

Thousands at immigration protest on San Jose streets

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Body

More than 2,000 pro-**immigration** and labor demonstrators mobilized in East **San Jose** on Sunday in a powerful display of the persistent dream of American citizenship, despite federal inaction. The outpouring of demonstrators was organized by a loose coalition of community, church and labor organizations calling themselves the May 1st Coalition.

On the fifth anniversary of a 2006 National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice, turnout in **San Jose**, Los Angeles and other cities was significantly lower than for that historic event, when a million demonstrators marched in scores of cities across the nation.

But **San Jose's** march was equally passionate, and more ethnically diverse, compared with the original event, with Native American, Chinese, Muslim, Jewish, Catholic and Protestant activists joining in song, chants and placard-waving. They were joined by clusters of union activists who vowed to fight the spread of anti-labor efforts seen in Wisconsin and elsewhere.

"They all have perseverance in common," said Santa Clara County Supervisor Dave Cortese, who has spoken at all five **San Jose** rallies. "There's frustration, but not resignation.

"We've been asking for five years. These are hardworking men and women, and we need to create a path to citizenship," he said. "The federal government has failed to tackle this."

Calling for legal protection for illegal immigrants and workers' rights, demonstrators met at the intersection of King and Story roads, then streamed down King and turned onto Alum Rock Avenue, ending their three-mile march with a rally at **San Jose** City Hall.

"People are definitely frustrated that Obama and Congress have not delivered on what was promised," said organizer Cesar Juarez, who was a mere 18-year-old Evergreen Community College student during the first march. He now holds a degree from **San Jose** State and is pursuing a career in community organizing.

"There is definite excitement about next year's presidential election," he said. "And if everyone today talks to two to four family members, we've influenced **thousands**."

Amid a sea of Mexican flags, clergy members offered voices of support.

"It is a test of a society, how it treats its immigrants," said Rabbi Melanie Anon of Shir Hadash synagogue in Los Gatos. The Rev. **Jose** Pedigo of **San Jose's St. Julie** Billiard Parish said, "We are the foundation of change. "... We are all in this together."

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Samina Sunas of American Muslim Voice said the Prophet Muhammad instructed his followers to give half their food and water to newcomers.

"There should be no 'illegals' here," said Yasmin Vanya, also of American Muslim Voice. "We're here to show our support on behalf of the whole Muslim community, to ask President Obama to honor his election campaign promises."

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