

LOCAL NEWS

Pink hats, signs show support for women's rights in Lowell (VIDEO)



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LOWELL — A group of around 120 people paraded around the city on Sunday — several donning pink hats, and brandishing signs with phrases like “Girl’s rule, Trump’s a tool,” and “The price of apathy is to be ruled by evil men.”

Marissa DuPont, of Solidarity Lowell’s coordinating committee, which organized the march, said support was given to marchers in the form of car horns blaring and people waving. Demonstrators were also struck with opposition in the form of one individual shouting out, “Long live Trump.”

The demonstration was part of the Women’s March 2018. Hundreds of marches similar to the one in Lowell took place this weekend across the nation and in pockets across the world.

The intention of the demonstrations were to show support for women’s rights and condemn the policies of President Trump on the anniversary of his inauguration.

When she found out Trump would serve as the next president of the U.S., DuPont said she felt “terror and panic,” which morphed into anger. The Lowell resident said it propelled her toward activism.

"I don't want to be one of those people standing by and not doing anything," DuPont said. "I want to be one of those people that are helping and making sure things change in the future."

The day after the election, Solidarity Lowell was started. The organization is a coalition of community members of Greater Lowell operating with the goal of "working toward social justice and standing together against hate and discrimination," according to a portion of the group's mission statement.

Solidarity Lowell has also been active in supporting immigration by working toward making Lowell a sanctuary city. The group has also supported keeping Lowell High School downtown and has backed the election of city councilors Karen Cirillo and Vesna Nuon.

Sunday's event began at the UMass Lowell Inn & Conference Center at 2 p.m., with speeches from Nuon and candidate for state governor and former Newton Mayor Setti Warren.

From there, a group paraded over the Central Street bridge, down Merrimack Street to Lowell City Hall. From there, the group marched southbound down Dutton Street with the crowd gathering at Mill No. 5 on Jackson Street.

Several speakers addressed marchers there, including Cirillo, who concluded her speech with lyrics from the Helen Reddy song "I Am Woman," which include "I am strong, I am invincible, I am woman."

Chanrithy Uoong, former city councilor and the first Cambodian-American to win a council seat anywhere in the U.S. also spoke. Uoong worked to create the chant "Dump Trump," from the crowd during his address.

Also speaking was Manisha Bewtra, an alderman-at large for Melrose, where she serves as the first person of color to hold elected office in the city's history; and Alexandra Chandler, the first person to gender transition while on the job of Naval Intelligence in 2006.

"Today we still fight for and against gender wage gap, lack of women leaders, violence against women, women reproductive rights, children being trafficked as sex slaves," speaker Susie In-Chhoun, officer of the Cambodian American Caucus and survivor of the Cambodian genocide, told the crowd. "Never stop fighting."

Former U.S. Ambassador to Denmark Rufus Gifford, of Concord, called the weekend's marches a chance to "beat back a very negative chapter in American political history."

"We need to show up more and more at marches like this because ... if something happens to one member of our community, it impacts every single one of us," Gifford said.

In-Chhoun's daughters were also on hand to show support for their mother and to speak for the nation's youth.

"We wanted to show that the younger generation can make a difference as well and show that we also care," said 19-year-old Sun Lyna as the crowd dispersed on Sunday.

"I'm here to change the world," added Lyna 16-year-old Chhan Raskmey. "I want to help change the future for children, the women and the future generations to come. And this isn't just about women, it's about everyone."

Raskmey pointed out this was the family's second march of the weekend.

"I can feel hope again," she said. "My faith in humanity has grown so much to see all these women come together."

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