

Workers Fired After 'Day Without Immigrants' Protest Stand Up To Ex-Bosses

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Body

May 02, 2017(The Huffington Post: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/> Delivered by Newstex) About 20 former employees of a Michigan manufacturing company have banded together to dispute their **firing**, which occurred one day after they participated in national 'day without **immigrants' protests**[1]. The employees, almost all of whom are Latina women, were **fired** in February from EZ Industrial Solutions in Chesterfield, Michigan. They filed a charge[2] with the National Labor Review Board later that month, the Detroit Free Press first reported Sunday[3]. EZ Industrial Solutions management had 'coercively questioned' **workers** about whether they would take part in the Feb. 16 demonstration and threatened them with a one-week suspension if they participated, according to the filing sent to HuffPost by the **workers** attorney. Tony Paris, who is representing the **workers** through the nonprofit Sugar Law Center, said they're waiting for the NLRB to respond.

The federal agency, which enforces labor law, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Paris said about 23 people were **fired** and that 'roughly 20' are still involved in the case. Thousands of people participated in the **protests**[4] following President Donald Trump's[5] crackdown on immigration [6]— they skipped work, stayed home from school and closed their businesses to show the significant role **immigrants** play in their communities. Some protesters had their employers' support, but others weren't so lucky. Dozens of people were **fired**[7], including 21 people at a South Carolina boat builder, 12 at an Oklahoma restaurant and 18 at a Tennessee painting company. Paris said the Michigan employees wouldn't have a case if EZ Industrial Solutions had regularly enforced an attendance policy in the past. But instead, he said, employees had informal schedules and hadn't previously been disciplined for missing work, even when they didn't inform a supervisor. 'When [the company] found that a lot of their workforce was going to observe [the day without **immigrants**] to let politicians know that **immigrants** are vital to the community, well, that became a problem,' Paris said. 'They decided to just create and enforce, out of nowhere, this unilateral type of policy.' Through an attorney, the company disputed the claims. 'After hearing that employees were contemplating taking the day off to participate in the **protest**, they were told that they were needed on the job and had to report to work,' attorney Robert Boonin told HuffPost in an email. 'They took it upon themselves to not report to work as required. Under these circumstances, particularly when it involved two-thirds of the workforce, the company acted well within its legal rights.' 'The employees' actions disregarded the directives of the employer, the needs of the customers and the normal protocols they were expected to follow if they wanted to take a day off in a manner that would not unduly disrupt operations,' Boonin added. Paris amended the NLRB charge in March to add the allegation that three weeks after **workers** were **fired**, their 'employer threatened to report employees to Immigration Services in retaliation for their protected concerted activities, including their participation in NLRB proceedings.' Boonin said EZ Industrial Solutions believes all its employees were working legally. 'The company in no way considered involving [U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement], has reason to involve ICE, and never threatened to involve ICE,' he said. The company is confident the NLRB will dismiss the case, Boonin said, calling the allegations 'factually inaccurate and misleading.' Paris said he didn't know the immigration statuses of all the **workers**, and said most did not speak fluent English. He said they were brave to pursue the case through a federal agency in a political climate that has become increasingly hostile

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to **immigrants**. 'This is the most inspiring group of **workers** I've ever worked with,' he said. 'They all told each other and myself, 'If we don't take a stand now, things are only going to get worse. And this is worth fighting for.' This article originally appeared on The Huffington Post http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/michigan-workers-fired-day-without-immigrants_us_59088cc5e4b05c397682bb79 [1]:
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/nationwide-protests-immigrants_us_58a5e5bbe4b07602ad528d19?ncid=txtlnkusaolp00000603 [2]:
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<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/topic/donald-trump?ncid=txtlnkusaolp00000603> [6]:
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/topic/immigration?ncid=txtlnkusaolp00000603> [7]:
<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/employees-across-u-s-fired-after-joining-day-without-immigrants-n722991?ncid=txtlnkusaolp00000603>

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