

EAST BAY TIMES

Activists march in full-day protest at Richmond jail over ICE detentions, Concord camp, travel ban

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RICHMOND — For the uninvolved, protests and demonstrations around the Bay Area might feel like a steady background beat at times. But recent waves of grievances, both nationally and locally, have galvanized groups that promise protests over securing immigrants' rights for as long as it takes.

A broad coalition of political action groups gathered outside the Richmond jail on Tuesday to protest an array of immigration issues and promised continued demonstrations in Contra Costa County, which is home to the Bay Area's only ICE detention center.

"Children should not be locked in cages," protesters chanted as they circled the entrance to the West County Detention Facility in Richmond.

The groups came from Richmond, Contra Costa County and San Francisco and planned to hold 12 hours of action and protest on Tuesday. However, the early morning announcement that the Supreme Court had upheld the Trump Administration's travel ban reinvigorated the assembled activists.

"Rapid response" protests were organized in San Jose, San Francisco and throughout central and west Contra Costa County on Tuesday. Around 70 people gathered at the corner of Stevens Creek Boulevard and Winchester Boulevard in San Jose to protest the Supreme Court ruling.

About 70 protesters on each corner of Stevens Creek and Winchester boulevards in San Jose lined up early Tuesday evening to show their displeasure of the Supreme Court ruling upholding President Donald Trump's travel ban policy. (Anna-Sofia Lesiv/Staff)

Gulled Roble, 29, emigrated from Somalia and now lives and works in Santa Clara. He was protesting the ruling that has blocked his parents from visiting him.

Ishaq Pathan, 29, deputy director of Islamic Networks Group, said he was leading a workshop for US-Yemeni students on how to tackle bigotry in the U.S. when he had to deliver the news of the Supreme Court's decision to his students.

Demonstrations outside of the Richmond jail have occurred more frequently in recent months. Locally, revelations over the [close relationship](#) the Contra Costa Sheriff's Office has with ICE, migrant girls separated from their parents at the border [being held in Pleasant Hill](#) and the recent announcement of a potential [detention camp](#) for 47,000 immigrants in Concord were on many protesters' minds.

"West County is home to many immigrant families, but I don't feel supported here. I live 10 minutes from this facility, and it's disheartening to know our own family members are being brought here," said Diana Diaz, 23, who works as a youth organizing coordinator for RYSE Center in Richmond.

On Tuesday morning, the county Board of Supervisors voted to designate the county as a "Welcoming County" for immigrants and refugees. The move was initiated by Supervisors John Gioia and Karen Mitchoff.

The supervisors wanted to "let all know that all are welcoming here," Sonia Bustamante, chief of staff for Supervisor Gioia, said at the Richmond rally.

In Concord, residents with several groups [planned to attend](#) the Concord City Council meeting Tuesday evening. Some groups planned on meeting at the Concord BART station earlier and walking there. A [second rally](#) was proposed for 1 p.m. on Wednesday when the Concord City Council is hosting a special meeting to address the detention camps.

“Many people could not be here or they would be exposed, so we need to be the ones who stand in the breach,” said Kate Kendell, executive director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, at the Richmond rally.

Richmond’s Vice Mayor, Melvin Willis, spoke before the crowd in front of the Richmond jail and called out the county’s sheriff by asking the crowd to repeat, “Shame on David Livingston” and encouraging protesters to continue opposition to the detention of immigrants in Contra Costa County.

“My mom always told me that a closed mouth don’t get fed,” Willis said.

Willis pointed to the Richmond City Council’s action in May to prohibit the city from investing or contracting with companies that provide data or vetting services to ICE unless the council determines there is no reasonable alternative.

Olga Talamante, 68, is a Pacifica resident and executive director of the Chicana/Latina Foundation, but she came out to protest in hopes that ICE detainees at the Richmond jail could hear her and the gathered groups and take heart.

“It’s just outrageous that there is this anti-immigrant hate from immigrants or people that descended from immigrants,” Talamante said.

She spoke about her Mexican grandparents who traveled freely in California before the [mass deportations](#) of U.S. citizens of Mexican descent during the Great Depression.

“We say that we didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us,” she noted.

Jimmy Lee, spokesman for the Contra Costa Sheriff’s Office, sent out a news release a little after 9 a.m. on Tuesday, citing the protest outside the Richmond jail. Lee listed more than 20 politicians or organizations that have toured the facility since October of 2017 and a number of other programs and resources provided there.

Cleve Jones, co-founder of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation, assisted in shuttling activists from BART to the Richmond jail on Giant Highway. He spoke to the crowd at noon, expressing outrage at the facility holding migrant children in Pleasant Hill and predicted that Contra Costa County would see more protests as it “will be one of the epicenters of resistance.”

“This is going to be a long struggle, and I don’t think this will be over soon. The lives of these immigrants matter to us. There’s a home for all of us,” Jones said.

Protests already have been scheduled through the weekend. In Richmond, a “Families Belong Together” protest at the Richmond jail has been scheduled for 11

a.m. Saturday. A similar protest is planned in San Francisco at Dolores Park at 10 a.m.

The steadfast protesters of “[El Cerrito Shows Up](#)” continue their weekly protests at the El Cerrito Plaza. The next protest is for Thursday at 6 p.m.

Anna-Sofia Lesiv contributed to this report.