



On Martin Luther King Day...

The struggle continues

Here we are, on Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday in 2014, 46 years after his criminal assassination, yet millions upon millions of black people are in deeper poverty than ever, black schoolchildren are being funneled into prison at record numbers, and black youth like Trayvon Martin are shot down in the street for wearing a hoodie. The struggle against segregation accomplished marvels in destroying open discrimination, and it helped inspire a world wave of struggle for freedom around the world. But clearly the struggle is far from over. Legal segregation is gone -- and let's never forget that it existed and what sacrifices it took to bring it down -- but there is still a long fight against racism ahead of us. Let's learn from the struggle against segregation in order to inspire the anti-racist struggle today.

The struggle against austerity must include the struggle against racism

The struggle against segregation included a struggle for better jobs, higher pay, and good social programs. The struggle against racism reinforced the struggle for better conditions for all workers. But furthermore, the struggle of all workers could not move forward without fighting racism in unions as well as among employers. It's no secret that the savage cutbacks in social conditions are motivated in part by racism against black, Latino and undocumented workers who bear the heaviest burden of those cuts.

Today the Second Great Depression has sucked the working class of all races and nationalities down into a desperate, deadly whirlpool of hopelessness. It has hit the black, minority and undocumented workers the hardest, but both black and white workers have been targeted. The profits of the large corporations have recovered, but for both black and white workers, the depression rages on, spreading joblessness, wage cuts for those still working, and the threat of hunger for retired pensioners and social security recipients. The struggle against racism is part of this struggle of the 99%, black and white workers together, against the devastation imposed on us by the 1%.

Solidarity with oppressed people all over the world!

The struggle against segregation included solidarity with national liberation movements in Africa and other struggles of black and other oppressed peoples around the world. Today our struggle must also include solidarity with those fighting against dictatorship and oppression, no matter where they are. We should continue to support the struggles of African peoples against dictatorships and against market-driven capitalist dictates directed by the World Bank and IMF. We should support Arab and Middle Eastern peoples fighting against entrenched dictatorships, including the Syrian people fighting for the removal of the dictator Assad, and the Iranian, Bahraini, Saudi and other peoples fighting for political rights.

Where dictatorships have been overthrown, such as Tunisia and Libya, we should support the difficult struggle to learn how to build a new national life, and the efforts of workers of these countries to develop united struggles against poverty and exploitation. Let's reject with contempt the arguments of those who tell us to look back fondly on the old dictatorships, because they had some social programs; instead we should back the struggle for freedom.

Let the rank-and-file unite against the pro-business politicians!

The struggle against segregation had its weaknesses. In particular, many leaders including Dr. King were too close to the Democratic Party, one of the two big parties of our capitalist exploiters. Today we see that there are many black officials, and yet racism continues. There were black mayors in Detroit, and yet the city workers suffer wage cuts and layoffs and privatization, the police continue racist attacks, and the city's population sees the shredding of basic services. There is a black Democratic president, and yet it's still business as usual in privatizing the schools, cutting social benefits, and handing over billions to banks and corporations. Both the anti-racist and the anti-austerity struggles come up against the opposition of the pro-capitalist politicians, whether white or black.

So the path forward will include struggle against both parties of big business, Republicans and Democrats. We need mass actions against the continuing racism and the robbery of pensions, wages and jobs. We need new organizations of the workers and the oppressed to stand against the organizations of the rich. This can start with ordinary working people building networks in their neighborhoods and workplaces, where the nitty-gritty folks have their say and control the actions. Build networks of resistance to austerity!

The same thing will happen around the world. A month ago, at its congress at the end of December, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), the largest union in South Africa, declared that it will no longer support the ANC and the ANC-led government. (See, e.g., www.numsa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/SNC-Declaration-final-copy.pdf, which lauds Mandela but denounces the ANC.)

Come to the Rally and March for "Jobs, Peace, and Justice" on Martin Luther King Day

Commemorating the 1964 Freedom Summer

Monday, January 20, 2014, at 12 noon

Central United Methodist Church

23 E. Adams and Woodward, Detroit

(Organized by the Detroit MLK Day Committee -- mlkdetroit.org)

The four unions which came together to form NUMSA in May 1987 were part of the important forces fighting apartheid. As part of the Congress of South Africa Trade Unions (COSATU), NUMSA backed the ANC in the fight against apartheid regime. But the ANC, when it came to power, abandoned the promises of its famous "Freedom Charter" and worked hand-in-glove with the World Bank, the IMF, and the South African corporations that had grown rich from exploiting black workers under apartheid. The result is that millions upon millions of black workers in South Africa, including mineworkers, live under conditions reminiscent of Detroit, with high unemployment, with even worse social services, and corralled into slums and worthless shacks – now no longer held

there by apartheid, but by economic oppression. And the workers of South Africa are starting to say, "enough already!"

It is up to us here in Detroit to also break with false friends and take the path of struggle. If NUMSA can break with the ANC and say there has to be a change in South African trade unions, then workers and activists here in Detroit will also eventually see through the Democratic Party and stand for a change in the do nothing policy of the present trade union leadership.

Let us commemorate MLKing day by rededicating ourselves to the struggle against racism and austerity! Get organized in communities, workplaces, unions, and schools across the country!

From the historic overthrow of apartheid to the Marikana massacre of striking miners

The divided legacy of Nelson Mandela

On December 5, Nelson Mandela, the greatest leader of the African National Congress (ANC), died. The oppressed masses had built a number of organizations whose members fought courageously against apartheid, such as the ANC, the Pan-Africanist Congress, and the Black Consciousness Movement. The ANC ended up as the largest organization in the decades-long struggle that overthrew the racist apartheid system. The white racist regime in South Africa was a major blight on Africa and the entire world, and the anti-apartheid struggle was one of the major freedom struggles of our time. Mandela was one of the heroes of this struggle.

The communist movement was, since the mid-1920s, an important part of the struggle against the racist South African regime. To this day, the South African Communist Party (SACP) works closely with the ANC, and it was close with Mandela, who was a member at one time. Communism is not just the fight against economic oppression, but against tyranny and oppression of all types. Meanwhile the racist and imperialist American government had for decades backed the apartheid government as a bulwark against communism and African liberation movements.

The end of apartheid in 1994 marked a new departure for South Africa. It was a new dawn.

Yet on August 16, 2012, almost two decades after the fall of apartheid, years during which the ANC ruled South Africa, thirty-four striking black miners were shot down by police at Marikana, South Africa, and many more were wounded. This massacre dramatized that while many ANC leaders had become millionaires, the majority of black people in South Africa still suffered from deep poverty. It showed that the class struggle was intensifying in South Africa, but the ANC and the SACP were now on the wrong side of the barricades.

This, too, was part of Mandela's legacy. He had been one of the key figures who had led the ANC, as it came to power, to discard the promises of its famous "Freedom Charter", which had called for radical economic change. Instead, the ANC government has acted as one of the foremost backers in the world of free-market fanaticism. If today the bourgeois governments honor the memory of Mandela, the Mandela they love is the one who became a defender of the privileges of the rich and an advocate of policies like those of the World Bank.

This shows the importance of the fight against revisionism, the political trend that talks in the name of Marxism and communism but nevertheless betrays ("revises") their real meaning. It is revisionism, not communism, that rules in China and Cuba today, and Russia and Eastern Europe in the old days. This has had its effect in South African politics. Although many members and supporters of the South African Communist Party fought courageously and at great personal cost against apartheid, the party also came to follow closely the sold-out policies of the revisionist movement centered in the Soviet Union. And the example of the ANC regime shows how a new bourgeoisie can arise after a revolution; in the case of South Africa, the new ANC millionaires stand hand-in-hand with the traditional white bourgeoisie.

Let us be inspired by the historic victory of the South African masses in overthrowing apartheid, but let us also be committed to continuing the class struggle until liberation from poverty, inequality, and all oppression. Let us learn from the great struggle of the South African people, and from both the pluses and minuses of Mandela's legacy. Let us build new organizations of struggle, committed to the revolutionary cause of the working class and attentive to the lessons of the historic movements of the past. Solidarity with the struggle of the South African working people of all ethnic backgrounds for a decent life, equality, and socialism!

For more on the history of the struggle against apartheid, see www.comunistvoice.org/00SouthAfrica.html. For links to statements by activists of various backgrounds on Mandela's legacy, see the second half of www.comunistvoice.org/DWV-131215.html.

Read *Communist Voice* magazine

Communist Voice is a journal of revolutionary working-class theory against the capitalist system. It supports the ongoing class struggles for freedom, a decent life, and protecting the environment, and it tackles controversies facing activists from a Marxist-Leninist standpoint. It stands for anti-revisionist Marxism, a theory incompatible with Trotskyism, Stalinism, Maoism, and anarchism, or with the false "communist" regimes like the former Soviet Union, China, and Cuba.

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(This is a corrected version of DWV #110, which differs from the original in fixing the description of NUMSA.)