

Grab him by the policy

“The Women’s March sent the message that we are not powerless and our situation is not hopeless. It was important to me that I was on the right side of history, so I went back to Toledo and got to work.”

Jen Tharau, a fourth-year public health major at the University of Toledo and member of the Toledo Area Progressives, led a peaceful protest march in downtown Toledo Feb. 4 and said that the march was intended to raise awareness regarding the unconstitutional actions happening under the current administration.

After attending the Women’s March in Washington and watching her 18-year-old friend arrange an anti-Trump protest in November, Tharau decided to organize her own march here in Toledo.

With colorful signs and creative rhetoric, over 400 community members gathered in front of One Government Center to protest President Trump’s most recent executive order – the travel ban. Speakers of different backgrounds united by one march shared their stories and purpose for marching.

“Normal people is who we’re marching for today,” said activist Elizabeth Powder.

Powder, who has been politically active for 25 years, believes that it is her duty to be involved.

“It lets other people know they are not alone, and it empowers everybody else there to take action every day. That’s why I protest,” Powder said.

Lawyer Kurt Young also gave a speech to motivate marchers to continue protesting.

“Fight the money and the flaws in our system,” Young said. “It

works. Gather together like this, across broad coalition to keep this up.”

Young, who plans on running for elected office, said that the United States was founded on this motto: “E Pluribus Unum” or “from many, one.”

“From many nations, one people, from many ethnic backgrounds, one people, from many economic strata, one people, and if we the people join together like that, we can make a difference,” Young said.

Executive director of Equality Toledo, Nick Komives, also contributed to and spoke out about the attacks happening on the LGBT community. He referred to the 14th Amendment and its purpose to secure marriage equality for everyone.

“People who are in this amendment, each person, we’re not talking about citizens; we protect the people, and these people deserve refuge in our country and some of them happen to be LGBT,” Komives said.

He said that this march was not just about one single issue affecting a single segment of the population. To him, all of these issues have an effect on one another.

“LGBT people look like every single person here,” Komives said. “We happen to be brown, we happen to be white and we also happen to have different genders, and that’s great; that’s what makes our country great.”

Fourth-year UT student and member of the Muslim Student Association Nour Barudi was another speaker who shared a personal story. She spoke about her parents’ waiting three whole years to receive their green cards. She also expressed her worries for her family back home in Syria.

“Every single day, I am waiting for a phone call to tell me that a bomb dropped on my family’s building and wiped out half

of my family,” said Barudi. “Nobody knows. It’s until you can truly see this, your eyes are closed.”

Being a Syrian American Muslim, Barudi said that she was not only marching for people from the seven countries affected by the ban, but for everyone who had been oppressed.

“We have voices; we have power now and we will continue to resist no matter what it takes from us,” Barudi said. “Continue this fight.”

Hedyeh Elahinia, biology student and co-president of MSA, gave a speech about being an Iranian American Muslim.

She said that, in 80 years, people are not going to remember her for how Iranian or American or Muslim she was but instead for how much she loved and was loved. She believes that people will remember one another for how much they paved the way for equality.

“I am an Iranian American Muslim woman and, as much as it does not matter, all of our identities matter because it makes us one; it puts us right next to each other in the line of people marching in a revolution, one revolution,” Elahinia said.

Jocelyn Watkins, a member of the International Socialist Organization, brought up the topic of Muslims being detained and refugees being denied the chance to enter the United States.

She spoke out about Palestinian homes being demolished, deportation ridding people of their homes, the hardships the working class faces, women fearing for their safety due to sexual and domestic violence, poverty and homelessness and LGBTQ people being rejected by their families. She too believes that all these issues are connected.

“Solidarity is the way forward,” Watkins said. “Solidarity is all oppressed people just having to fight back until we win.”

She said that there will be people who will tell them that they are too idealistic, irrational and impractical. However, they must fight, struggle, endure it all together, as they are the 99 percent and have the power together to bring the system through its ease.

“We don’t just need a change in the election results. We don’t just need to switch the president to another party,” Watkins said. “We need real system change.”

The rest of the speakers who spoke at the march included Bowling Green council member Daniel Gordon, UT student Jessica Angelov, teacher Ruth Courtney and Tiffany Kid, program manager at Farm Labor Organizing Committee.

Protestors flooded Jackson Street carrying signs and chanting, “Show me what democracy looks like. This is what democracy look like.”

Thurau, who did not expect more than 20-30 people to show up, said that she was surprised when 400 people showed up to march on Saturday.

She accredits the success of this event to various groups including Lucas County Young Democrats, Black Lives Matter Toledo and Toledo Area Progressives.

“Looking out into the crowd this Saturday, it seemed as though there was an executive order for everyone,” Thurau said. “However, we were unified and marched in solidarity knowing that we the people hold power and influence in our governments.”