

Make Martin Luther King Day a day of commitment to renewed struggle

The historic mass struggles and rebellions of Dr. Martin Luther King's time won large numbers of victories and should be celebrated today. But the decline in the anti-racist movement coupled with moves to the right in bourgeois politics means that the masses of African Americans are still discriminated against in employment, housing, education, health care, the so-called criminal justice system and more. The struggle must therefore continue. And one telling example of why this is so is that the number of people killed by the police, people who are disproportionately black and indigenous, has kept creeping upward through the Obama, Trump and now Biden administrations. Thus, by late December of last year 1,124 people had been killed by the cops, which was another yearly record. And all too often those shot are victims of racist police murders.

The cumulative effects of this discrimination are several: African Americans on average are poorer than whites; also, although the situation has improved, black infants are twice as likely to die as white infants, and before the pandemic you were likely to die 3.6 years sooner than the average white person if you are black, while today that gap has increased to perhaps five years.

Meanwhile, the Trumpist Republicans

continue their voter suppression campaign. As part of this in recent years they've proposed hundreds of bills in state legislatures that would disproportionately exclude African Americans from voting, and as of May last year 18 states had passed a total of 34 laws that restrict voting rights for the poor.

That racial discrimination, racist police murders and denial of voting rights continue more than 54 years after the assassination of Martin Luther King shows that they're built into the system. Nevertheless, the history we celebrate on MLK Day also shows that such outrages can be beaten back through mass struggle.

What is more, the struggles of the black people in this country – such as the Black Lives Matter movement – have long inspired progressive people around the world, while the struggles in other countries have inspired progressive people in this country to rise in their defense, because our aspirations and futures are linked. For example, earlier this century progressives opposed the bloody U.S. imperialist invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, and being consistently democratic and progressive means that today one must oppose the Russian imperialist invasion of Ukraine as well as defend the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement in Iran.

A vocal part of the American left refuses

to do either, however. According to their logic, since the U.S. government gives military support to the Ukrainian resistance for its reasons, we're not allowed to support the resistance for our reasons. And since the U.S. has long condemned and sanctioned the Iranian theocrats, we're not allowed to support the massive democratic movement against them.

But **in Iran**, women have no right to choose whether to wear or to not wear the hijab (head scarf), and the world now knows the story of the 22-year-old Kurdish woman, Mahsa (Jina) Amini, who was murdered by the “morality police” for allegedly improperly wearing hers in mid-September. At that time large numbers of women immediately took to the streets with many men supporting them. Soon there were also student protests and strikes, workers in several industries organized solidarity rallies and strikes, the police and religious militia thugs were often driven away from mass demonstrations, and the slogan “death to the dictator” (Ayatollah Khamenei) became ever more popular. In short, the people have displayed incredible courage and heroism. But as the new year begins, after over 500 protesters have been killed, and over 19,000 arrested, and with the fundamentalist regime now beginning to hang protesters for such “crimes” as “waging war against God,” the open forms of protest have been declining.

Nevertheless, Iranian history over the past few years shows that new rounds of struggle against capitalist exploitation, women's oppression and the oppression of Iran's non-Persian nationalities will erupt. The democratic demand for “Woman, Life, Freedom” will not die. - see <http://www.comunistvoice.org/00Iran.html> for more on this profound democratic movement

And Putin's motive **in Ukraine** is to deny its national existence by incorporating it into a new Russian Empire. But for nearly a year the Ukrainian people have valiantly resisted as the Russian government pours more and more troops and mercenaries into their country, bombs their infrastructure in order to leave them freezing in winter and commits other atrocities. Thus, progressive humanity should support the Ukrainian resistance and demand that Russian imperialism get out of Ukraine now. - see <http://www.comunistvoice.org/00Ukraine.html> for much more on Ukraine

In solidarity with the peoples of Ukraine, Iran and people everywhere who are fighting against reactionaries, let us begin this new year with commitments to advance struggle against racial discrimination, police brutality and denial of voting rights in this country. ◇

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Keep in touch with us by subscribing to the *Detroit/Seattle Workers' Voice* email list. For information, see http://www.comunistvoice.org/DSWV_email_list.html. Read *Communist Voice*, a journal of revolutionary theory. It upholds real Marxism-Leninism, exposes the capitalist system, and tackles controversies facing activists. See <http://communistvoice.org/>.

40th Annual MLK Day Rally and March, Monday January 16

Garfield High School, 400 23rd Ave

Indoor rally starts at 11:00 am. March starts at 12:30 pm.

Sponsored by the Seattle MLK, Jr. Organizing Coalition (Please bring a mask)