

Protesters at the inauguration in Washington

"The election shows that we are not a true democracy and that our vote does not count"

A WSWS reporting team
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A *World Socialist Web Site* reporting team interviewed a number of participants in last Saturday's protests in Washington DC during the inauguration of George W. Bush. Despite the well-publicized mobilization of police aimed at reducing the size of the demonstration, thousands of protesters from throughout the US came to the capital in the largest numbers since the second inauguration of Richard Nixon during the Vietnam War in 1973. [See our January 22 article "Thousands protest Bush inauguration" <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2001/jan2001/demo-j22.shtml>]

Greta Guzman, Ted, and Ray Tracy from Annapolis, Maryland, and Dinah Holtzman from Durham, North Carolina were together at the rally in Dupont Circle, a gathering point for demonstrators near the inaugural parade route. They all had voted for Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore, except Ted, who voted for Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader.

Greta: "We are here to protest against Bush and the outcome of the election. Gore should have won. In fact, he did win."

Ted: "Not all the votes were counted. We should not have a president who was selected for us. The mainstream press has accepted the outcome of the election. It is basically a system in which the corporate boardroom is going to make decisions, rather than the people."

Greta: "The common people are forgotten. We are the laughing stock of the whole world. We are supposed to be a superpower that represents democracy and we can't even hold an election."

Ted: "Both main parties are keeping down the common person."

Ray: "They are concerned with self-preservation, not what is good for the average person. I came here because I am appalled at what is happening in this country. You don't get the truth from the main media."

Dinah: "I am here to protest everything about Bush—his selection of Ashcroft, Gail Norton and his other cabinet

members. They are all pro-business and anti-civil rights, anti-women, anti-gay. When do the American people have a say? This election was chosen by the Supreme Court and that is not right."

Jon Obee, a graduate student from George Washington University, said, "I think the election was a fraud and the voice of the people was ignored. This goes from the vote count, to the Supreme Court decision, to the mishandling of votes. The Supreme Court acted in a partisan fashion. The separation of powers has broken down. I think this is fascist by origin, and it disenfranchised a lot of people."

Terry Lohman, a massage therapist who lives in Virginia, told the WSWS, "I didn't think this was an election. I think they should eliminate the Electoral College, then Gore would have been elected president. It is not that I like Gore, but I really dislike Bush. I object to the death penalty. I lived in Texas and Bush has killed more people than anyone in the US. He is a racist.

"I think the Supreme Court should be impeached. They are supposed to be nonpolitical. They betrayed the American people. I think Gore won in Florida. I don't like the KKKristians, they have no right to be in government. The people who are appointed to White House positions should remember the Constitution and there should be a separation of church and state. If I wanted to live in a place where a religion was dominant and intolerant, I would live in another country, but this is what is coming here.

"The Democrats did not say anything about the Supreme Court decision. They bowed to it. Until someone forms another party that people will take seriously, nothing will change."

"I have been involved in voter registration for the last five years," said Jeri Bey, one of about 500 people protesting in front of the Supreme Court building. "People would always tell me that their vote didn't matter. I argued with them, and explained to them that their vote is important. The US Supreme Court has made a liar of me. It seems that they are

telling us that we might as well stop voting because they will make sure it doesn't count. I personally will never be involved in voter registration again.”

Many people came to the parade route with a friend or two, found a sign they agreed with and looked for a place to stand.

Jean Peays, a teacher in Virginia, said, “I just couldn't stay away, I had to let people know that I was against a president being selected while votes were not counted. I am here because of the disenfranchisement of thousands of African-American voters in Florida. I am very disappointed that there were stories of intimidation, places being closed, voters being turned away. I feel that in the greatest country that we have, people should be able to express their free right, their First Amendment right to free speech and to vote for who they wanted to vote for. So I am very upset and very disappointed and I am just here to express that disappointment.”

Contrasting the vast amounts of corporate money being spent on the inauguration and the impoverished conditions facing many people in the nation's capital, Jean said, “It is deplorable. You have vast pockets in the Northeast, Northwest and Southwest of people who live hand to mouth. Yet they're having thousand-dollar-plus balls for a man who was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and never really had to work for anything; someone who never realized what it is like to go out and work nine to five in order to survive and pay your rent. Neither have the Cheneys. They have both led very secluded and elitist lives and it is really sad that these are the people who are going to represent our country.

“And not just them, but the senators. There was a story that has just come out that the vast majority of them are millionaires. So how can they realize what it is like for the average American? That is creating this whole class system in which the little man is lost, does not have a voice at all.”

Diana Stewart added, “I am very concerned that the person who now sits in the White House just left the state with the largest number of executed people in this country in the last 21 years. The United States is one of a handful of countries that retains the barbaric practice of the death penalty. We are in company with Iran, Iraq and China. More than 80 people have been found innocent who are on death row. It is part of a racist criminal justice system.

“Former Governor Bush is the lord high executioner in Texas. I am very concerned about what will happen to the rights of people who are imprisoned, many of whom have not had an adequate defense. Ninety-seven percent of all people on death row did not have enough money for an attorney. There are no millionaires on death row. The majority did not have adequate trials. I am here today to

protest that we still have this barbaric form of government.”

Ray Lee and Karen Way, who flew to the rally from Florida, also spoke to the *WSWS*.

“I am here to protest that they did not count all the votes,” said Ray. “I am a person of a few words. I feel government should be of the people, by the people and for the people. We are supposed to elect our president—they should make all the votes count.”

Karen added, “There are a whole lot of people in Florida that are very angry. There are a whole lot of things that happened in Florida that I don't think got reported nationally. There were roadblocks that stopped black people from voting. They put broken machines in the black sections of Liberty City and down in Miami. They knew the machines were broken before the election, but they put them in the black sections of town rather than take them out. And you have the felon list. There is so much it is unbelievable. This is going backwards in time.”

David S. Butcher from West Virginia, who was waiting in line to go through a parade checkpoint, said, “I just don't understand the need for this military presence in Washington DC today. They say this is supposed to be a free society, but you can't even walk around in the nation's capital. Earlier today I tried to get through a checkpoint and they would not let us go. They just said it was shutdown.

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Catharine Hood, also from West Virginia, said, “There is a certain energy here, a certain camaraderie that I like. I am very much afraid of what will happen with the death penalty. It looks like there are going to be many more executions now that Bush is president. I would like a society that is able to solve its problems without killing people.”



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