

Voces de la Frontera: Wisconsinites shut down highway near Trump fundraiser to protest family separation & imprisonment

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Immigrant rights protesters from Voces de la Frontera blocking the I-794 off-ramp into downtown Milwaukee Thursday morning. Credit: Ingrid Walker-Henry, 6/28/18.

Milwaukee - On Thursday, hundreds of people marched and blocked streets around a fundraiser Donald Trump held for Wisconsin Republicans in protest of Trump's plans to intern tens of thousands of immigrant families in border camps. Marchers called for ICE and Customs and Border Patrol to be abolished and replaced by institutions that support and welcome immigrants, and demanded ICE close the case of Franco Ferreyra, a Waukesha father of 4 currently imprisoned by ICE. A dozen community members blocked an interstate off-ramp into downtown, backing up traffic for miles.

"Our movement shut down streets and a major highway today to send a message to Trump and his rich donors," said Christine Neumann-Ortiz, Executive Director of Voces de la Frontera. "We will not stand idly by while Trump tries to build modern-day internment camps and wages a campaign of state-sponsored terror against immigrant families, Muslims, and refugee children. We will do everything in our power to block his white nationalist agenda. ICE and CBP must be abolished and replaced with institutions that welcome and integrate immigrants and refugees. We must stop deportations and reunite families like Franco Ferreyra's that have been separated. Today we showed that Trump's hate is not welcome in Wisconsin."

Community members gathered at Zeidler Union Square in Milwaukee before marching toward the Pfister Hotel, where Trump's private fundraiser was scheduled to begin at 9:30am. When the march arrived at a police line outside the hotel, 12 people moved into the street and blocked traffic, gathering around a banner reading "Families Belong in Communities Not Cages." The group then moved to other street corners near the fundraiser before settling in front of the I-794 off ramp into downtown. After blocking the interstate for over half an hour, the protesters held a program before marching back to Zeidler Park. From the park, many left for Racine for the continued protests against Trump and Foxconn.

"This is not a normal time," said Rabbi David Cohen of Congregation Sinai in Milwaukee, who took part in the street blockade. "As a Jew, I can say that our history tells us what happens when we hear leaders saying that they're closing borders until we figure out what's going on. We have heard this voice before. When we hear children being told to go one way — to take a shower — and their parents to go another way, we have heard those lies before. In 36 places, the Bible underscores the responsibility we have for the stranger, for the people among us who are powerless. It is our job to give them safety."

"One night when I was 7 years old, we got a phone call that changed my life forever," said Isabel Martinez, 13, of Manitowoc. "It was my dad saying he was picked up by ICE. It has been almost 6 years since I have felt my dad's arms around me. The pain that I carry will never go away. So Trump, I say to you, when you enact these disgusting policies, I hope you think of me and the millions of kids like me left to pick up the pieces."

"ICE needs to return Franco Ferreyra to his kids," said Lucy Corona, a high school classmate of Franco. "His kids need him. He's done nothing wrong. Everyone that knows him knows he's a great guy who does nothing but help everyone around him. We need to keep families together, and Trump needs to know that. Bring Franco home." An online petition demanding ICE release Franco can be found at vdlf.org/freefranco.