



On Martin Luther King Jr. Day: Honor the civil rights movement of the past by fighting back against Trump's racism today!

This year's celebrations of Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday are being held in the midst of a storm of attacks on every value the civil rights movement ever fought for. The very lives and livelihood of black people, workers and poor of all backgrounds and all justice-loving people are at risk. We need to honor the anti-racist movement of the past by building a new movement today. We need mass struggle in the streets, workplaces, and schools, but we also need to study and debate the orientation for this movement.

For years one president after another pretended to be on the people's side, while in fact helping the rich get richer. Now Donald Trump is the open face of the rich, sneering at working people and especially minorities. He has gone on a binge of deportations, breaking up families, and placing millions of people under a reign of terror. He has closed his eyes to the plight of the Puerto Rican people after the hurricanes; he has thrown them paper towels in lieu of helping them restore power, schools, jobs, and infrastructure. He has denounced immigrants from Haiti, El Salvador, and Africa as coming from supposed "shithole countries". He is intensifying the danger of a horrifying nuclear war through criminal brinkmanship in Korea and Iran. He is cutting back on health care programs, eliminating environmental protections, denying the danger of climate change, backing sexual harassers like Roy Moore, stealing from the poor to give tax breaks to the rich, and more. But first and foremost, he makes sure to display his racism and bigotry.

Trump is not going to show the people mercy. His presidency shows how deeply embedded racism is among the business class and the millionaires of this country. But the civil rights movement showed that when the masses of people take matters into their own hands, change is possible. And today we see the emergence of a broad mass struggle in the streets, from Black Lives Matter, to the women's movement, to the struggle in defense of immigrants, etc. Just as the Iranian

working people came out onto the streets with over a week of demonstrations against the oppression there, we need to take part in the militant protest movements here.

But both in Iran and here, we are faced with the question of orientation - how not only to have large protests, but a solid movement that won't die out. In Iran, over the last few years the movement has changed so that the "moderate" section of the clergy is being denounced as well as the hardliners. Here in the US similar issues exist. The Democratic Party leaders have dragged their feet in the struggle against Trump, because they represent the same capitalist class as the Republicans do, and they play up to millionaire backers. The Democratic Party establishment won't even allow the rank-and-file to choose candidates, and it keeps looking for bipartisan cooperation with Trump.

So we need to build a new movement, not just repeat the past. As we enter 2018, the second year of the Trump presidency, we see that we are going to suffer for a long time from the judges appointed by Trump, and the agenda pushed by Trump. The large demonstrations of the first year were important, but it's clear that we need organization for a protracted struggle. So let's increase the level of political discussion among our friends and at school and work. Let's draw out the class issues involved in the dramatic political events of the day, and show that Trump's ignorance and bigotry is the ignorance and bigotry of his rich and privileged capitalist backers. Let's stress the need to unify the working class to fight back. Let's continue to participate in all the mass protests, like the anti-racist marches on MLK Day, and seek to unite with like-minded people to build a working-class movement.

By doing these things, we'll be helping to build the kind of independent political movement needed to fight today's poverty and racism. And we will be taking a step towards overthrowing the capitalist rule of the rich over the working majority. <>

Solidarity with the Iranian people!

Starting on December 28, Iranians came out on the streets for over a week to protest. The demonstrations weren't just in the capital, Teheran, but in dozens of other smaller cities, where they were even more vigorous. The Islamic Republic is known for showing no mercy to dissidents and protesters, but the ruling clergy were taken by surprise by the power and extent of this movement. There were thousands upon thousands of arrests, and dozens killed, but nothing could hide the anger of the Iran people, especially workers, women, and youth. And the towns inhabited by Kurds and Arabs were among those prominent in this upsurge.

Various groups ought to influence the movement, but it did not appear to be organized by any one political trend. It was a response to the long years of austerity, unemployment, unpaid wages, corruption, and religious tyranny.

The Islamic Republic may appear stable, but it has been decaying under the surface, and it has been shaken by one mass upsurge after another. There was the "Green Movement" in 2009 against the stealing of the presidential election by the hardliner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. And

for years now there has been a persistent series of labor protests, taken despite the lack of legal channels, the ban on independent unions, and the brutal punishments. Indeed it is notable that the recent mass protests have been composed largely of workers and the poor while the Green Movement of 2009 had been largely based on the middle-class.

These mass struggles are the real voice of the people, while the theocrats of the Islamic Republic make a show of guided democracy, in which you can vote, but only for those candidates whom the clergy (represented by the Guardian Council) allow; the votes will be counted, but the count may be clandestinely adjusted if the highest cleric (Supreme Leader) thinks it necessary; and the parliament can legislate, but only for those laws which the Guardian Council accepts.

The mass protests showed a radicalization of the working people, many of whom are opposing not just this or that faction of the theocratic ruling class of the Islamic Republic, but the regime as a whole. The country has changed since the protests of 2009 when large numbers of people took to the streets to demand that the moderate fundamentalist Mir-Hossein Mousavi be president instead of the hardliner Ahmadinejad. Today there are slogans against both hardliner Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and against moderate president Hassan Rouhani.

The immediate background to the demonstrations seem to have been the presentation in mid-December of the 2018 national budget. Rouhani is a so-called moderate or reformer, but his neo-liberal budget contained severe austerity measures, cuts in subsidies for social welfare, and increases in money for the military and the police. This exasperated the population, and in late December the hard-liners staged some demonstrations against Rouhani, blaming the economic difficulties on him. Meanwhile Rouhani had ensured that this year's budget revealed some previously secret figures on the huge sums going to the religious institutions: the priests and their friends grow fat while the people are supposed to pull in their belts. Rouhani meant this as a slap on the hardliners. The people, however, have come out en masse against both the moderates and the hardliners. Neither religious fundamentalism, whether moderate or hardline, nor market fundamentalism will satisfy the demands of the Iranian workers.

What happens in Iran affects the entire Middle East. The Iranian, Saudi, and ISIS fundamentalists may be at each other's throats, but all three seek to smother the rights and struggles of the working people. The Iranian intervention has, for example, played a major role in suppressing the uprising against the Syrian dictator Assad and bludgeoning to death the Arab spring. When the Islamic Republic crumbles, it will encourage democratic forces throughout the region. <

The 100th anniversary of the Russian revolution: *Nostalgia is not enough!*

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917. New books and articles have appeared on the history of the revolution. There are those who think there is no alternative to capitalism, and there is no shortage of those who curse this example of working-class revolution. But for those looking for a way out of the growing miseries of today, the story of the first protracted attempt to build a new society has great appeal. So many today look back to these days with nostalgia.

But revolution hasn't come as soon as expected. It was thought that World War I and the Russian revolution were ushering in a general crisis that would bring capitalism down, and yet a hundred years later, capitalism is still here. If we are to continue the struggle for liberation, we need more than nostalgia. We need to study the revolutions of the past, but while doing so, we also need to take account of the changes in the world, both in the capitalist world and in the left-wing movement.

Marxism holds that the class struggle flows from the economic and social base of society. And we know that this base has changed substantially over the last century. This changes the type of opposition that the working class faces and changes how the struggle should be conducted. We have seen the development of new forms of capitalism, such as state-capitalism, which was built in countries which had overthrown the old ruling classes. We have seen the collapse of most of the old colonial system, but also its replacement by new forms of imperialist oppression, including the rise of new imperialist powers. And we have seen various revolutionary parties rise and fall, or survive but be corrupted and become new oppressors.

In both learning from the old revolutions and updating their lessons, we face many obstacles. The capitalist authorities lie about the past, or simply consign the best accomplishments of the working class and of the oppressed peoples to dusty archives; they hide the history of resistance and struggle, and of the role of the masses in achieving whatever is good in the present society. But we also face a major obstacle from within the left itself.

The Russian revolution couldn't have taken place without a struggle lasting years against those who wanted to reconcile with capitalism. These were those who advocated a mutilated or revised form of Marxism or socialism that left out the revolution.

But a new form of revisionism later arose within the communist movement itself. This was Stalinism, but also Trotskyism - despite their fierce fight against each other, Stalinism and Trotskyism resemble each other in many ways. Both Stalinists and most Trotskyists regard many oppressive regimes as socialist or workers' regimes, albeit perhaps ugly or "deformed" workers' regimes. This has created a situation in which many on the left have opposed the uprising against the Assad dictatorship in Syria or prettify the ugly Kim Jong Un regime in North Korea. The sad truth is that neither Stalinism, Trotskyism, anarchism, nor left communism takes serious account of the major changes in the world situation; these trends have ossified into sterile rigidity; they think the world will come to them and their catchphrases, rather than the left having to adjust to the world.

We in *Detroit Workers' Voice* come from a different trend of activists, one that originated in the mass upsurge of the 1960s. The clearest activists from that time knew that something was wrong with the supposed communism of the Soviet Union and the pro-Soviet parties, but differed on what should be built in its place. The turbulent 1960s and 70s saw in the US such things as the struggle against the Vietnam war; the solidarity movement with the national liberation struggles in Africa and elsewhere; the great anti-racist movement; workers' strikes; the growth of the women's movement; etc.

This was not just a time of mass actions, but of the search for a proper revolutionary theory. Many activists couldn't just accept the movement as it had been in the previous couple of decades, but looked to build a new type of movement. We began to oppose the false communists as "revisionists", who had distorted Marxism in order to justify betrayal of the working class struggle.

This anti-revisionist wave was eventually defeated, and only fragments still exist. As a result, today the Stalinists and Trotskyists dominate what is regarded as the communist movement. In this situation, it has become fashionable to ridicule the anti-revisionist movement of the past, and the way it crumbled into pieces. But at its best, the anti-revisionist movement, or new communist movement as it was sometimes called, brought forward theoretical issues of vital importance; it gained support at many workplaces among workers fed up with the liberals and the labor bureaucrats; and it gave immense support to liberation struggles of many sorts.

Today there is struggle everywhere, and there is confusion and division everywhere. But, in a way, this isn't so different from what happened in the past. A century ago, there were also major problems in the world movement, and the Second International, which had at one time been the highest achievement of socialist organization, stood against the revolution. The Bolshevik revolution was carried out in defiance of the leadership of the Second International. Similarly today, if we are to truly commemorate the anniversary of this revolution, we need to work for a radical change in the world left-wing movements of our time. In the coming months, follow-up articles that will appear on the *Detroit/Seattle Workers* e-mail list will delve into the some of the changes in the world situation over the last century, and what this means for revolutionary theory. <

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