

Thousands of New Yorkers Reject Donald Trump's Anti-Immigration Policies

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Image via [Getty](#).

MANHATTAN—Hours after Donald Trump signed two executive orders cracking down on undocumented immigrants, an estimated 3,000 people packed into Washington Square Park for an emergency rally on Wednesday night. More than two dozen elected public officials, civil rights activists, and faith leaders gathered under the gleaming Washington Square Arch to unequivocally condemn Trump's policies. The rally was organized by the local chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR).

The mood was defiant and soulful; one woman held a lighted sign that read "UNITE 4 JUSTICE" and another waved a poster that said "Let Syrian refugees in." For more than two hours, a crowd cheered on speakers who lambasted Trump and erupted into a series of pro-immigrant chants throughout the night, including, "No Ban, no wall, New Yorkers for all," and "Say it loud, say it clear, refugees are welcome here."

In addition to the actions signed on Wednesday, Trump is expected to issue [four more](#) anti-immigration orders that will temporarily ban US entry for citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries; bar Syrian refugees; end protections for [undocumented immigrants who moved to the US as children](#); and limit legal immigration, which makes it more difficult for foreigners to access US work visas.

Trump's orders threaten to cut federal funding for cities that welcome undocumented immigrants, known as sanctuary cities. Officials in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Austin and elsewhere quickly [rejected](#) Trump's anti-immigrant stance, which has been one of the central aspects of his election platform, and vowed to protect all immigrants.

“This city is, and this city always will be a sanctuary city for all people,” New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer exclaimed to cheers at Wednesday night’s rally. City Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal promised, “We are prepared to run this city without federal dollars, if that’s what it takes.”

Stringer, Rosenthal and other officials had harsh words for Trump, with Councilman Corey Johnson calling Trump “a pathological liar with no impulse control,” and “a demagogue,” and Stringer exclaiming to Trump, “you’re an idiot!”

The outpouring of support from city officials and New Yorkers at large was a thin silver lining for what immigrants and children of immigrants in the crowd described as dark times. Zeba Fazli, a 24-year-old Muslim-American of Pakistani descent, said that since Trump’s election, “it’s been a new low every day.”

Of the dizzying number of actions he’s taken since assuming office, she said, “Everyday you learn a new way to be heartbroken about your country and sick to your stomach about where it seems to be going.”

“But then, you show up to places like this, and you remember that [Trump] was not the popular vote,” she added, “It’s heartening to come here and remember that.”

Graduate student Joolan Saroor, 27, is worried about her relatives in Yemen, a nation included in Trump’s ban and currently ravaged by civil war. “If the situation worsens in Yemen, how do we sponsor them to come here?” she asked. She’s also worried for friends currently protected under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, which offers temporary permission to stay in the US for undocumented immigrants who arrived under the age of 16. A reversal of DACA, as Trump has proposed, means these immigrants will be deported.

“We’re just doing every little thing we can to make our voices heard and giving a voice to those who don’t have one,” Saroor said, adding that she attended Saturday’s Women’s March and will begin contacting local legislators about her concerns.

The crowd was filled with allies, too, who argue that targeting immigrants is un-American. As Councilman Corey Johnson stated, “Any of us who are not Native Americans are immigrants in the United States.”

“You wonder, if you can ban people from Muslim-majority countries, where does it stop?” Fazli asked.

Ann Toback, executive director of progressive Jewish organization the Workman’s Circle, says Muslims are being targeted the way her Jewish ancestors were 100 years ago. “It’s unacceptable to be closing the United States’s doors to the people who need it most, and it’s unacceptable for us to not be welcoming people who come to us—who are here—today, and chasing down immigrants and DREAMers and building walls.”

Several speakers described immigrant rights as the civil rights movement of this generation, marking this as a history-making moment in America. “Our children and our grandchildren are going to look back and say, ‘What did you do in 2017 when a demagoging [sic], pathological liar, racist president stood up and tried to divide America,’” Johnson said. “And we here in New York City, we are going to be the face of resistance.”

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