"The International Women's Strike on March 8th, 2017 is an international day of action, planned and organized by women in more than 30 different countries.

"In the spirit of solidarity and internationalism, in the United States March 8th will be a day of

action organized by and for women who have been marginalized and silenced by decades of neoliberalism directed towards working women, women of color, Native women, disabled women, immigrant women, Muslim women, lesbian, queer and trans women.

“March 8th will be the beginning of a new international feminist movement that organizes resistance not just against Trump and his misogynist policies, but also against the conditions that produced Trump, namely the decades long economic inequality, racial and sexual violence, and imperial wars abroad.”

A number of women’s organizations and a few labor unions have endorsed the call for a Day without Women.