

TOPICAL

Watch Now: Ukrainian-born Racinians speak out against Putin during rally in Racine

Adam Rogan

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Lena Latyshev, who was born in Ukraine and has lived in Racine since 2005, flies the flags of her native country and her current home during a rally Sunday on Monument Square.

ADAM ROGAN,

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RACINE — What can people in Racine and the U.S. do to combat the illegal aggression that Russian President Vladimir Putin has brought to Ukraine?

“To say that we would like to support Ukraine and stop this war ... Help to save refugees. We need support of whole world.”

That’s what Lena Latyshev said. She’s lived in Racine since 2005, having moved here with her husband after he was relocated for work with SC Johnson. Before that, she was born and raised in Ukraine.

Her parents, Olexander Bushev and Tanya Drogal, moved to Racine in 2020 from Kyiv, Ukraine’s capital, currently under siege from Russian invaders.

“I’m very grateful for this community. We have to stop Putin. We have to stop Russia,” Latyshev said Sunday afternoon during a rally on Monument Square, where dozens gathered to show solidarity with the people of Ukraine as they protect their homeland from the war of aggression orchestrated by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

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Olexander Bushev, who moved to Racine from Kyiv, Ukraine, two years ago, walks toward Monument Square Sunday flying the flag of his home country.

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Russian citizens are speaking out, too. Tens of thousands of Russians took to the streets of Moscow and more than 50 other Russian cities on Sunday to say “No to war,” even as the country’s police threatened to jail those who speak out against Putin’s regime and the war against its much smaller neighbor to the west. An estimated **4,300 Russian antiwar demonstrators** were arrested.

“When something happens to you, my brothers and sisters, something happens to me,” Ernest Ni’A, pastor of Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church in Racine, said during Sunday’s rally in Racine.

“(In war), how many millions have died? How insane is this? ... and it’s still going on?” Greg Petro, deacon at St. Rita Catholic Church, said later. “This is about solidarity. What happens to one, happens to all. We are one human family.”



Ukrainian flags were flown on Monument Square Sunday in solidarity with the people defending their homeland from foreign invaders.

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Petro continued, quoting from a prayer Pope Francis issued in response to the war in Ukraine: “Open our eyes and our hearts, and give us the courage to say: Never again war! With war, everything is lost.”

Jenny Rettmueller of Racine has been in touch with her family in Ukraine; her grandfather was born there. On the second day of the invasion, her aunt and other relatives fled Kyiv after an **orphanage was bombed**. They’re now in Lviv, another city has **yet to be directly attacked** but has been swamped with refugees seeking safety.

On Sunday, Rettmueller said her family learned that their loved ones abroad were now living as refugees and had run out of food.



Jenny Rettmueller, at center, has family who have been forced to become refugees in Ukraine. She and her fiancé, Corey Musiel, attended a rally to stand in solidarity with those affected by the ongoing war instigated by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

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About 60 people attended a rally on Monument Square Sunday, March 6, showing solidarity and support for the people of Ukraine.

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It’s impossible to know exactly how many are dead, wounded or displaced in the current war. Ukraine estimates that **more than 2,000 civilians are killed**, with **thousands more combatants on both sides dead**. More than **1.5 million Ukrainians have become refugees**, according to the United Nations; before the war, the country’s population was more than 44 million.

Sunday’s ceremony closed with Drogal walking into the center of the assembled crowd.

Fighting back tears, she waved a flag and said: “I love everyone. Thank you for your support.”

Photos: Scenes from Ukraine as Russia invades

Ukraine Tensions