

A Seat at the Table

Thousands gather at the Capitol to protest Trump's immigration policies.

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Link: <https://www.cityweekly.net/BuzzBlog/archives/2018/06/30/a-seat-at-the-table>



Chants of “Abolish ICE!” and “We care, why don’t you?” rang above Salt Lake City’s downtown Saturday as an estimated 2,500 people gathered at the Capitol to demand an end to the Trump administration’s “zero-tolerance” immigration policy.

“You have to use your voice; you have to speak up,” Corrine Galvan, one of the day’s speakers, said, reflecting on the time she spent last week at a California detention near the U.S./Mexico border.

“What are we doing?” Galvan said, exasperated. “There is no seat at the table because there’s no fucking table.”

The Salt Lake City march and rally was one of more than 700 happening across the country, including six in Utah. Local demonstrators met at City Creek Park. A half-hour later, they’d marched to the Capitol steps, calling for an end to current family separation practices and demanding the reunification of detained immigrant children with their parents.



“If we cannot protect children yearning for refuge, we cannot protect anybody,” speaker Ermiya Fanaeian, student organizer for the local March for Our Lives chapter, said. “Let’s vote like our lives depend on it—because they absolutely do.”

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, an Oregon Democrat who made news recently for recording a video on his cell phone when officials refused to grant him access to a Texas former Walmart that’d been converted into a detention center, traveled to the Salt Lake City rally to encourage demonstrators to stay politically active. “We need to keep pushing,” he said. “We believe in Lady Liberty’s torch.”



"Sometimes there is no choice. When your own government is trying to murder your family, there's no other way" —Stephanie Mortensen

Stephanie Mortensen and Yessi Timoteo came to the rally because these policies are personal: Timoteo is undocumented and Mortensen is the daughter of first-generation Guatemalan immigrants.

"It's heartbreaking," Timoteo said before musing on the perilous journey many immigrants embark on to reach U.S. soil. "Sometimes there is no choice," Mortensen said of many immigrants' decision to risk coming to the country undocumented. "When your own government is trying to murder your family, there's no other way."

Speakers ended the day by telling the large crowd that the rally wasn't the end of the fight. John Mejía, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Utah, encouraged everyone to continue to protest, march and, most importantly, vote. "That is how we take our country back," he said.