

I.C.E. Takes Aim at L.A. Activist

Stop Deportation of Claudia Rueda!

Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

LOS ANGELES, June 4—In the morning of May 18, 22-year-old immigrant rights activist Claudia Rueda was kidnapped off the street by a gang of Customs and Border Patrol thugs while she attempted to move her car. In April, her mother was falsely targeted by the Border Patrol and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department for alleged drug smuggling. Picked up a few days after the release of her mother, Rueda was transferred to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) detention center over 100 miles away near San Diego and now faces deportation as an undocumented immigrant. Her attorney stressed that the immigration cops singled out Rueda because of her work in defense of her mother and her activism in support of undocumented youth, while a friend commented, "They wanted payback." We demand: Free Rueda now! No deportations! Full citizenship rights for everyone who has made it to this country!

A student at California State University Los Angeles and an organizer with the Los Angeles Immigrant Youth Coalition (LAIYC), Rueda came to the U.S. as a young child and lives in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles. In the last few years, cops have turned this overwhelmingly working-class, Latino community into a virtual war zone as residents have been subjected to countless drug busts and immigration raids. Meanwhile, the area is undergoing rapid gentrification, as long-time renters are being evicted, rents are ballooning and small businesses are closing. Neighbors of the Ruedas said that they are a poor, working-class Mexican immigrant family, like most of those who live in Boyle Heights.

Since becoming commander-in-chief of U.S. imperialism, President Trump has unleashed a wave of terror against immigrants. Beginning in January, I.C.E. has

arrested over 41,000 people, a 38 percent increase over the same period last year. Trump's "priorities" include going after those who are even suspected of a criminal offense, no matter how minor, and a simple traffic stop can result in felony charges and deportation.

When it comes to anti-immigrant racism and mass deportations, Trump's Democratic predecessor, Barack Obama, was no slouch either. His administration is notorious for expanding the border wall with Mexico, vastly increasing the size of the border police and deporting over 2.5 million people—more than any previous president.



Claudia Rueda speaking while protesting detention of her mother in downtown Los Angeles on April 25.

Centro CSO/Twitter

Obama also expanded deportations using the racist “war on drugs,” which is continuing as the Trump administration goes after Latino immigrants for alleged drug violations. The “war on drugs” has especially hit black people with brutal vengeance—a war of police repression and imprisonment that has sent millions of blacks to prison. Black people in the majority are forcibly segregated at the bottom of society, and institutionalized racial oppression of black people is central to the maintenance of American capitalism. The fact that the government is increasingly using the “war on drugs” to round up immigrants shows that black rights and immigrant rights will either go forward together or fall back separately.

Since Rueda’s ordeal began, several protests have demanded her release. The day of her arrest, dozens demonstrated at the Border Patrol station in Chula Vista, a few miles north of the Mexican border. The next day, Spartacist League comrades distributed the article “Down With Racist War on Immigrants!” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 1107, 10 March) at an LAIYC-organized protest of mainly Latino youth in front of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office in Downtown L.A. We also carried a sign in Spanish demanding, “¡Plenos derechos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes!”

Among the organizations that participated in the L.A. demonstration calling for Rueda’s immediate release from I.C.E. custody was the reformist Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). For decades, the DSA has made a career of rallying behind the capitalist Democratic Party, including its recent backing of Bernie Sanders, a long-time member of the Senate Democratic Caucus and defender of U.S. wars and military interventions abroad. As the Democrats spit on millions of desperate people deprived of decent jobs, affordable housing, education and health care, the DSA works to mobilize leftists and youth around this capitalist party in the name of a “fight the right” campaign to oust the Republicans. As we wrote in “DSA: Democratic Party ‘Socialists’” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 1113, 2 June), the DSA is an obstacle to workers revolution and takes up such causes as anti-immigrant racism to offer up the oppressed as voting cattle for the Democrats.

The DSA and other leftists are currently pushing the illusion that “sanctuary cities” can protect immigrants from I.C.E. terror. As a result, they burnish the credentials of city councils and Democratic mayors like L.A.’s Eric Garcetti, allowing these enemies of the working class and oppressed to present themselves and their killer cops as “friends of immigrants.” As we have noted, it is downright delusional to believe that local agents of the capitalist state will establish oases of refuge for immigrants. Indeed, the fact that L.A. County sheriffs are not permitted to ask about a person’s immigration status did not stop them from collaborating with the Border Patrol in the drug raid at the home of Rueda’s mother. While the sheriffs released her after admitting that she had nothing to do with the narcotics investigation, she was simply handed over to the Border Patrols agents for alleged immigration violations.

Eighty organizations and hundreds of individuals have signed a petition calling for Rueda’s release. Crucially, the California Faculty Association (CFA), an affiliate of Service Employees International Union Local 1983, has also issued a statement defending her. However, the union bureaucracy’s strategy is to support the capitalist Democratic Party while focusing solely on pushing legislation in Sacramento to protect undocumented students, faculty and staff in the California State University and community college systems. We welcome any legislative measure that might impede immigration agents, but the power to stop Rueda’s deportation and defend immigrant rights lies with militant mobilizations centered on the multiracial working class and its unions. An example of such struggle was the defense of Juan Vivares, whose threatened deportation was temporarily halted after his wife’s union, SEIU Local 32BJ in New York City, protested outside an I.C.E. office and called for his freedom (see *Workers Vanguard* No. 1109, 7 April).

To build a revolutionary workers party in the U.S., it is necessary to break labor’s ties to all political parties of the capitalist rulers—Democrats, Republicans, Greens. With a significant black and Latino leadership component, such a party will lead the struggle to end the dictatorship of the capitalist class and establish proletarian state power as part of a series of socialist revolutions internationally. In a workers America, all foreign-born working people in its territory will be welcomed to become citizens. ■