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Thousands March in Milwaukee to Defend Immigrant & Refugee Rights

Churches declare sanctuary and local officials announce pro-immigrant initiatives as marchers declare the beginning of broad opposition to the new administration's threats against immigrants and refugees

MILWAUKEE – On Saturday, thousands of Wisconsinites marched from Milwaukee's South Side to the Milwaukee County Courthouse to declare the "Inauguration of the Resistance" to the new administration's threats against immigrants and refugees. People from across the state came to Milwaukee, with buses travelling from Appleton, Racine and Madison. The march was part of a [national day of resistance](#) that saw action in 70+ cities nationwide. The march was followed by street theater ([video here](#)) on the courthouse steps and a brief program.

"Since the election we have been working hard to ensure the fire of Trump's hate and abuse does not spread," said Christine Neumann-Ortiz, Executive Director of Voces de la Frontera. "A new statewide alliance of diverse groups has been formed, the Coalition for an Inclusive Wisconsin, to build a united front against attacks on our civil, economic and human rights. We have been organizing at the local level to build sanctuary spaces or safe zones in schools, workplaces, and churches that affirm the dignity of immigrants, refugees and other vulnerable groups. We have been building deportation defense networks to challenge Trump's mass deportation plans. We have been organizing for future actions such as Days without Latinos and immigrants, the communitywide general strike. In battle after battle, the movement to recognize the civil, labor, and human rights of immigrants has prevailed, and we will do so again."

Milwaukee County Supervisor Marina Dmitrijevic announced that she will be introducing a sanctuary resolution on January 25th, and encouraged all present to attend a public hearing that day ([video here](#)). **"My legislation seeks to have Milwaukee County join many other urban areas across the country in a unified movement promoting our values while declaring that we stand firmly against discrimination in all forms,"** said Supervisor Dmitrijevic. "I want everyone to know that Milwaukee County is a safe place for all and that when our values are threatened, we will have the backs of our greatest resource here, our diverse people."

Other speakers spoke in defense of DACA, opposed discriminatory efforts to force Muslims to register with the government, and affirmed the importance of immigrants to Wisconsin's dairy industry and overall economy. All declared they would resist the new administration's threats of mass deportations.

"My church is almost 100% an immigrant congregation," said Emmanuel Rios, Pastor of Casa de Restauración Church in New Berlin ([video here](#)). "As pastor, my job is to care for the flock that God has given me by His grace. **For that reason, we at Casa de Restauración have decided to give physical sanctuary to families threatened by deportation.**"

"Wisconsin's dairy community is very supportive of our state's immigrants," said John Holevoet, Director of Government Affairs for the Wisconsin Dairy Business Association ([video here](#)). **"Dairy contributes over \$44 billion per year to the state's economy. This would not be possible without our immigrant workers.** We will work hard to give them opportunities to stay, work, and thrive here. That includes restoring driver's cards to give all Wisconsin residents the ability to drive safely and legally, regardless of immigration status."

"Today we stand here united to affirm our common humanity and the dignity that God has conferred on all human beings," said Ahmed Quereshi, President of the Islamic Society of Milwaukee ([video here](#)). **"We condemn discrimination, unequal treatment before the law, and any attempt to create a registry of Muslims or of any other faith, an effort that offends the First Amendment protections for religion and hearkens back to Nazi Germany's registry of Jews in the 1930s."**

Saturday's national day of action was endorsed by the Fair Immigration Reform Movement, United We Dream, Reform Immigration for America, Center for Community Change, Human Rights Campaign, Planned Parenthood, Moveon.org, Sierra Club, UNITE-HERE, SEIU, and the American Federation of Teachers, among others.

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