

Women's March on Washington January 21, 2017



(Below are reports from Utopian readers on the protests that took place in Washington, D.C. and around the country on January 20 and 21.)

Washington, D.C.

January 21

at DTW airport the boarding gate area was mostly women going to the March, came in by ones and twos until we were most of who was there, maybe even 100 or more, 80% of the plane anyway, looks and smiles exchanged

the gate agent said over the PA: "there's a lot of women on this flight" and how she said it let us know she was an ally

all of us in the boarding area cheered

when I gave her my boarding pass she said she wished she could be there and would be there in spirit

it all felt like a "we"

odd to feel that way in an airport

on the plane, the female cabin attendants were smiling at us all

marchers were even most of first class

all age groups, not all white either

one older woman took off her Pussy Hat and gave it to a stranger who admired it

seat mate was a singer putting together protest songs from the Civil Rights movement to sing at the rally

we talked for the entire flight



such an odd experience to feel so surrounded by allies on an airplane, to feel so safe, and so much a part of something bigger

leaving the plane, cabin attendant smiled and said good luck tomorrow, have a great time

all was such a balm for the awfulness

at the rally (and on the way there and back) there was again that feeling of allies and safety and kindness.

most striking to me was how the speakers framed this new movement:

they were almost all women and a majority women of color and each said in her own way "welcome to our world," inviting the sea

of mostly white women feminists into their centuries old struggle for civil rights.

Janelle Monae introduced five women she called "Mothers of the Movement," each of whom had a child killed by police action, and we did a call and response with each woman in turn: the mother said the name of her murdered child and we said back to her: "say his/her name!"

the individual and the whole were joined in that act of bearing witness to personal grief.

the next day it still felt as though there were allies everywhere. first step: get together.



second step: get it together.

and always: find ways to support one another and keep our spirits up.

it's going to be a long hard fight, but as Bob Marley said: "the hotter the battle, the sweeter the victory."

...
such is my report

Robin M.

Bay Area

January 20

Today, January 20, there were numerous anti-inauguration protest events around the Bay Area. I attended two: a noon rally at UC Berkeley's Sproul Plaza, and a rally in downtown Oakland.

The Berkeley rally was fairly large -- I estimate somewhere around 3,000, maybe a bit bigger. This includes several hundred Berkeley High students who walked out and marched through town to the rally. Speeches were for the most part pretty mild, although one speaker called for socialism, denounced the Democrats, Stalinists, and trade union bureaucracy: that was Jack Heyman of the ILWU. Jack, a long time dockworker and a Trotskyist, was there to announce that last night ILWU Local 10 voted to shut down the seven Bay Area ports by not working today.



I arrived at the all day rally in downtown Oakland at about 2:30pm. It was smaller--at most 200 to 300, many of them high school students. I stayed for about half an hour, and got a chance to talk to several Oakland teacher activists with whom I collaborated when I was an active teacher, some of whom I first met in 2009 when they were college students protesting cuts and fee hikes in the UC system and with whom I sat in for 17 days at Lakeview Elementary in 2012 to protest the closure of five Oakland elementary schools.

I'll be participating in the Oakland women's march tomorrow. It should be very big.

Jack G.

Boston

January 21

150,000 in Boston.

Awesome.

Sandy Y.



Los Angeles

January 21

Los Angeles Demo: Some estimate 250,000 (it felt like it!)

Sally, Veronica and I were blown away by the numbers of people by 9am when we arrived. Attached are only two pictures of hand made signs but what was incredible was the numbers of hand made signs and the variety of ages and diversity in all ways. It looked like half were our age and the other half where varied. (60's folks coming back out?)

It felt really good to see all those folks together and the camaraderie was refreshing. One thing was a bit surprising was the absence of the organized left (if it still exists). Also, there was NO

leadership at all. Speakers when we finally got to hear them were democrats. That's when we started to leave.

There was no consistency in politics at all. Some hand made signs were against Trump, tiny hands signs, anti-racist signs, feminist signs, Hillary signs, really a mish mash of politics. We did see some that talked about revolution but we're not sure if they we Bernie people.



Chants were varied but one we heard supported by everyone around us; "say it loud say it clear immigrants are welcome here", "the people united will never be divided", One of my friends said "my body, my choice" was a constant.

In one picture "resist", the women's facemask said, "fuck Nazis"! I gave her a leaflet but she was leaving so no chance to talk.

So, Trump winning did something to spark some resistance. The question is how lasting and how electoral???

Roni L.

January 21

In LA, the crowd at Pershing Square may well have been 750,000, maybe more, certainly the biggest demonstration I've ever been in.

Ron T.

Oakland

January 21



At least 100,000 on the Oakland march -- probably more. The march stretched for at least a mile. Haven't heard about the San Francisco march yet, but it was likely at least as big.
Jack G.

Jack G.

New York City

January 21

Hi Folks,

What an amazing day... the protest in NYC went on for so many hours, bringing together an estimated 400,000 people from all walks of life, an overwhelming number of women of all races and ethnicities, and so many families with children of all ages. And many, many people were reaching out to each other, excited to be standing together against this horror in the white house. I thought it was one of the most socially interconnected protests I've ever attended. People's signs were highly creative and very diverse, and there was a sense that we've all come together because we share important values and are ready to stand up to support each other against this crazy man and his corporate elite.

The numbers I recently saw indicate that there were 125,000 in Boston, 400,000 in NYC, 500,000 in Washington, DC, and 500,000-700,000 in LA! (No wonder you felt it was the largest demonstration you've ever been in, Ron!) Another news report I heard said that it was the largest demonstration since the 1960's! And I believe that protests occurred in 600 cities within all 50 states. What is even more interesting is that protests aligned with ours here went on around the world in 7 continents, and I believe the estimate was a total of 3 million worldwide! There sure are many, many people worried about what this ignorant, racist, sexist, homophobic, neo-fascist tyrant is about to do. And, in the few conversations I had today in which I said we needed a revolution, I found increasing agreement.



People I went with carried a variety of signs, ones that support multiple struggles: Black, Latin, Gay, Straight; Women, Muslims, Immigrants, Stand with Standing Rock, No DAPL, No Fossil Fuels; Power to the people & Jobs for All.

There were also some insightful & fun chants like "Build a fence/Around Mike Pence," or "We need a leader/Not a creepy tweeter." And there was a frequently repeated one where women would chant "My body/My choice" and were answered by men with "Her body/Her choice". What an amazingly collaborative, supportive, and exciting group of people!

I was also at the NYC demo at Columbus Circle on Wednesday evening, 1/19, where Robert DeNiro, Rosie Perez, Alec Baldwin, Sally Field, & Cher performed.



Here's a link to a number of photos of the recent demonstrations in the *NY Times*:

<http://www.amny.com/news/politics/trump-protests-in-nyc-photos-of-women-s-march-inauguration-day-demonstrations-1.12975035>

On a sad note, folks in BCJN received a message yesterday to let us know that three of their NY upstate farmworkers had been arrested & were being deported.

Hope folks are doing well...

Mary H.

January 21

N.Y. Addendum

Everyone,

The march's spirit of unity was amazing and inspiring, and it was huge. Based on my recollection of the 2003 antiwar demo, I think

that the estimate of 400,000 is too low. It appeared to me to be more like 500,000-700,000. There was an incredible proliferation of home-made and extremely creative signs and, as someone else commented about another march, the organized Left was almost invisible. My take on the mood was that it was as festive as it was angry. The two chants that I heard a lot were, 'Hey, hey, ho, ho, Donald Trump has got to go!', and 'This is what democracy looks



like!' I think it was significant in what was *not* expressed; that is, of the hundreds of signs that I viewed, I saw only one for 'revolution', one for 'revolt', none that were clearly anti-electoral or against both the Republicans and Democrats, and none calling for a general strike or 'shutting it down'. Left unexpressed was that defending human rights meant voting for the Democrats in 2018 and 2020, a proposition confirmed explicitly by a discussion on the bus going home after the march. Finally, although the march was quite diverse in terms of gender and generation and two of the three organizers were Black and Latina, the event itself was overwhelmingly white.

I've attached some photos taken at the march.

Peace,

Bill B.

January 21

I agree with Bill and Mary's observations of NYC events. Anne and I went to the Thursday Michael Moore demo and again to the big

Women's march on Saturday, where we met Mary at the Women's Climate Justice contingent (and Anne met several of her folk music friends). At times the march hardly moved. There were many self-made signs, no evidence of any left groups, although any might have been buried somewhere in the vast crowd. The crowd was overwhelmingly liberal; at one point at the Thursday gathering, people spontaneously broke out in an "Obama, Obama" chant. But I am greatly heartened. This is just the beginning.

Wayne P.



Detroit

January 21

Detroit had a spirited march, too, though not as big as some. It stretched for more than 3/4 mile. (I know that because my kids and g'kids were near the front of the march and I was near the rear, and we were trying to connect, so I know how the march stretched out. Lots of good vibes and music and signs. And LOTS of honks from cars passing by. One of my favorite signs: "First they came for the immigrants... and we said: Not this time, assholes!" The only left group that I saw openly leafleting was Spark... amazing!

Pretty heartening!
Jon M.

Santa Fe

January 21

All,

Reports put the size of the Santa Fe demonstration at 6,000 or more. This is a city with a total population of 70,000. Based on the reports others of you have sent, it seems likely that this was the biggest single day of protest in US history, including during anti-Vietnam war protests.

Rod M.

And around the country...

January 21

Here's a link to a spreadsheet that gives low and high estimates for the marches in over 500 U.S. cities, and also in over 100 cities abroad:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1xa0iLqYKz8x9Yc_rfhtmSOJQ2EGgeUVjvV4A8LslaxY/htmlview?sle=true#gid=0



As you'll see, the estimates are that between 3.3 million and 4.6 million marched in the U.S., and another 250,000 to 300,000 elsewhere. These estimates may be low.

Here's a link to aerial videos and stills of the huge marches and rallies today in Boston, Denver, New York, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Chicago, Austin, Raleigh and others:

<http://www.vox.com/2017/1/21/14345972/boston-denver-chicago-march>

Jack G.

Comments on January 20/21 protests

January 20

I think Dave Chapelle captures the sentiment of a large slice of 'woke' America:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHG0ezLiVGc>

I am hoping for gigantic struggles against Trump and then some.

However:

1. Many people I have talked to since Nov 8, don't see the world changing much between Trump and Obama. That says a lot about both. Victory Trump.

2. Many people do not feel the need to defend criminals who are going to be deported by Trump. Plenty of immigrants, while worried, are also hoping its not them since they are on they see themselves as law abiding do-gooders. Victory Trump.

3. No one I have met is for defending terrorist i.e. Muslim/ Arab countries. Everyone wants to be safe from terrorism. Victory Trump.

4. By some miracle Trump knows the precise boundaries/ fractures of the movement and attacking those fault lines. Victory Trump.

Shemon

January 21

Thanks to Bill and everyone else for their reports. Bill's description of the mentality and the politics of the NY march is very much in synch with what I saw/felt in LA. The movement, at least as revealed in the demonstrations, seems to be solidly lined up behind the Elizabeth Warren/Bernie Sanders wing of the Democratic Party. We'll see what happens going forward, particularly, whether future political developments lead to any kind of radicalization.

Ron T.

January 21

I liked that there was no presence of the organized left. I think this era requires new thinking, new methods, and new rhetoric.

I believe that our best way forward is to build something new, building on the experience and wisdom of past struggles of course, but finding our own voice-- most especially because it is absolutely time women took the lead (much as Stephen Biko explained that white people could not lead the black liberation movement in South Africa) and because women's emancipation is far far from won, and because what I saw and took part in at the rally was a weaving together of civil rights and Black Lives Matter (five mothers whose children were killed by police where there and we did a call and response with each of them: "Travon Martin!" "Say his name!"). to meld my peer group-- middle-aged and older white women-- to the struggle against racism, xenophobia, and all those other human rights struggles made a profound impression on me.

I think there is a new spirit here that is beyond dogmas, political or religious, and we will find our way through to economic justice by drawing upon the wisdom, energy, and work of those of us in the movement whose interest is in economics.

A lot of educating needs to be done, and in my view, we need a new approach with new words. There is a lot of truth to build upon and for me the words and indeed some of the strategies and philosophy behind the words can be more open to and better informed by the current situation. Whether or not we build upon the past, which of course we will.

Robin M.

January 23

He has though it will be a bitter pill to swallow.

Taylor Caldwell wrote a book, "The Devi's Advocate, a dystopian novel, in which an authoritarian government severely suppressed

the populace. The "rebels" used a strategy that was actually used by the US in Nicaragua to oust Daniel Ortega. They groomed one of their own to be accepted by the regime and eventually work his way up to a high level in the military police. He eventually became the "procurator" of a large district and to all appearances was just another military governor. However, the rebel strategy was that he would oppress and squeeze that population like they had never experienced and this would create enough "spine" for them to rise up and throw off their shackles, which they did. The rebel plant was, unfortunately, a victim but was gladly so.

In that light, I believe that the marches Saturday, while large, are undirected and without consistent and timely reiterations will have the same impact as did the anti-invasion marches preceding our invasion of Iraq. I am close friends with one of the last holdouts that each Friday would hold a sign on the corner of Cerrillos and St. Francis that said, "No more war".

For those who would pat the marches on the back I say that we need to have the same sort of determination as did the "Women in Black" that marched every single week in Chile in protest of their loved ones who were disappeared.

I fear that barring that sort of discontent this could be just another such action or similar to Occupy.

Brian O'K.

PS-Trump is a Mussolini. Just compare photos!

January 23

Boston thoughts

Like everyone else, I found the whole day exciting, inspiring and empowering.

Unique for me to be at a demonstration where I didn't know anyone, but it kind of added to the experience to not have the distraction of talking with friends and just being totally "in the moment".

When I first heard of “pink pussy hats”, my reaction was “lame”. But it turned out to be an important symbol of sisterhood, and I’m glad I broke down and knitted one for a young friend attending her first march and wore one myself. It made me an immediate member of the day’s Nation.

The crowd in my metro station was jam-packed, but everyone was so upbeat, kind, and warm that it didn’t matter that I had to wait an hour to get on a train. Everyone just seemed to include me in their conversations and people seemed open to my views that the problem is with capitalism itself, and that we need a social revolution to bring about fundamental change.

125,000. Crashed the public transit system. Crashed the cell towers. Marchers took up the entire march route and gridlocked. Organizers were overwhelmed.

I loved the presence of SO many older women (my age) and so many teens and very young adults. The vast majority of people I talked to said that this was their first political direct action ever. The hand-made signs were creative, covered a wide range of the issues people believe in, and seemed to me much more about women exerting political power than about re-electing Democrats.

I don’t know about the platforms of other cities, but those of Boston and DC were really quite radical. As you can imagine, I am particularly partial to “human migration is a right and no person is illegal.”

Everyone is posing the question, “what next?” Every call for action is not going to bring out 4 million people worldwide, but I think that is missing the point. Will 400,000 youth and young adults realize they must educate themselves and take a more active role in shaping the world’s future? Will 40,000 women decide that direct action is the path to social change? Will 4,000 decide to form a movement to work for fundamental social change that seeks to unite the various struggles of oppressed people into a unified force? Let’s hope so.

We need new words in our movement, words that speak to the hopes and dreams of the oppressed, words that speak of love and tolerance and empowerment, words that capture the creativity of

our youth. Words that are not only words, but music and art and dance and performance.

Sandy Y.

PS About 2.000 in Ventura California, whose march was called "Justice for All"

January 23

web214ny@aol.com wrote...

While billed as a Women's March, the demonstration visibly included the struggle for all human rights and climate justice, among other things. Implicitly it carried the slogan, 'An Injury to One is an Injury to All' "An injury to one is an injury to all" was explicitly stated in the DC march, on signs and on the stage.

Robin M.

January 24

Great thoughts Sandy,

Especially: Everyone is posing the question, "what next?" Every call for action is not going to bring out 4 million people world-wide, but I think that is missing the point. Will 400,000 youth and young adults realize they must educate themselves and take a more active role in shaping the world's future? Will 40,000 women decide that direct action is the path to social change? Will 4,000 decide to form a movement to work for fundamental social change which seeks to unite the various struggles of oppressed people into a unified force? Let's hope so.

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As far as Trump is concerned, I agree that domestically he is a powder keg of unknown quantity. He may destroy the political class

or at least greatly hinder it. His proclamations re: domestic and international affairs are unpredictable and as in the case of annulling the TPP he is willing to make drastic moves and worry about the consequences later. Very dangerous but possibly very useful. In ways of which I am currently, at least, muddy.

I would only add that our new words also need to express that lack of action can and probably will have seriously negative consequences. I like the article in today's paper that states that the organizers of the march plan on an action every 10 days. That is at least what will be needed and I hope that it can actually happen.

Brian O'K
