

Full statement by Kay Jackson read at the Wisconsin Rapids protest on January 31, 2026.

On Monday evening we had the opportunity to visit the site of Alex Pretti's murder. Being in the space where this atrocity occurred shook me in a way that even the TV coverage hadn't. The shared feelings of rage and grief among the hundreds of people present were powerful, but so was the sense of community support and determination to resist. All along the street people were offering smiles, hand warmers, snacks, and hot drinks. Restaurants were open as warming centers and to provide access to restrooms. The mood was somber around the place where Alex's body had lain just two days earlier, but candles, flowers, pictures drawn by children and a brass band playing "Lean on Me" reminded us that there is joy, beauty and bravery in the world. The lives of both Alex and Renee attested to that. The people gathered along Nicollet Avenue were there to bear witness AND to find ways to take action—donating food and supplies, delivering groceries, providing transportation, supporting small businesses and serving as ICE watchers.

I returned to the site with my daughter on Tuesday morning around 7:30. There were already about 30 people standing in the bitter cold. Urns of fresh coffee and tea were out. As I stood there a young Hispanic man approached me, introduced himself as Eduardo and asked my name. We shook hands and chatted for a bit until he had to continue on his way to work. As he left, he said, "Thank you for your kind heart that supports me and my community." I was touched and humbled. However, as I continued to think about his lovely words, I began to feel ashamed and angry. In 2026 why should any person in this country feel it's necessary to thank a privileged, old white lady for simply standing up for justice and equal rights for all? I had to face the reality that in our busy lives it's been easy to tune out all the insidious policies and behaviors that marginalize our non-white brothers and sisters. Now it's so starkly in our faces that we can't ignore it and we can't go back.

The political writer [Anand Giridharadas](#) has said that the daily outrages we have experienced since the beginning of the second Trump administration are really tiny biopsies to test the hearts and minds of Americans.

Will apathy, fear and self-interest ultimately make us turn a blind eye to the appalling cruelty inflicted on people who have come here to work hard and build a better life? The people in Minnesota and those gathered here today say HELL NO!

Will apathy, fear and self-interest keep us quiet as millions are denied health care? The people in Minnesota and those gathered here today say HELL NO!

Will apathy, fear and self-interest lead us to accept an economy in which members of the 1% buy yachts for their yachts while most Americans struggle to afford the basics? The people in Minnesota and those gathered here today say HELL NO!

Will apathy, fear and self-interest make us comfortable with abandoning our international partners and friends? The people in Minnesota and those gathered here today say HELL NO!

Will apathy, fear and self-interest keep us disengaged as America slides into authoritarianism?
The people in Minnesota and those gathered here today are saying HELL NO!

There is no end in sight to the battle to save our democracy and we must remain vigilant. We will continue to gather here every week to renew ourselves in the solidarity of our shared values. We will gather here every week to bear witness to the truth in the face of Trump's ongoing lies. We will continue to take action in support of the most vulnerable in our community as we have done with our drives to support local food pantries and the families in need in Minnesota. Most importantly as we approach the election season, we will identify candidates who share our values and do the work needed to get them elected.

I'll close with a passage my sister sent me from a book by indigenous writer [Robin Wall Kimmerer](#).

We are in the time of the Seventh Fire, a time prophesied by my Anishinaabe ancestors. A sacred time when our shared remembering transforms the world. A dark time and a time filled with light. We can choose to live in the dark or in the light. We remember the oft-used words of resistance, 'They tried to bury us, but they didn't know we were seeds'" (Kimmerer).