

ICE and the Crisis of Our Times: UUPers Participate in Indivisible Alliance

By Bill Simons, Secretary

Photos contributed by Ethan Fox, Rob Compton, and Nancy Simons



of the people, by the people, for the people

These are not ordinary times. In conjunction with the leaders of other unions, State UUP President Fred Kowal underlines the seriousness of the situation in America 2026: “Most disturbing has been the use of deadly force by federal law enforcement, chiefly by ICE and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, including the recent murders of Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis. Victims include those killed while in custody at internment camps as well as those peacefully protesting or simply witnessing ICE agents conducting their ‘operations.’ The power

of the state to kill is not one that can or should ever be used indiscriminately. Yet, that is what is happening in our country right now.”

The terms and conditions of UUP employees do not exist within the vacuum of an imagined ivory tower. SUNY Upstate Medical University employee member UUP member Alcibiades Lazaro Ramierez González was seized and spent time in ICE detainment. ICE is present in Otsego County, and the incumbent local sheriff has committed to collaboration with ICE. At SUNY Oneonta, there are employees and students vulnerable to ICE seizure. In addition, diversity curriculum and federal funding are under threat from policies of the current presidential administration, as other institutions can attest. To those who counsel that activism on campus and community will only energize the opposition, recall the words of Nazi critic Martin Niemöller:

*First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.*

Nearly 30 years as a union officer, 16 of them as chapter president, have shown me that silence is a far greater danger than activism.

The words of Kowal and other union leaders are unequivocal: “Unions have always been at the forefront of the struggle against authoritarian regimes. It is time for organized labor to take the necessary steps toward escalating widespread resistance against this one... academic unions have an obligation to our members, our campus workplaces, the students we teach and the communities where we live and work to speak out, to organize and to take a stand.”

State UUP continues to support and collaborate on *No Kings* rallies sponsored by the Indivisible movement. It defines itself by word and deed: “Indivisible is a nationwide movement of millions of people working to stop the rise of authoritarianism in the United States and to

demand a real democracy. We believe that politics is too important to leave up to the politicians – it requires all of us to get on the field. (<https://indivisible.org/about/>)” Locally, Virginia Kennedy, a UUP member who donned the union shirt during the local *No Kings* rally, is the group leader of Cooperstown/Oneonta Indivisible.



Cooperstown/Oneonta Indivisible leader Virginia Kennedy, left, with Lieutenant Governor Antonio Delgado

Those of us, including UUP Oneonta Political Action Leader Ethan Fox, our late Treasurer Rich Tyler and his wife/partner and UUP leader of multiple portfolios Loraine DEI Officer Penina Kamina, Vice President for Professionals Jesse Simpaucio, Professional Delegate Anthony Nichols, President Shirley Clark, Acting Vice President for Academics Rob Compton, Secretary Bill Simons, Health/Safety Officer Ron Bishop, former Grievance Officer Paul Conway, former Academic Delegate Gina Keel, Todd Evan, Matt Murphy, Chilton Reynolds and his TLTC team, Matt and Michelle Hendley, Miguel Leon, and Joe Ingrassia, can attest to the impact of Indivisible events. Virginia’s exceptional motivational leadership are on display at organizational meetings, sessions with government officials and candidates, rallies, documentary filming, and food drives.



union swag: UUP there—Rob, Bill, Ethan

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generations united

Be there for the UUP-supported Indivisible No King 3.0 Rally at noon, Saturday, March 28th, on the Oneonta field next to Foothills. Registration information will come from Ethan. The democracy you save may be your own.



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