



TOWARDS BLACK LIBERATION

Dispatches from the Black Left Unity Network (BLUN)
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INTRODUCTION

This volume contains the dispatches of the Black Left Unity Network (BLUN). By dispatches we mean the following:

- a. Editorial articles in the four issues of the BLUN journal, The Black Activist
- b. Policy positions on the mission and strategy of the BLUN
- c. Statements prepared by BLUN leadership for unity meetings, including sessions at the US Social Forum and at international forums
- d. Leaflets injected into the protest motion of the various battlefronts of the Black Liberation Movement

The BLUN is a transitional organizational form toward the consolidation of a left tendency to provide leadership to the Black Liberation Movement. This process does not hope to achieve total agreement on ideological line. It does seek to establish a democratic discussion of leading organizations and individuals to fight for political consensus. Ideology includes our general views of the world and involves religious beliefs, historical interpretations, and general value orientations. Political line is about gathering social forces who want to fight against all forms of oppression and planning general strategy and tactics. This is what the BLUN is about.

We face a major challenge: Can the leading forces (organizations and individuals) fighting for Black liberation sit together and find ways to build a broad inclusive unity? There are contradictions:

1. Maintaining organizational integrity while being in a unity motion of the BLM?
2. Leaders of each organization accepting each other as equals?
3. Compromising by uniting on some questions and not on others, what we call the 80-20 principle?
4. Finding ways to meet organizational budgets while sharing resources for a united national movement?
5. Balancing recruitment for each organization without disrupting the general process of building a national movement?

This volume is to share what we have said and done over the last few years that the BLUN has been in motion. The impact of the struggle at Ferguson after the murder of Michael Brown, coupled with the massive outrage of the many such police assassinations, has taken us to a decisive moment for Black left unity. Many of us have stepped forward with courage and militancy. Now is the time to find ways to sit in council, all of us together who have an anti-capitalist orientation and are focused on Black liberation. All of us – workers and trade unionists, youth and students, women, LGBT activists, seniors, immigration activists, intellectuals,

environmental activists, cultural activists, mental health activists, communist cadre, and all the rest of us.

Please read and comment on these documents. We are a process in transition and welcome your contribution as we need it for the unity that we must build.

FROM *THE BLACK ACTIVIST*, JBLUN.ORG

Summer 2013

01 Forging Unity of the Black Left: A Major Task of the Black Liberation Movement!

The Black Liberation Movement must be more than the spontaneity of the Black masses. It must provide a national framework with an internationalist perspective and strategic organizing components that seek to unite the thinking and actions of the many struggles around a program for revolutionary change.

Thus the Black liberation movement must have conscious activists that work together to give the spontaneous struggles a conscious program and direction; an assessment of the balance of forces on the side of the oppressor and the oppressed; and provide a global context for understanding their struggles for a better world.

The fragmentation of the Black Liberation Movement resulting from the U.S. government attacks and the ideological errors during the late 1960s and 1970s, and further impacted by the demise of major zones of socialism as the main bases of support for the anti-imperialist struggles worldwide, has made it difficult to forge unity among enough Black left forces to effectively intervene in crucial struggles like the political disenfranchisement of Black people in Florida and Ohio that installed Bush Jr. as U.S. president in 2000 and 2004 and Katrina in 2005.

When the forces in the Black Liberation Movement who make big demands for redress on the system for its crimes against Black people, are unable to give direction to the Black people's spontaneous responses to such blatant acts of national oppression, it does not build confidence among the Black masses that a Black Liberation Movement can help to bring about the liberation of Black people. This also weakens the confidence of the national and international anti-imperialist forces in the Black Liberation Movement.

The forging of a unity of the Black left, must therefore be a conscious, continuing and serious effort of the Black Liberation Movement, if it is to become more than the sum total of the spontaneous local struggles, and the loose national networks that form to try and influence election campaigns and win basic reforms.

The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN), while far from the scope and depth of the unity that is needed, represents a conscious and active commitment and mechanism toward forging this unity.

Through BLUN working groups like the Cuba Working Group, we seek to unite Black left forces in practical mass work and educational activities, as we try to figure out ways of widening and deepening a unity process.

The BLUN salutes the work of Black Workers For Justice!

Black Left Unity Network

02 We Condemn the U.S. Refusal to Participate in the Durban Review Conference: African Americans and People Of Color Speak for Ourselves!

The election of Barack Obama as US president was an important development in the direction of democracy. It represented an ideological blow against the hold of racism and white supremacy on national political elections. Many Blacks and People of Color worldwide have great hopes that his election among other things, represents a leadership willing to take a strong stand against racist US and global policies, systems and governments.

The refusal of the Obama administration to participate in the Durban Review Conference on racism to be held in Geneva on April 20 – 24, 2009, without preconditions that restricts the conference from addressing the racist and genocidal nature of Israel's oppression of Palestine, is truly a big disappointment. It not only departs from one of the important meanings of the Obama election – unifying a political majority in opposition to racism; it represents an act of complicity with violations of human rights as stated in the United Nation's Charter.

While the United States and western governments boycott the Durban Review Conference, the impact of the international economic crisis continues to deepen the historic vestiges of centuries of racism, devastating poverty, and all forms of discrimination and injustice upon People of Color inside the US and throughout the world. It is a major cause of the ethnic cleansing which we have witnessed in parts of Africa, resulting in the deaths of millions.

Little attention has been given to the fact that in the U.S. alone, it was Black and Latino communities who were the targets of the unjust and discriminatory subprime loan schemes of Wall St. and the financial markets. These loans preyed upon the legitimate aspirations of millions of Black and Latino families for adequate housing and home ownership. Various analyses of the housing market crisis indicate that Black and Latino communities are disproportionately impacted and will "lose between \$164 billion and \$213 billion" as a result of predatory lending, thrusting thousands into economic crisis, homelessness, poverty, devastation.

The ILO reports that women will also be disproportionately impacted by the economic crisis, exacerbating the historic elements of gender based discrimination world-wide. Increases in

unemployment world-wide will hit women workers the hardest. According to the ILO Bureau for Gender Equality, “women’s lower employment rates, weaker control over property and resources, concentration in informal and vulnerable forms of employment with lower earnings, and less social protection, all place women in a weaker position than men to weather the crisis”.

Increased racially motivated and gender based violence is being documented across the globe as the downturns from the economic crisis linger in developing as well as developed countries. Every continent has seen a rise in violence against women, gays, immigrants, and non majority nationalities. “Rising inequality can result in an increase in racial bias for scapegoating or advancing xenophobic and isolationist tendencies”, reports say.

The world-wide struggle against the concrete manifestations of racism and discrimination were the central focus of the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in the first place. Without the US and other western governments correcting their egregious refusal to officially participate in WCAR and now the Durban Review process, the Obama Administration turns its back upon hundreds of millions of the oppressed and disadvantaged around the world who continue to suffer at the hands of the greed and misconduct of the racist, misogynist, rich and powerful. This is the true cost of the defense of Israel at the expense of the Palestinian people and all the oppressed sectors and communities around the world.

We have submitted petitions and made appeals to the US government to participate in this important conference, without success. Its participation in a preparatory meeting, gives a false impression that the US government is really committed to ending racism inside the US and around the globe. We see in the US refusal to attend this conference, a continuation of the policies of the previous administrations, magnified by the Bush administration of refusing to be accountable to democratic standards and decisions arrive at by the UN and other international bodies.

We therefore call on the Durban Review Conference to recognize the voices of African American and People of Color delegations and coalitions from organizations and social movements throughout the US in this important deliberation, to arrive at a report that frames, mandates, informs, reviews and reinforces accountability to international conventions and standards on human rights.

Black Left Unity Network

03 Victory to the Ongoing Bolivarian Revolution: U.S. Imperialism Hands Off Venezuela!

The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) salutes the victory of Nicolas Maduro Moros as the new and democratically elected President of Venezuela.

We stand in revolutionary solidarity with the statement issued by the Afro-Venezuela movement that pledges its' continued support to the objectives of the revolutionary process in Venezuela and the election of President Maduro.

The struggles and voices of Afro-Venezuelans represent the deepest sentiments for democracy and social transformation and were critical to this victory and the ongoing Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela that was led by Comrade President Hugo Chavez.

We will never forget the immediate response by the Venezuelan people led by President Chavez to the tragedy triggered by Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast and the offer of major aid to assist the survivors remaining in the disaster area and those dispersed to all corners of the U.S. The U.S. government's refusal of this aid and the aid offered by revolutionary Cuba, pointed out clearly how the U.S. government will sacrifice the lives of African descendants and poor people, before it will recognize the good deeds of governments that are anti-imperialist, truly democratic and building a society that benefits the needs of the majority, not the capitalist elites.

Even with the major changes and improvements made by the Venezuelan revolutionary process, the forces of counter-revolution are still part of the economic and racist elite in Venezuelan society. Their ties to U.S. imperialism make them a major threat to the revolutionary process. Combating and defeating their maneuvers remains part of the ongoing revolutionary process until this class is defeated.

African descendants in the U.S. know firsthand how elections are manipulated by the capitalist elites. They use their control of major media to try and place doubt in the minds of the people, trying to suggest voter fraud as has been the case so many times for candidates supported by Black people in the U.S. But in Venezuela, where the elections are structured in ways that safeguard and protect the democratic will of the majority, the capitalist elites have been combated in this arena.

The revolutionary struggle in Venezuela is critical to the revolutionary direction of building and expanding socialism throughout the Americas in the 21st Century. The organization and struggles of the Afro-Venezuelans as an identifiable and integral part of the Venezuela revolutionary process represents the further advance for socialism.

Through our efforts to rebuild a revolutionary Black movement in the U.S. we will ensure that African descendants in this country understand the common historical and political ties that bound our peoples together. For us there is no question that African descendant's in the U.S. must be part of the defense of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, as U.S. imperialism assumes its historical role as a central force supporting and or initiating counter-revolution in Venezuela.

The BLUN commits to educate the Black working-class and to call on the activists and organizations in our network, to mobilize in defense of the Venezuelan Revolution as it is connected to the struggles of All African descendants against the impacts of the colonial, neo-

colonial and imperialist past and present, and to further shaping the direction for a revolutionary social transformation throughout the Americas.

Victory to the ongoing Bolivarian Revolution!

Black Left Unity Network

04 Justice For Trayvon Martin: Wear Your Hoodie, Protest This Racist Murder and Rebuild the National Black Liberation Movement

The senseless murder of 17 year old Trayvon Martin, an unarmed Black youth in Sanford, Florida, who was shot by George Zimmerman, a white man driven by racism and protected by an unjust “Stand Your Ground” law, is a crime against humanity and violation of human rights.

The refusal of the Sanford police department to arrest Zimmerman, despite having evidence that he chased Trayvon after being told by the 911 operator not to do so, and his aired “fucking coon” comment showing that he wanted to kill this Black youth, along with the cover up actions by the heads of the Sanford police department, sends an age old racist message - that Black people have no rights that a white is bound to respect. The Sanford police did not drug test or do a criminal background check on killer Zimmerman, and allowed him to keep his gun permit enabling him to purchase and carry another instrument of death. Yet, they drug tested young Trayvon’s dead body, and did an extensive background check, trying to find reasons to justify this racist killing.

The economic crisis created by the capitalist system and its ruling 1%, that is protected by government policies and agencies, including major cuts in social programs in the billions to bailout the banks and corporations, has fostered a sharper racist political and social climate by scapegoating working class and poor Blacks and Latino’s and labor unions as the cause of the economic crisis.

The struggle against the racist aspects of the economic crisis that reflect the conditions of the most oppressed and exploited sectors of the 99%, must be brought forward by a more united Black left in alliance with other oppressed sectors, and a strategic campaign, that highlights the issues and demands and begins to mobilize a national resistance of working class Black and other oppressed peoples.

The immediate demands for the arrest of killer Zimmerman for a hate crime, the resignation of the Sanford police chief and the repeal of the “stand your ground” laws in all states throughout the U.S., must be linked to a struggle and movements to build mass based working class Black and oppressed people’s power.

The short lived struggle following the initial massive response to the racist jailing of the Jena six, in Jena, Louisiana in December 2006, shows that the immediate struggles that highlight the racist injustices of the system, must be linked to a long term struggle and organized national movement with a program of action that addresses the systemic causes of these injustices.

The coming forward of the demands and movements of the most oppressed sectors, is critical to a direction that begins to shape new power relations and a new consciousness toward uniting the larger U.S. working class to challenge the attacks.

The struggles to reform the capitalist system are not the answer. The reforms alone have not eliminated the conditions of human oppression and exploitation, despite what's written in federal, state and local government constitutions and charters, or the forming of special commission and agencies.

The lack of mass based power by working class Black and other oppressed people has also allowed the reforms that have been won through struggles since the formation of the U.S., to be weakened and eliminated, to increase profits and power for the rich.

The history and depth of the oppression and exploitation of the Black masses, is part of the permanent structure of capitalism, sharpening during economic crises.

In addition to being a source of cheap labor that continuously allows the capitalists to lower the standard of living for all workers, the Black working class is a main sector of the larger working class of consumers, that the capitalist rely on to purchase the products made by oppressed and cheap labor mainly by workers of color in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This is a major reason for the Congress passing U.S. free trade agreements like NAFTA.

The struggles and movements of the Black, oppressed and working class masses must be to build mass based power and democracy over the economy, social institutions and all areas of government, as part of bringing about a revolutionary alternative to the capitalist system. An alternative that uses the massive wealth and resource of this country to address the suffering, disease, unemployment, homelessness, deaths, and the divisions caused by the greed and wars of a system that places profits over human needs and rights.

The murder of Trayvon Martin highlights one of the ways this racist and exploitive system sees addressing the problems of the economic crises to further divide the people and to try and extend the life of capitalism and the dominance of the 1% capitalist ruling class.

While there will be many responses to the tragedy of Trayvon Martin, the proposed solutions that promote a direction beyond basic reforms, will require a more united and conscious role of the Black left among the Black masses to help link immediate issues to a long term movement building, program, strategy and struggle.

Black left unity grounded in work among the Black working class masses must become a main task!

Black Left Unity Network

05 Assata is Not a Terrorist: She is a Freedom Fighter like Harriet Tubman, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King

The attack on Sister Assata Shakur is an attack on the right of the Black masses and the Black liberation movement to resist oppression. The U.S. government and all of its branches have always persecuted, jailed, exiled and murdered Black activists and revolutionaries no matter their philosophies or tactics-communism, Pan Africanism, separation, revolutionary nationalism, integration; nonviolence, armed self-defense, running for political office.

Assata, who was unarmed and shot 5 times with the intent to kill by the New Jersey state police, was part of the U.S. government COINTEL program, similar to its now so-called war on terrorism, to justify murderous attacks of Black activists and revolutionaries, that saw the assassinations of Malcolm X, Martin L. King, Black Panthers and the frame-ups, jailing and forced exile of many named and unnamed activists.

The labeling of Sister Assata as a “terrorist” is part of the U.S. strategy to further isolate Cuba as the most important political ally of the Black liberation movement over the past 50 years, and as a leading political and ideological force in the struggle against capitalism and U.S. imperialism throughout the Americas.

The jailing of the Cuban 5 as spies and the efforts to cast Cuba as a racist nation against Afro-Cubans are part of this strategy of isolation, seeking to foster internal strife and rebellion to set-back the growing anti-capitalist alignment and socialist direction of countries in this region. This is also why the U.S. is supporting the opposition in Venezuela trying to claim fraud in the recent election of Nicolas Maduro who is committed to continuing the Bolivarian Revolution led by Comrade Hugo Chavez.

The so-called war on terror has ushered in new military tactics and policies that try to justify invading the sovereign territories of other nations as was done with the invasion of Pakistan to kill Osama Ben Laden, and the use of drones to assassinate the two Americans labeled as terrorist in Yemen.

The political asylum granted by the U.S. to Luis Posada Carriles, a known terrorist involved in terrorist acts throughout the Americas, including the bombing of a Cuban airliner in 1976 that killed 173 people. The U.S. government refuses to send Carriles back to Cuba for trial, claiming that he faces the threat of torture. Yet, the torture of years and decades in solitary confinement of

Black and other political prisoners like Assata Shakur inside of the U.S. jails is acceptable punishment for challenging oppression.

What the U.S. is projecting by this bounty on Sister Assata is a threat to countries throughout the world, that providing political asylum to anyone challenging the policies and laws of the U.S. government and the system of capitalism, will be labeled as harboring terrorists and placed on the hit list. This is an attack on internationalism, which must be a main feature of the struggle against capitalist globalization and imperialism. It is also a message to the revolutionary and social movement organizations in the U.S. that our struggles for change must be kept within the limits of bourgeois democracy.

The capitalists support for Obama as U.S. president was clearly different from why the Black masses voted for him. Obama's betrayal of the hopes of the Black masses further points out why the forces of the Black liberation movement must unite both to rebuild its national character, and to mobilize the Black masses against these attacks in order to expose and isolate the role of the Obama administration that has been used to disorient and hold back the resistance of the Black masses to the deep attacks on working-class Black and other oppressed peoples increased by the capitalist crisis. Let's form a national Black united front to defend Assata and to put the U.S. government on trial for its War on Black America!

We must not allow them to come for us one-by-one! Hands-off Sister Assata Shakur!

Black Left Unity Network

06 Stop The War on Black America!

The impacts of the corporate driven capitalist crisis represent a War on Black America and have created many battlefronts. They include

- The struggle for jobs
- The struggle against housing foreclosures, evictions and gentrification
- The struggle to defend, improve and for community control of public education
- The struggle for worker rights and to defend, democratize and expand organized labor as a leader and power base of a working class social movement
- The struggle against women's oppression and all forms of sexual oppression
- The struggle against police murders extrajudicial murders by police and racist vigilantes
- The struggle against mass incarceration, political prisoners and the prison industrial complex
- The struggle against environmental racism

These struggles must be connected by common slogans, a national program, and some coordinated actions in order to mobilize the breath and death of the power of the Black masses as a revolutionary social force.

The most glaring aspect of the War on Black America is the military assault and murders of unarmed Black and Brown young people across the country by the police.

The report issued by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement showing that every 36 hours during the first 6 months of 2012, a Black person was killed by the police, has helped to capture the rapidly growing militarization of Black communities throughout the U.S.

The criminalization of Black working class young people has been a key part of the U.S. domestic strategy to develop a police state under the auspices of protecting society from its internal crime and social erosion. The so called war on terrorism launched after September 11, 2001, elevated this criminalization to the level of being an internal threat to U.S. national stability and security.

Stand your ground laws, and a right-wing led 2nd Amendment campaign to defend gun ownership, play to the racist and chauvinist fears of white America. These campaigns are part of the unfolding of a racist and fascist social movement led by corporate financed right-wing forces like the Tea Party.

If these murders were brought before an international criminal court free of influence by U.S. imperialism, the perpetrators would be labeled as “death squads” and the U.S. would be tried for committing crimes against humanity.

If police speak out against the police department’s complicity with the brutality and murders of unarmed Black people, they are vilified, disciplined, often placed in dangerous situations without back-up and fired.

In cities across the U.S. Black people are holding meetings and forums, and forming coalitions to struggle against extrajudicial police brutality and killings of Black and Brown people. However, these important developments while reflecting the national scope of the U.S. police state have not yet formed a national coalition and campaign with a common program of action to unite these battlefronts.

The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) through our National Dialogue Calls engaging Black activists across the country discussing the various attacks and struggles along with reports on the BLUN listserv, are hearing the desire to build a national unified fight-back. However, initiating a process for forging the unity remains the challenge.

The BLUN is calling for the building of a national Stop the War on Black America Campaign as a movement building framework for uniting the many efforts throughout the country fighting against various aspects of the attack on lives, communities, social institutions, economic survival,

environmental protection and democratic and human rights of Black people throughout the U.S. and in solidarity with opposing U.S. wars on oppressed peoples throughout the world.

A first step in this direction is for the various efforts to adopt the slogan Stop the War on Black America to be included in their literature and public statements that begin project a united national sentiment defining the political nature of these police murders and the police state.

After a period of shaping a national sentiment by promoting a common slogan and united activities in the various locales, and reporting on these efforts, the BLUN is proposing that a national meeting be held to bring together representatives of the various coalitions throughout the country to develop a national program of action and national Stop the War on Black America Coalition.

Let's take the first step Now and adopt Stop the War on Black America as a common slogan. The BLUN listserv can be used to report on the various struggles across the country, and the steps forces are taking to forge unity. The BLUN National Dialogue Call can be a connecting point to discuss moving forward toward building a national Stop the War on Black America Coalition and campaign.

Black Left Unity Network

Fall 2013

07 Rethinking Political Struggle: Black Liberation is a Fight for Power

The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) includes forces actively engaged in all aspects of fight back in 2013, a year of great significance. This is the 50th anniversary year of two important events: the March on Washington and the "I have a dream" speech by Martin Luther King (August 28, 1963), and the speech by Malcolm X, "Message to the Grassroots" (November 10, 1963). While this issue is not merely about memory; it is this memory that helps us understand the significance of today's events and why a process for forging Black left unity and a program of action is so critical at this historical juncture.

2013 is both a year of loss and gain, of defense and offense... of Sanford, Florida; Jackson, Mississippi and North Carolina. It is the year of the assassination of Trayvon Martin, the mayoral victory of Choke Lumumba and the positive mass power of Moral Mondays. It is important to put all of this in a framework that helps us chart the future path of Black Liberation. We have had dreams and nightmares, but in the 21st century we have to have our eyes open, our minds alert, and never lessen our spirit and willingness to fight for freedom by any means necessary.

Black people have been exploited and oppressed because that's how the U.S. society has been organized from day one. Racist violence and economic exploitation, to quote H. Rap Brown (Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin), "is as American as cherry pie." Radical Black activists have used moral persuasion, and aroused public opinion to fight for democracy and progress. But even with the Black Liberation Movement having the support of oppressed nationalities and white allies in the trade unions, churches, campuses, and social justice movements, the rich and powerful in society have used their power to repress, co-opt and redirect our struggles for fundamental changes. Why? Because we Black Activists threaten their hold on power, exploitation, wealth and domination on a national and global scale.

Over the generations during and since slavery, Black people have learned the hard way, meaning the school of hard knocks, that Black liberation is a fight for power and revolutionary social transformation. So we have to start by answering the question, "What is power and how to we get it and use it to struggle, resist, alter power relations and transform society?"

Power is the capacity to force structural changes in the economic, social and political power relations between the oppressed and exploited, and the systems of oppression and exploitation. Another aspect is the control of important resources – money, institutional resources, votes, people, and the ability to disrupt and stop the means of capital production, essential services and major functions of the state. We can either see the struggle for areas of governmental power and engaging in social movements as two different choices, or have a strategy that sees governance driven by the social movements as a feature of the struggle for power.

The country is run by rich corporations and inherited wealth, some of which date back to the ill-gotten profits of the slave trade and slavery. The wealth accumulation was deepened by a system of patriarchy that super-exploited women's labor in the economy, the home, and as a source of labor reproduction. This wealth and power either dominates or influences every level of government, including the media, the major religions, institutions of higher education, philanthropic foundations, and sections of the underground economy.

The government (often referred to as the state), controls the military including the local police and all of the branches of the armed services and domestic and international intelligence and counterintelligence agencies; the judicial system that includes the courts and prison industrial complex; and all of the federal agencies dealing with social programs, the environment, the treasury, transportation, trade and commerce, regulatory agencies, etc.

Social movement strategies, tactics and revolutionary programs that organize and mobilize the power of the people, are core to a revolutionary process of building transformative revolutionary consciousness, confidence, organization and the mass political will to struggle. In this context the BLUN aims to focus its energy on the historical role of the working class and the impoverished masses to defeat capitalism and create a new society.

The struggle for transitional and transformative democratic governance of the local branches of state power should be seen as an important political objective in the fight for fundamental change. However, individuals may play important and leading roles in the social movement. But, they are not the main agents of fundamental change. Our struggle for liberation and justice never waited for nor needed a "heroic" individual. Our struggle created heroes and sheroes in the midst of battle and not through self-selection or voting for the "most heroic."

The main role of the state is to protect the U.S. capitalist system and to expand its global dominance. There are five ways that power is controlled in terms of what people generally refer to as governmental democracy:

1. Voters: elect officials that are supposed to pass laws that increase economic, social and political democracy and prosperity for their constituencies and the whole society.
2. Officials get elected and wield power to represent their constituency in order to get reelected. The US system is usually a "winner take all" exercise, so even if you get 49% you end up with nothing. This 49% gets silenced in the legislative bodies until the next election.
3. The executive runs the central institutions of government and is the symbolic voice of the entire government and country, although not controlling all of the institutions.
4. The bureaucracy of the government is composed of both electoral appointments (usually by the chief executive) and civil service staff protected from arbitrary firing. This bureaucracy is usually intact for up to 20 years whereas executives last for terms of 4 years.
5. The political party system is rigged to support two capitalist parties and shut everyone else out. Parties organize voters, slate candidates, develop political programs, and link local politics into a national framework. Parties control the finances of electoral campaigns.

We face two kinds of struggles against the power of the state, and this has been true from the very beginning of African captivity in slavery – defense and offense. We have to fight to protect ourselves and to survive racist attacks, while at the same time plotting and scheming up on plans to unite, organize, mobilize, and fight to get free. This goes on every day in the consciousness of individuals, over the dinner table, in organizational meetings, in hair salons, in churches, at the workplace, in union halls, on the college campuses and in Black Studies classes.

Social movements are usually non-institutionalized actions of people who share a common ideology and set of goals, and unity around improvisational mass tactics to achieve goals and carry out their mission. The role of a social movement is to change people, change structures, and lead to more sustainable forms of organization. This motion is constant.

What the BLUN hopes to bring to these many struggles is a return to the fresh out of the box revolutionary thinking that is needed to help all of us again glimpse sight of the ultimate goal of freedom.

This means that we have to focus on the link between reform (small changes to make immediate conditions better) and revolution (the ultimate goal of taking power and fundamentally changing the system to something that works for everyone). The struggle for revolutionary transformative power must shape the Black liberation movement's core understanding of the fight for self-determination, and serve as a basis for uniting the Black left and the Black masses in the struggle against national oppression, patriarchy, capitalism and imperialism.

So, we defend and strike back!

We fight for every reform possible but always linked to the goal of freedom based on revolutionary change. We stand against reforms that mainly seek to legitimize and protect the capitalist system and that support imperialism and American exceptionalism.

So we want to discuss this dialectic of defense and offense by analyzing the Assassination of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida, the Mayoral victory of Chokwe Lumumba in Jackson, Mississippi and the Forward Together Movement's Moral Monday Campaign in North Carolina.

The Assassination of Trayvon Martin

Trayvon Martin was a 17-year-old African American male. A zealous wannabe cop who was declared not guilty by a jury with just one assimilated Black Latina on it murdered him. Some middle class Black people and stabilized Black working class, moved into predominantly white gated communities assuming to be safe for their families from the increasing violence of the economically declining inner-city Black communities. That's the kind of community where Trayvon was murdered, in such a community.

He was also an average young brother, eating candy and talking on the cell phone. But being Black with a hoodie and clearly enough self-respect to not be totally be intimidated by the armed stalker – he was a target.

Trayvon is not alone. The Malcolm X Grassroots movement demonstrated that Rap Brown was right, because every 28 hours racist cops and vigilantes shoot down a Black man, woman or child. But Trayvon's vigilante execution was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back... graphically exposing the racist role of the state from the amount of time it took the local government to arrest and charge Trayvon's killer, the string of failures of the prosecuting lawyers and the ignore-race instructions by the judge, supported by a stand your ground law justifying racial profiling that led to the not guilty verdict of Zimmerman.

The failure of the U.S. District Attorney to declare Trayvon's murder as part of a pattern represented by thousands of similar extrajudicial murders by police and vigilantes of Black people, tells Black folk that they must honor the rule of law. Hypocritically, the US government makes charges against other governments internationally for acts of violence and repression against their people to the point of carrying out military actions against those governments.

This kind of structural hypocrisy makes it crystal clear that there is a war on Black America that requires nothing short of a revolutionary struggle to end it.

The swift and massive responses by Black people and many from oppressed and working class communities following the Zimmerman not guilty verdict indicate an increasing loss of confidence in the U.S. as a system of democracy and justice.

We can see five social and political actions in response to this great awakening:

1. Mainstream Civil Rights organizations, with the most financial resources and with support of the state, led by such forces as Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, have a national platform to organize containment events that corral the masses into “peaceful” demonstrations, allegedly in 100 cities.
2. In Florida, closer to ground zero of the Trayvon Martin murder, more militant actions have been organized. The African Peoples Socialist Party has long been a militant agent for change. The Southern Peoples Movement Assembly organized a statewide march on Sanford, and the Defenders of the Dream organized a sit in at the Governor’s office in Tallahassee.
3. The prisoner hunger strikes on the West Coast are part of the growing national prison resistance and abolition movements, making the links between the racial profiling and police violence against Black and other oppressed peoples in the streets and the violence and inhumanity of the prison industrial complex as a major aspect of the state’s violence.
4. In several cities BLUN affiliate organizations mobilized and engaged in Trayvon Martin protests, linking the struggle to local issues.
 - The People’s Organization for Progress (POP) in New Jersey, known for mobilizing Black, Latino and working-class communities for institutional changes, people’s power and international solidarity mobilized at a major intersection that blocked traffic;
 - The Black Workers For Justice in NC that has focused on organizing Black workers as central to organizing labor in the South as a rank-and-file democratic social movement mobilized and promoted around the demand for justice for Trayvon and Stop the War on Black America at the Moral Monday civil disobedience mass rallies at the NC State Capital, challenging the corporate domination of state government and attempts to eliminate basic democratic and human rights for Black, other oppressed and working-class people,
 - The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement a leading national organization in the struggle against police and vigilante murders of Black people, and for transformative power in the city of Jackson and the Mississippi Black Belt, has helped to promote the widespread and systemic nature of racial profiling and the complicity of all levels of government,
 - The Defenders for Freedom, Justice and Equality in Richmond, Va., active in the struggles for social justice and a major leader in a fight against the desecration of an African burial ground by government and corporate that want to use the site for a sports stadium.
5. Finally, every social justice coalition is in deep discussion about how to intervene in this moment of spontaneity and rising mass consciousness.

There is no single tactic that is correct as we have to fight where we are with the resources at hand, but fight back we must. We need more of whatever forms of resistance are possible. But at this time it is critical to get on the same page with our general orientation.

The BLUN has adopted the following slogans for this current period of mobilization:

STOP THE WAR ON BLACK AMERICA!

WE CHARGE GENOCIDE!

HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL!

These slogans give us a framework. MXGM has taught us this racist capitalist society kills a Trayvon every 28 hours – no location is exempt from this slow walking style of mass murder. Given this the BLUN urges everyone to make sure they are studying and linking their immediate situation to national trends because the Black Liberation Movement has to be built on the national level. We need to begin this theoretical process now in the heat of the struggle. We call this work Revolutionary Praxis—linking theory with practice and practice with theory.

Internationalism and The Black Liberation Movement

Doing solidarity work with and for our revolutionary anti-imperialist allies throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America has historically been a key component to Black Left organizations in the US. The BLUN has continued this necessity with our Solidarity & Education work around Cuba, Haiti and the Venezuelan Bolivarian Revolution as documented on our blog (<http://www.blackleftunity.blogspot.com>), website (www.blackleftunity.org) and within our first issue of this journal (jblun.org). We will –in the near future- also be addressing the issue of Reparations as an African and African Diasporic demand central to Black Freedom and Human Rights.

We are aware of the inextricable links we have with our African and Latino Diasporic Sisters and Brothers. These links are grounded in the recognition of having capitalism as a common enemy and of having significant cultural ties and similarities which have evolved out of slavery, the slave trade, colonialism and present-day globalized capitalism.

Grappling with Key Questions of Forms of Actions

Within every context this spontaneous motion is grappling with key questions.

Here are two critical ones – self-defense and the need for mass civil disobedience versus the power of the state.

Many people while leading protests always begin by pleading for peace, even while the people are under attack. The BLUN calls for a distinction between generalized violence against people or property and politically focused violence especially self-defense.

We demand the right of Black people to self-defense – Trayvon could have killed Zimmerman in self-defense because we clearly now know that Trayvon’s life was in danger! On the other hand, the aimless street violence in Oakland, for example, divided the community and distracted the political focus to vandalism and not an organized fight-back against racist state power.

Another important tendency is petitioning the Department of Justice to investigate the possibility that Trayvon’s murder involved a civil rights violation. History teaches us that this is very much a long shot that spans years of litigation. The main thing is that we don’t oppose this move, but consider it secondary to maintaining massive street demonstrations and innovative tactics to build consensus and unity of action across the organized forces in our community that can put “boots on the ground!”

Every mother feels the pain of a lost child, every sister the loss of a brother, every grandmother the loss of a grandchild, and every wife the loss of a husband. We hurt for each other. We must act now to stop this madness!

What would be a powerful expression of national resistance as part of the No More Trayvons Campaign would be women and young girls holding weekly vigils at police stations, courts, city halls, jail -wearing red scarves symbolizing the blood from the police murders of Black people- and demanding an end to police/state violence and mass incarceration of Black people!

“The No More Trayvons” struggles have identified militant forces across the country ready to struggle, but they lack a national program of action to help unite and define them collectively as a strategic campaign against the state.

The “Moral Monday” movement in North Carolina has embraced the importance of making a connection between the right wing legislative attacks on all social support programs and the complicity of a rigged jury system allowing a murderer to go free.

Activists in Depressed Detroit are fighting back against the capitalist sale (commodification) of all public assets in their struggle against a right wing governor fronting for the auto industry that claims to have recovered without labor recovering as well!

Activists in Chicago are fighting the right wing Zionist mayor carrying out the largest closing of public schools in the history of the US. Everyone is connecting his or her local struggles to the senseless murder of Trayvon Martin. We fight to honor Trayvon because we are all Trayvon Martin!

It is also important to internationalize this struggle, exposing the lack of U.S. accountability to the UN Declaration on Human Rights, and international treaties and conventions as part of the struggle to isolate U.S. imperialism. As the leading imperialist country extending its state violence across the world, we must use every opportunity to help to expose, isolate and charge the U.S. system with committing crimes against humanity. This also gives further meaning and support for the demand for Reparations as part of the struggle for African American self-determination. By linking the “No More Trayvon’s Struggles to other local issues, the Black led resistance shows how the police and overall state violence against the Black working-class is part of the capitalist system’s strategy to criminalize and scapegoat Black people as the cause of society’s economic and social problems that hurt “all citizens.”

Building a popular movement that mobilizes broad sectors to resist the capitalist attacks

The Forward Together, Not One Step Back Movement in North Carolina has mobilized thousands on Moral Mondays to challenge the right-wing dominated state legislature that has enacted bills attacking the working class with emphasis on Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, immigrants and the labor unions.

This mass movement began as a people’s assembly establishing a 14-point program that dealt with education, worker rights, imperialist wars, environmental justice, voting rights and many other social justice issues, declaring itself as the Historical Thousands on Jones St (HKOJ) the location of the NC General Assembly. Every February thousands are mobilized to the NC state legislature stating that “it’s the people’s house” meaning that the people have not turned over power to legislators to act in their own narrow racist and procapitalist interests.

The HKOJ includes over 100 NAACP local branches and close to 200 community and social justice organizations. By organizing 29 Moral Mondays challenging the moral consciousness, and the democratic and constitutional legality of the right-wing super-majority in the legislature, thousands of people, including many whites from the districts of the right-wing legislators have turned out in protest, including 960 that got arrested for engaging in non-violent civil disobedience. This movement has helped to beat back much of the Tea Party influence in NC.

It has created a climate of resistance, bringing out teachers and some of the AFL-CIO unions whose actions have been largely focused on lobbying and supporting legislative candidates. The main national issue of this movement is protecting voting rights. While playing an important and leading role, the NC NAACP is still mainly a civil rights organization tied to the Democratic Party and will only go so far in terms of tactics in challenging the attacks of the Black and general working-class. It is critically important for the Black Left to have a mass base and network of forces to be an influential part of this movement and acting independently within the climate it creates. One of the good things that have come out of North Carolina’s Moral Mondays is that other cities are beginning to adopt Moral Mondays as part of their fight-backs.

Electoral Struggles and the Fight for Self-Determination

Black Left forces also face the constant lure of electoral politics. We seek the capacity to protect ourselves from negative electoral political forces and have the ability to initiate a popular electoral campaign to grab the reins of power of local and regional government to advance the freedom struggle. The government sometimes acts like a spider's web, you enter to change it but it grabs you and turns you into the spider's meal. The forces that control the government often end up controlling the activists that enter. In spite of this, we have a few examples of local level electoral politics that have clearly advanced the Freedom Struggle.

A current example of an electoral victory that is advancing our Freedom Struggle is the mayoral victory in Jackson, Mississippi. A militant activist lawyer, a leader of the Malcolm X grassroots Movement and the New African Peoples Organization and a longtime leader in the Black liberation movement, Chokwe Lumumba, has been elected mayor. The slogan of his campaign was "the people must decide." Lumumba and the MXGM built a people's assembly in his ward when he was running for Jackson city councilman in 2009.

The People's Assembly was the starting point for his Jackson city council position. It had an international connection with the Chavez-led government of Venezuela, who provided the city's poor with low cost fuel, light bulbs. In addition, Venezuelan governmental representatives visited Jackson to meet with the People's Assembly.

The concept of the People's Assembly grew out of the Hurricanes Katrina and Rita survivors assembly that was held in Jackson to bring together dispersed survivors to develop a Post Katrina/Rita Reconstruction Program to launch a Reconstruction movement that would influence and control over the rebuilding of their communities while struggling for rights of internally dispersed people under the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

Many saw the demand for Reconstruction and the Reconstruction movement as a developing strategic battlefield for the struggle of the Black liberation movement and African American self-determination. The Reconstruction movement was seen as a new framing for the national Black liberation struggling for the reconstruction of communities that were gentrified, for public schools that are characterized and privatized, for police accountability to the communities, accessible public healthcare, affordable housing, political power, etc.

While the splits in the Gulf Coast Reconstruction movement led to its demise, the Lumumba election and the Jackson Plan (in this issue, page 16) is carrying forward its basic strategic aims in the form of that Plan.

"While the revolution can't be elected, elections can be helpful to the progressive and revolutionary struggles."

What lessons can be learned from the experience? What advances can be made? What are the challenges of administering local government with a progressive agenda? What must the Black liberation movement do to help defend this important victory toward building a mass base of democratic people's power, and a zone for advancing the Black liberation and workers movement in the South?

It is important to put this in the context of the Obama presidency. To compare our "race-pride" expectations of Obama with what he has actually done leads to many of our activist/progressive Sisters & Brothers disappointed and feeling betrayed.

However, we expect more from Mayor Chokwe Lumumba and the Jackson Plan that provides the program and strategic context for his election. Key is that this election and strategy must be embraced and supported as part of a national strategy of the Black liberation movement. The strategic document for this tactical political victory is the Jackson Plan.

Some lessons and questions for the national Black Liberation Movement to discuss

This is a period of new Black electoral energy rising across the nation. The fight-back against the mega-rich-backed Tea Party Onslaught upon hard fought for Civil Rights legislation is just beginning.

We need to rethink this process in terms of what it means for the Black Liberation Movement (BLM). This is critical because the BLM fights in opposition to capitalism; hence it is fundamentally in opposition to both mainstream political parties. In fact, the BLM is opposed to the fundamentals of this entire political system, including their rooted-in-slavery constitution. We acknowledge, however, that the masses of Black people have a history of struggling in the electoral arena for civil and democratic rights as well as for us to have voice and power in pressing for social justice reforms within the system.

The last great expansion of access to have a civil right-voice was the 1965 Voter Rights Act. Of course since the Supreme Court has just taken the teeth out of that legislation, there will likely be a battle to win back enforcement. And even though Black people have started getting disillusioned with Obama, they will once again fight to have voice within the political system even as that very system continues to betray and victimize them. The BLUN considers the battle to restore Black voter enfranchisement as a crucial political opportunity to help root the Black Liberation Movement deeper within the Black masses.

The common view is that the Black movement has been divided into a civil rights movement (integrationists and assimilationist) and a Black Nationalist movement (separationist and self-determination). The position of the BLUN is this is a false dichotomy for the masses of Black

people. Both have provided tactical moves that expressed elements of Black power. This is especially clear in electoral politics.

The fight to gain voice in the system was based on a special claim of the Black vote to support Black candidates. The formation of Black caucuses represented recognition of the strategic role of the Black masses in the electoral arena as the basis for their elections and in building alliances with other oppressed nationalities to become a social and political bloc to advance broader demands and fights for concessions.

Black people in the electoral arena, voters and office holders, practice democracy in general, while also paying particular attention to the special interests of Black people. Since the 19th Century, the Black vote has also been a bargaining chip primarily for the Black middle-class and bourgeoisie to enter the Republican and later, the Democratic Party with the hopes of influencing the direction of those parties on issues dealing with race, civil rights and winning some concessions for their classes.

Since the New Deal, Black people have been the most loyal base of voters for the Democrats. They are Democrats in search of incremental reforms that can protect the Black community and provide some kind of social and economic relief from class, national and women's oppression. This is part of local struggles in every city.

Given how deep the economic crisis is, we need to embrace every move the masses of people make to better their conditions. But that is not all. Our task is to link this fight for a voice and reforms inside the system to the outside fight for revolution to fundamentally transform this very system.

Danger! US Financial Capital Delinking From US Labor

There is one class in power over the state, dominated by finance capital, and it is increasingly delinked from direct appropriation of surplus from US labor power. This is dangerous because they are rewriting the social contract between labor and capital. Working labor and the permanent unemployed face declining wages, decreased standard of living and homelessness.

This position of fighting for reforms inside and revolution outside is beginning to converge. The extreme expansion of obscene wealth and grinding poverty is tearing the veil off the eyes of the people. Add to that the crimes of imperialist war and techno-fascist-global-surveillance; just about everybody is asking some very fundamental questions about what kind of system we have in this country.

If ever there was a time to talk about moving past this exploitative capitalism system it is now.

We can learn from a major error of the national democratic revolution in South Africa following the establishment of a Black majority government. A large number of the key organizers and

leaders of the COSATU labor federation, the Communist Party and some mass organizations went into the government and tried to lead from the top. However this leadership made great compromises with global capital and turned into its opposite ending up having tis police shooting down protesting miners just as had been done by the previous racist regime. The system can convert you into an enemy of the people!!

There are critical battlefronts for the Black liberation movement no matter who heads the government.

Detroit is 82.7% Black and has just been taken over by a right wing governor who has installed a Black lawyer assigned to sell off city assets and make sure capital remains in control over the diminishing Black labor living there. This is after 39 years of Black mayors, and 46 years since the great rebellion of 1967. We look forward to an in depth summation of the Detroit experience covering both inside and outside, both the experience of fighting for reforms and for revolution.

The South -which has always served as strategic region for U.S. capital to undermine the power of organized labor and to shape the racist politics in the electoral arena and the overall U.S. system of institutionalized racism- has now become a major region for the industries that remain vital to US and global industrial-finance capital. The emerging mass struggles against the right-wing state legislatures, as in the case of North Carolina; and for democratic people's governance in Jackson, MS, with the election of Mayor Chokwe Lumumba is taking place in a region where more than 55% of the U.S. Black population live and continue to struggle against remnants of the Jim Crow era. It is also a major region for foreign direct investments from the global economy. The political struggle with deep roots in the Black working class and the labor movement that must be built as a conscious and militant social movement provides conditions for the Black liberation movement to again play a leading role in the struggle for revolutionary change.

The Black Left Unity Network, Some Questions and the Work Ahead

The Black Left Unity Network believes that a Black National Congress is needed to link the many defensive and offensive social, economic and political struggles around a program of action that produces a popular national mass movement to challenge and gain power and control over the system's social, economic and political institutions as a basis for establishing areas of dual power.

The main focus of the BLM should be the urban Black and Latino communities and the South. The South is now a region of historic concentration of African Americans and a rapid growth of Afro-Caribbean's and Latinos with pockets of Native American... all of whom represent the most oppressed sectors of the U.S. working-class.

What is the role of the state – reforms?

The use of state finance. The control of land. Bully pulpit. Check police brutality/murder. Local versus state versus national. When BLM forces are a legislative force, people's consciousness will

advance rapidly around program because the public debate will offer real alternatives outside of the republicans and democrats.

What is the role of the BLM – defense and offense?

The politics of self-determination – the people’s assemblies. This is the context for the convergence of the fight for reform and revolution. This is the organic form of people’s power that can prepare the people for the great transformation.

The independent organization of the working class and leadership of Black workers– the role of workplace politics. Fighting to control the workplace, the site of production, distribution and consumption, and educating, organizing and mobilizing Black workers in the labor movement to help radicalize labor’s broader rank-and-file as a class conscious force in the fight against the political and social control by capital.

The current hundreds of spontaneous struggles reflect the righteous outrage of the Black masses and larger sections of the working-class against the many injustices caused by the capitalist system. However, all struggles against the injustices are not consciously struggles against the capitalist system and the class and powers that control it.

Today’s spontaneous struggles cannot develop this revolutionary class-consciousness. This is the task of a rebuilt and rejuvenated organized national Black liberation movement.

Black left unity must be a conscious effort to align revolutionary forces in rebuilding a national Black liberation movement. The Black Activist Journal of the Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) is part of the BLUN effort to make the rebuilding of the Black liberation movement a conscious effort and unity process that many can engage in.

Join the BLUN!

08 A Call to Organize! The Black Liberation Movement Cannot Advance Without the Revolutionary Organization of Women

The Black Left Unity Network Calls for the Formation of a National BLUN Women’s Working Group

To address the many forms of oppression faced by Black Women in particular and all working class women in general in this society, women workers must have an organization that addresses the triple oppression we face as women, as workers, and as African Americans. The struggle against patriarchy must also be a pillar of the Black Liberation Movement’s efforts to rebuild and

reorganize. It is a key historic task of our struggle in the fight to transform society and for the national liberation of our people.

Join the BLUN Women's Working Group! We Must Organize!

The Black Left Unity Network Women's Working Group

For more information on the Women's Working Group email: abinta@jflm.org

Spring 2014

09 Memory and Power: When Warriors Fall, It's Time to Rethink and Rebuild

The reality of life is contained within the road traveled between life and death in the context of the social forces of history. One way to read history is through generations. Fanon points to this is the famous quote from *Wretched of the Earth*: "Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it." There have always been revolutionary individuals and groups, but some generations have been able to discover their revolutionary mission. This is partly as objective possibility, and partly as subjective will.

We can look back to the 1930's and the 1960's. These are two decades when a critical generation threw themselves into movements. This involved radical ideological consciousness for social transformation. In the 1930's it was to rise up against a capitalist crisis and emergent fascism. People were being forced into poverty fearing political repression and global racism. In the 1960's the uprising was in the context of economic expansion. There was great optimism, rising expectations and the belief that social justice could be achieved under capitalism. This includes both within imperialist countries and for national liberation in the third world.

But there were some revolutionary people and groups in the 1960 that understood it would be impossible to achieve social justice within an imperialist country. Social justice was going to be achieved as a result of ending capitalism via a socialist transformation. A new reality check was forced on people when the two great social justice icons of the 1960's were murdered: Malcom X (1925-1965) and Martin Luther King (1929-1968). The system was once again discovered to be rotten to its core.

These 1960's Black liberation activists are now the elders of the movement. They are the living libraries of the Black liberation movement. Many academics and journalists are making every effort they can to grab this knowledge to create books, to turn this knowledge into commodities and advance careers. What is missing are autobiographical accounts that can be used as manuals for training new generations to become movement activists. Good examples of this are the

Autobiography of Malcolm X, and James Foreman's *The Making of a Black Revolutionary*. In any case we need books not just about glorifying the movement, but to learn lessons from them to help rebuilding the movements of today.

We have recently lost key activists, elders from the 1960's revolutionary movements. The BLUN honors them and calls for all movement centers and groups to have discussions about them so they can be models for the young activists now and those yet to step forward. There are many more left and it's time to learn from them before they also make their transition from life into death.

Jayne Cortez (1934-2012)

Jayne Cortez, poet, activist, independent publisher, and performing and visual artist, was born in Huachuca, Arizona in 1934. She is the author of ten books, and her works has been translated into twenty-eight languages. Some of her major titles include *On the Imperial Highway: New and Selected Poems* (2008), *The Beautiful Book* (2007), *Jazz Fan Looks Back* (2002), *Somewhere in Advance of Nowhere* (1997), *Coagulations: New and Selected Poems* (1982). Not only was she a skilled technician of language, but one of the world's major Afro-Jazz and political visionaries, surrealist poets, whose dynamic charisma and explosive delivery of her work thrilled audiences worldwide.

Jayne Cortez was a committed Pan Africanist, a Women's / Human Rights activist, and was a member of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in Mississippi, registering Black voters, in 1963 and 1964, during the 1960 Civil Rights Movement. Sister Jayne Cortez was major Djali/Griot of the modern African post-colonial experience, and a major writer in the U.S. and African world. Historically she is a "Sister" to the great Negritude poets, such as Aimé Césaire and colleagues. We must remember her as one of the major voices and visionaries of our time.

Amiri Baraka (1934-2014)

Amiri Baraka started out as a beat poet in Greenwich Village in New York City. His 1960 trip to Cuba after Fidel Castro came to power had a radical impact on his life. As poet, author, and playwright, Amiri Baraka built a national and international reputation as artist. After the assassination Malcolm X's in 1965 he moved to Harlem where he founded the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School. As one of the major figures along with Larry Neal, Sonia Sanchez, and, AskiaToure, they are regarded as the architects of the Black Arts Movement that worked in tandem with the emerging Black Power Movement. He became a leading force in the African Liberation Support Committee. Amiri eventually moved back to Newark, NJ, where he and his wife Amina founded the Committee for Unified Newark and the Congress of African People. He published several journals and the newspaper *Unity and Struggle* that used Marxism-Leninism to inform the Black Liberation Movement.

We should remember Amiri for his contributions to not only the Black Liberation Movement, but for his struggle to connect the national question of Black self-determination to the international class question of capitalist and imperialist exploitation of working people. Amiri was not born a revolutionary. It was his engagement as an artist who grew more conscious of how oppressive a capitalism society functions. Instead of buying into the privilege of a celebrated artist, Amiri embraced the black masses bringing his artistic and intellectual skills into his community giving voice and advocating for democratic Black power. Throughout the various phases of his life, Amiri continued to grow politically grappling with how to fuse the struggle for Black liberation and struggle for socialism in America. By struggling to take up different questions and changing his outlook and his own practice made him a transformational revolutionary, someone who was self-critical and reflective about building a new society.

Rod Bush (1945-2013)

Rod Bush was an internationalist, humanist, and Black revolutionary who devoted his life to fundamental social change. His love and care for humanity meant a life committed to the fight for transformational justice. Merged in his legacy is the synergy among ideas, practice and relationships. Indeed, Rod's life was grounded in love, community and a profound belief in humanity. His scholar activism was rooted in that revolutionary care and practice. He was central to the organizational work of SOBU/YOBU and ALSC. He served on the editorial staff of Contemporary Marxism and on the Board of the Left Forum. His engagement with and support of the aims of the Black Left Unity Network will not be forgotten.

An award winning scholar, his work is still too little known. Thus in the midst of recognizing his revolutionary activism we applaud Rod's scholarship. His last book, *The End of White Supremacy* is noteworthy in several respects. Rod locates Black internationalism as foundational to Black struggle. In the text, he astutely articulates how it happened that racism was established as constitutive of the capitalist world economy, which used racism as a justification for the establishment of a hierarchical system to the benefit of the pan-European world. As a theoretician, Rod articulates the power of Black internationalism as foundational to historical change and radical social transformation. His earlier book, *We are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and Class Struggle In the American Century*," won the 2000 Oliver Cromwell Cox Award of the Marxist Section, American Sociological Association. Indeed, Dr. Rod Bush developed a rich body of work, highly exemplary of the Black radical scholar-activist tradition. That is, his scholarship and activism were articulated in deep relation. And, importantly, Rod Bush bridged different ways of thinking and acting, in service to the struggle.

Cheryll Greene (1943-2013)

Cheryll Yvonne Greene: Journalist, writer, public intellectual... activist within the Black Liberation Struggle. Sister Cheryll was a quiet *SisterForce* that helped shaped how the world saw Black

Women through her editorial work in the building of Essence Magazine... and later in life, through her leadership in the global work of *YariYari: Black Women Writers and the Future*.

In the tradition of so many Sister Activists before her, Cheryll sacrificed family and a lucrative job to go to Atlanta and help shape the groundbreaking radical activist think tank, the Institute for the Black World. Sister Cheryll honed her editorial skills in the midst of the Black Liberation Struggle as well as the “established literary and arts world” such as *Cosmopolitan* magazine, W.W. Norton, and the Studio Museum of Harlem. Her sharp editorial skills were always available to Black Causes and rising Black writers while she was constantly engaged in Harlem’s grassroots battles against racism and economic exploitation.

Without the dedicated work of Sister Cheryll, we would not have had the now classic book: *Malcolm X-Make It Plain* as well as the Schomburg Center’s 2005 *Malcolm X: A Search for Truth*. And in spite of her long battle with cancer, she made her razor sharp skills and probing mind available to rising Black writers, fellow Sister Activists needing advice while contributing to and theorizing about the broader Black Liberation Movement.

Chokwe Lumumba (1947-2014)

Chokwe Lumumba was a leader in the national Black liberation movement. He emerged as a leader out of the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Africa (PG-RNA), one of the 1960s Black liberation organizations whose formation was influenced by Malcolm X. As one of the main organizations actively demanding the holding plebiscite to declare 5 states in the South as an independent Black Nation, Chokwe spent the last 26 years of his life working in the state of Mississippi organizing the Black masses under the slogan of “Free The Land.”

After experiencing shootouts in self-defense against police agencies at the PG-RNA founding conference in 1969 at the New Bethel in Detroit, Michigan and in Jackson, Mississippi in 1971, Chokwe Lumumba decided to go to law school and serve as Minister of Justice for the PG-RNA. He defended most of the high profiled cases of Black political prisoners and prisoners of war of the Black liberation movement, gaining him the title of the people’s lawyer. He was also the lead prosecutor in the 2007 International Tribune on Hurricanes Katrina and Rita that charging the Local and U.S. federal government with committing ethnic cleansing and other crimes against humanity against Black and poor people in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast Region impacted by the hurricanes.

Chokwe became member of the Jackson City Council in 2008, and was elected Mayor of Jackson in July 2013 where he brought forward a vision of people’s democratic governance and an economy accountable to the people. He died after only eight months as Mayor.

* * *

The Black Left Unity Network looks to find lessons that run through the lives of all of these fallen warriors. While we have taken note of several individuals, we hope everyone knows that these are not the only ones to fall. The Malcolm X. Grassroots Movement has published research that presents evidence of severe police repression: Every 28 hours a Black person is killed by the imperialist state. (<http://tinyurl.com/every28hours>)

We would like to propose the following for broad discussion and debate:

1. The grand narrative of African American history is the fight from slavery to freedom
2. Black unity of action of the working class and poor people is a strategic requirement for Black liberation
3. Our unity of action must uphold the tactical law to fight “by any means necessary.”
4. We link the fight against racism and male supremacy with the fight against class exploitation in search of a future beyond capitalism
5. We link the fight for Black liberation in the US to the freedom struggle throughout the African Diaspora and in support of freedom loving people all over the world
6. We fight to yank back Black Studies from the academic mainstream to its historic role as an intellectual arm of the Black liberation movement

These simple statements are the basis for serious political study and application to our practice and organizational development within the left for Black liberation and social revolution. The BLUN 12/21 symposium is one example of how these points are part of the developing Black left in motion today.

Join us as we fight forward.

Black Left Unity Network

Fall 2014

10 Building a National Movement after Ferguson

This editorial introduces the fourth issue of the journal of the Black Left Unity Network. The first three issues have solidly made the point that there are organizations committed to building unity to create a solid core for the rebirth of the Black Liberation Movement in the 21st century. There is a radical Black tradition in the US and throughout the African Diaspora as the historical basis we can stand on for the fight we must wage today. As of Fall 2014 it is clear that attacks and fightbacks are jumping out all over the place, coast to coast. In each location there is a cry for unity and yet we know that local struggles can at best create conditions for some reforms, but no real fundamental change. Nor can local struggles be sustained facing the usual ebb and flow of struggle

going hot and cold. We need each other. We need a national movement. Nothing short of a revolutionary movement will do.

The BLUN is a network of organized forces and militant individuals. We share our ideas and practical experience toward greater coordination of our struggle. Right now there is national focus on Ferguson, just as there was national focus on the case of Trayvon Martin and before that Oscar Grant. While we fight every day in our local areas it is when we link to the national hot spots that we can all advance together and raise the level each time we go forward. In this editorial we want to suggest why we need to build unity for a new national level of resistance to oppression, how to make the Ferguson fight back a launching point, and the path to make this happen.

There are four articles in this issue from the African Diaspora – Africa (Ernest Wamba dia Wamba), the Caribbean (David Abdullah), South America (Charo Mina-Rojas), and Europe (Gus John). African peoples are under attack all over the world. Each article demonstrates that our experience is no different from the general global trend. We are all in need of rebuilding our movements and finding ideological and political forms of consensus that can help us produce mighty waves of struggle, unity of action on a national and international level.

In general, the international situation is diving deeper and deeper into crisis.

1. The global economy has not recovered from the melt down of 2008. In fact the capitalist state covers over this by lying about the statistics of unemployment, underemployment, and stagnating wages. The top 0.01%, billionaires, continue to ravage each economy and drive more and more people into despair.
2. This extreme polarization of wealth has led capitalist states led by the United States to pursue a policy of permanent war against the third world, Asia, African and Latin America. The US is particularly guilty of war crimes against humanity. A major example of this is that the US continues to give massive support to Israel in its genocidal war against the Palestinian people.
3. There is massive surveillance ending any semblance of privacy and bringing the demonic state of Orwell's 1984 into existence. Big Brother lives in the White House, CIA, NSA, and the Pentagon. Global media serves not as a basis for democracy but as a propaganda arm of the global capitalist class.

On a national level in the US this global crisis is anchored in every aspect of life, especially for Black people.

1. Permanent war has hit the streets in the US. The Pentagon has militarized local police departments with billions worth of military arms, and turned over training to the Israeli Defense Forces as was the case in Saint Louis County hence impacting Ferguson!
2. The class polarization continues with 95% of the income gains in recent years going to the top 1%. Also white family wealth is just under \$100,000 but for Black families it is just under \$5,000!

These are some of the conditions that set the stage for a spark to ignite an outbreak of resistance, and as we all know, “A single spark can start a prairie fire.” (Mao) We had a spark with Katrina. We had another spark with Jena Louisiana. The murder of Trayvon Martin was another spark. Now the spark is Ferguson Missouri with the murder of Michael Brown. We have to ask a very important question: What can lead a spark to start a prairie fire? One kind of fire is a flash fire that can quickly burn out of control and be destructive in unintended ways. Another kind of fire burns down intended targets of opportunity and clears a path for a new future. Forrest fires are natural and clean out the forest in preparation or new growth. How can the spark of Ferguson lead to this kind of progressive fire? In the main, we are speaking of a symbolic fire of mass resistance to oppression, both in the St Louis region and the rest of the country.

A starting point can be the assessment of the social forces acting in different ways in the situation. In Ferguson the Black community was under attack and most forces were moving for some kind of social change. The Black political class targeted the electoral arena as Ferguson is 65% Black but mostly led by white elected officials. The traditional middle class leadership of the civil rights organization and the churches called for peaceful protest but calm and no direct confrontation and civil disobedience. The organized trade unions joined in symbolic protests on the stage of the October 10th march/rally but did not mobilize its membership to lead the militant protests of the community. The main fight back is coming from that sector of the community most impacted by police violence, unemployed young workers, the poor, and youth in general. They have directly engaged the police in street confrontations, but without a program for change with tactics that move the struggle forward.

Our reflection on the struggle in Ferguson represents two paths forward – the movement in Ferguson and the national rebuilding of the Black liberation movement. All forces in the Black community in Ferguson have a role to play. The electoral struggle will need to be organized and the critical issue is the role of the middle class versus the workers, youth and poor people. The masses represent the votes that are needed, but we ask who will these votes elect? And for whoever is elected, what policies will they advance? What will their relation to the masses be after being elected? We propose a five-point program to be part of any electoral campaign:

1. Demilitarize the police and put them under an elected civilian review board
2. Livable wages for all public employees
3. Legalize marijuana to keep Black youth from jail time for such offences
4. Use eminent domain to seize abandoned homes to house the homeless
5. Reduce all traffic fines to a low level with no jail time attached

But we know that this reform agenda will not end the suffering and pain of the people who will need a more militant and radical program. Frequently what we initially think of as change is a reordering of the system of oppression. We need a society in which everyone has a job, a home, health care, life-long education, and plenty of time for rest recreation and cultural creativity. For this we need a revolution, and for this we need a national movement.

Building out from the hot spot of Ferguson should lead to rebuilding the Black liberation movement. First we need to connect the activists fighting in different locations against similar cases of police violence. This has certainly been the contribution of October 22nd. We also have many other battlefronts to connect up. All of these reform struggles need to be connected to the Black left. These individuals and organizations are advancing ideological leadership to envision and fight for a post capitalist fundamental reorganization of society. Our movement is the cauldron for embracing the dialectical unity of reform and revolution. This combines the tactics of the day-to-day struggle of what we are fighting against with the long term strategic vision of what we are fighting for.

Building a movement is more than the spontaneous outbursts of fight back. We need sustainable organizational coordination and that means a higher level of discipline and consciousness. We are called upon to study and build collective processes. This requires us to go beyond our comfort zone of what we agree with to critically and carefully embrace all of the progressive tendencies in our movement. We need to understand each other and not rush to judgment based on ignorance of what each of us stands for. That would be repeating an error of the past. To begin this process the BLUN has developed a draft manifesto for consideration by all of the forces interested in rebuilding the Black liberation movement.

POLICY

11 Preparation for our Next Gathering— Assessment—Follow Up from the Atlanta Meeting at the US Social Forum

Background

The Atlanta meeting was a call for the Black left to see the Gulf Coast/Katrina disaster as a defining moment for Black revolutionaries to unite to work for the development of a national Black united front with an initial focus on developing and supporting the Gulf Coast Reconstruction Movement as a strategic flank of the wider national Black liberation movement.

The initial call for the meeting went out to about 30 people. Most expressed interest, but several were unable to attend. Recruitment of the majority at the meeting was done at the USSF. When talking to people at the USSF about coming to the meeting, they were very eager.

There was a welcome given by brother S.M. and a basic explanation of why the meeting was called. Sister R.B. made comments about the importance of having a “feminist lens” when dealing with questions of rebuilding the Black liberation movement and its processes and flanks of struggle.

There were 51 people in attendance at the Atlanta meeting. There were 16 women. The following groups were officially represented – New Afrikan Peoples Organization (NAPO), Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM), Black Workers League, Black Workers For Justice, Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO), Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER), People’s Hurricane Relief Fund (PHRF), Revolutionary Communist Organization, Gulf Coast Workers Alliance, Labor Community Strategy Center.

The two main questions posed for the Atlanta meeting were:

- ♦ What is the meaning of Katrina for the Black Nation in the US?
- ♦ How have our organizations attempted to respond to the crisis in the Gulf Coast?

The main organizational responses to the above questions included efforts to do organizer training for people committing to do work in New Orleans. Some talked about sending cadre to work directly with the People’s Hurricane Relief Fund and the Worker Justice Center. Most talked about engagement in some form of solidarity work.

Since the first meeting only allowed for brief discussion of the main questions posed, further discussion on these questions with the following additions would be good for city/regional meetings:

- ♦ What is the meaning of Katrina for the Black Nation in the US?
- ♦ How have our organizations attempted to respond to the crisis in the Gulf Coast?
- ♦ Has this work remained a major focus of organizational work? If so what is your assessment of the impact of your work? If not, why?
- ♦ What is your assessment of the state of the Reconstruction Movement in the Gulf Coast and what are the main needs, problems to be addressed?
- ♦ Where do we see the state of the Black Left in the United States?
- ♦ What are the key questions for/needs of the Black Left today?

Given our responses to the initial framing questions, it's clear that there are some assessments that we need to make in order to move a process forward. We propose the following as initial steps toward shaping a process for forging unity:

STEP ONE: Convene and begin/continue this critical dialogue amongst Black activists and organizations in your city/region between July 13 and September 30. They should involve others within our cities/regions. Many of us may not know each other, may know each other but have not worked together, etc. This can provide cities/regions with an important opportunity to make an assessment about our forces on the ground.

STEP TWO: Discuss ways of building concrete support for the International Tribunal to be held in late August in New Orleans and the Reconstruction Assembly in early December in New Orleans.

STEP THREE: Make an assessment of what forces in our cities/regions, left and middle forces, including faith based groups that are engaged in work related to the Gulf Coast/Katrina disaster and discuss ways of developing a unifying focus and greater collaboration among these forces in support of the Reconstruction Movement.

STEP FOUR: Hammer out an assessment of the political landscape of organizations in our region, and what our needs are locally/regionally/nationally as organizations attempting to address the ethnic cleansing of the Black nation. Additionally, assess the relationship between the needs and political landscape of our organizations and those organizations on the ground in the Gulf Coast.

STEP FIVE: Using this assessment, where are the key pieces of convergence or of divergence? What would be the elements of a broad platform that our groups could possibly unite under/around?

Framing questions

The following set of questions is intended to help us conceptualize in a more concrete manner what the building of a broader Black united front might look like.

- ♦ How can a program of Black national resistance based in the Gulf Coast help to build a movement for Black Reconstruction and self-determination of the Black Nation in the United States?
- ♦ What is needed to build the national political unity of Black organizations and struggles into a conscious African American liberation movement?
- ♦ What are the defining demands for reconstruction that exist today which have the potential to establish our regions as zones of power where the struggle for self-determination can be strengthened and exercise it's power? Why?
- ♦ How does the role of women's oppression inform or influence a program for Reconstruction? What are the demands that can promote the leadership of Black workers and women and oppose gay oppression in the struggle for Reconstruction?
- ♦ What are the manifestations of globalization in your region/city, and given this, what are the implications for demands for Reconstruction?
- ♦ A large number of Black left and progressive organizations are aligned as part of the Reparations Movement; how does the Reconstruction Movement in the Gulf Coast and its national character include and advance the demand for reparations?
- ♦ What does/would/could/should Reconstruction look like in your region? Why?

Next steps

Initial proposals and request for response

Several initial proposals were developed and preliminarily consented to by the group at the Atlanta meeting. This is an attempt to either re-iterate such consensus or make alternate proposals.

Re-convenings

Each organization in attendance at the initial meeting designate two representatives – male and female that can serve as representatives to a national Planning Committee; October 1st, location TBA: re-group for a second gathering. As folks have returned to their respective regions and had some time to confer with their respective organizations/constituencies, does this date make sense? Where does it make sense to re-convene? Proposals or offers?

The holding of the city/regional meetings are viewed as essential toward developing a process for forging Black left unity. More questions will come from these meetings that will deepen the discussions and help us gain a better sense of the state of Black left forces and the readiness to work toward the development of a national Black united front of struggle.

Please send feedback to this summary.

Respectfully Submitted by Saladin M. & Alicia S. 8/2/07

12 The BLUN: Who Are We and What is Our Basic Outlook and Perspective: Developing a 3-Year Plan

The Black left must be defined in its motion and application, and not simply in its self-declaration and rhetoric. This means that the Black left must be measured by how it educates, organizes and mobilizes the Black masses to deal with the conditions, institutions, powers and system that negatively impact our lives, including leading a struggle for national liberation and revolutionary change.

Revolutionaries who have engaged in protracted struggles have defined their main organizational aims of their movement building programs and campaigns, as building revolutionary power to dismantle the systems of oppression, and the reconstruction a new society based on new class, social and international relations. A revolutionary perspective must provide a direction that builds power, mass consciousness and strategic forms of organization toward achieving these goals. That is to say, that the work of BLUN should be realistic, containing the concrete tasks for the present, and should also contain guidelines for the direction of the Black liberation and anti-imperialist revolutionary struggle.

We must first recognize the nature of the period that we are seeking to build Black left unity in. This is important, so that our multi-year plan taps into, and helps to inform and organize the various expressions of the largely spontaneous resistance that we are seeing and anticipate will occur among the Black, oppressed and working class masses for some time as the capitalist crisis continues to deepen.

This is a period of prolonged economic and political crisis and growing mass resistance to austerity and repression. Capitalism can no longer promise, much less deliver, a rising standard of living in the U.S. or other advanced capitalist countries and former colonies. The growing worldwide resistance to the capitalist crisis has taken the forms of general strikes, occupations, demonstrations, and other forms of mass struggle. However, they have been unable thus far, to stem the capitalist onslaught.

Along with these attacks is a growing right-wing, racist and neo-fascist social movement financed by a section of the capitalist ruling class. It is building its infrastructure in the U.S. congress and state legislatures, and is carrying out mass propaganda campaigns and mobilizations against the democratic demands and social movements of the nationally and socially oppressed and the working class. The attack on voting rights further points out how this neo-fascist movement and

period is dismantling core elements of bourgeois democracy which targets the Black and oppressed masses.

The impacts of the capitalist crisis on the conditions of life for the U.S. Black working class began long before it was declared a crisis by the broad left. The 99% characterization by the Occupy movement of who is being impacted by the rule of the 1%, and the economism of the trade unions, have failed to address how the racist aspects of capitalism and its crisis disproportionately impacts the Black working class.

We should appreciate the emergence of the Occupy movement for some of their movement building tactics such as direct action, occupations and mass demonstrations, targeting the U.S. ruling class – the 1%, as opposed to the passivity of electoral politics. We must also recognize that these movements and struggles lack a clear strategic direction and leadership; and have been unable to sink deeper roots in the broad and disorganized working class.

Because of the militancy of the Occupy movement many young Black activists were attracted to it, even though they developed independent forms such as Occupy the Hood, to draw attention to the weaknesses of the Occupy movement in addressing the conditions of working class Black and oppressed masses of color. This lack of strategic direction and organized leadership is largely a cause for the waning of the Occupy movement, including the Occupy the Hoods. The main responsibility for raising the consciousness about the impact of the crisis on the Black masses and organizing their resistance falls on the shoulders of the Black left.

The fact that the Black masses have not been organized and mobilized to resist as a national movement, cannot be simply blamed on the Obama effect; even though the Obama effect has further confused and weakened the national and class consciousness of the Black masses, and is a source of the current divisions among the Black left.

This weakness mainly exists because of the fragmentation of the Black left as the conscious elements of the Black masses. It is responsible for our failure to build strategic unity to carry out the tasks of building the national, class, gender, internationalist and political and social movement forms that embody and unite the forces and demands of the struggle for African American self-determination and revolutionary change.

This fragmentation is more complex than the ideological differences that exist among the Black left. The history of the fragmentation has been more rooted in the errors of organizational sectarianism, dogmatism, hegemony, ultra-leftism, patriarchy, incorrect assessments of the historical period of struggle, and an unwillingness to engage in self-criticism about these errors.

In addition to fragmentation, the Black liberation movement has been narrow and not inclusive of various forms of social oppression that affect Black people, like homophobia, the disabled, the elders, veterans, the infirmed, the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated and their demands in shaping a program for African American self-determination.

The unity of the Black left thus requires a conscious plan, and forces committed to working the plan as a major priority for developing the subjective factors that mobilizes the Black masses as a revolutionary social force. It must be more than an occasional call for unity in response to particular attacks, even though this may be a starting point and major area of concentration for some of the work of the BLUN.

This is a period when the struggles for reforms must be understood as fighting to build zones of mass based power that positions the Black liberation movement to both resist the attacks, and to challenge capital and aspects of the state based on a transitional program for revolutionary change. This means that the struggles for reforms must be increasingly waged by revolutionary means to help demonstrate the real mass based Black power.

As the BLUN thinks about how to approach building Black left unity in this climate of resistance, it is important that the BLUN's basic perspective focus on trying to build this unity from below, and in ways that strategically aligns and locates the Black liberation movement as a conscious and leading force within the U.S. anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and global resistance.

While the BLUN is still mainly a loose network, it is the only effort focusing on trying to unite the Black left to rebuild a national framework for the Black liberation movement. The BLUN has begun some important areas of work, including holding a Black liberation Peoples Movement Assembly at the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit that brought together close to 130 Black activists from 10 states that joined working groups dealing with key areas of Black life and oppression that needed a unity process to help develop national demands and campaigns.

The BLUN has also engaged Black activists from 14 states in dialogue on analyzing and relating to the Occupy movement in an effort to arrive at some common thinking and possible actions to help influence it's character, and to carry the anti-capitalist mantra into the struggles among the Black masses.

However, this and other important initiatives have not been tied to a clear plan, and this has led to some impatience and frustrations that have at times wrongly characterized the BLUN as a "talk shop" and ineffective, because it did not assume a leading role in some proposed campaigns. This has contributed to the lack of follow-up in these important areas of work, and a lack of seriousness and accountability among some within the BLUN CC.

The BLUN must continue to refine and develop a better understanding of existing institutional bodies, and develop additional ones for decision making, engaging activists in common sectors of work, and doing education, recruitment, fundraising and communications, among other tasks.

How we understand these efforts in terms of being part of a perspective to unite the Black left is very important for the unity of the BLUN CC in articulating what the BLUN is and its basic direction.

There are some fundamental principles that we should ground our definition of the Black left in. The Black working class should be the main social force for promoting a Black left perspective. The struggle against capitalism, imperialism, national oppression, white supremacy, patriarchy, homophobia and imperialist wars must be seen as fundamental to the struggle against capitalism and imperialism and for reparations and African American Self-determination. As part of the African Diaspora, we see that African American liberation struggle as being part of the struggle to end the oppression of Africans and African descendants.

The BLUN must see the struggles of other oppressed peoples inside of the U.S. and the working class as potential allies of the Black liberation movement with varying levels of political and social consciousness and contradictions that have been shaped by colonialism, U.S. capitalism and imperialism. One of the important tasks of the Black liberation movement must be to help position the power and influence of the Black working class to form strategic alliances with the organizations embodying these allies when and where possible.

It must be clear, that the BLUN is attempting to unite the Black left to develop Black working class leadership to help give direction to the social and political movements in ways that strengthen their ability to challenge capitalist priorities and ultimately pose an alternative to capitalism itself. Playing a role in helping to develop the subjective factors that give expression to a national Black liberation movement does not mean that the BLUN should see itself as a revolutionary party or as the vanguard of the Black liberation movement. These forms and roles will emerge out of the Black left as it develops into a more cohesive political and ideological force with deep roots among the Black working class. However, the BLUN is part of the revolutionary process that must unfold, if the Black liberation movement is to become a conscious and united national revolutionary movement.

While these core principles must anchor the unity perspective of the BLUN; they must be defined broadly in order to include the various tendencies. The BLUN must provide a framework for summations of the work and for discussions and debates that democratically move the unity process toward greater political and ideological unity.

The BLUN has a lot to learn, especially as it relates to using the latest technology in a unity process and mass mobilizations. However, we also have a many years of experience in dealing with complex questions related to united front work, strategic alliance building, internationalism, and defending against the counterintelligence of the state that represent weak areas in the left that has been shaped by and emerging out of the social movements over the past 20 years. Being open to learn and willing to teach must be a trademark of the BLUN.

We have enough experiences to make some generalizations about what strategic steps are necessary to toward unifying the Black left and rebuilding a national Black liberation movement. They include:

1. Agitating for and building Peoples Assemblies. The various Black working class struggles responding to the deepening capitalist, need mass democratic forms of convergence that allow organizations to discuss and plan together ways to unite their multifaceted struggles and campaigns as a way of ending the isolation from one another.

Peoples Assemblies could unite the diverse movement forces around demands that address the corporate and state attacks on the Black working class, as well as racist, sexist, xenophobic, and homophobic attacks on sections of the Black working-class and other oppressed peoples. Peoples Assemblies are not coalitions per say. However, they may form coalitions and working groups that allow activists to work closer together in coordinating work.

2. A national dialogue on rebuilding the national Black liberation movement. The national dialogue among the Black left has for too long been around issues like support or non-support for Obama, electoral politics, movement personalities and authors of books. However, there has been no organized national dialogue about the need to rebuild the Black liberation movement in this period of capitalist crisis, especially when we are seeing local spontaneous resistance in every major urban inner-city across the country.

Such a dialogue must be limited to the Black intelligentsia. It must engage activists and leaders from the Black working class. The various social movements involving workers, women and LBTG forces should discuss how they see their demands and movements fitting into a Black liberation agenda and movement building strategy.

Forums also need to be developed to bring existing Black liberation movement organizations together to discuss their assessments of the period and how they see their campaigns and strategies contributing to the process of rebuilding the national Black liberation movement and Black liberation agenda. A BLUN Black Activist Journal can play a role in these efforts.

3. Anti-capitalist agitation. Over the past 30 years, the right wing has successfully branded the public sector workers and big government, the social safety-net for the working class, as the enemies of progress. The attacks on public sector unions are an attack on an organized power of the workers to defend public services.

The high unemployment rate in the Black working class is partly attributed to the large reduction of public sector jobs, which is the largest employer of Black workers. One out of every five working African Americans are employed by the government, according to the labor department. That comes out to 19.8 percent of the Black workforce, compared to 14.6 percent for whites and 11 percent for Hispanics.

This impact on the Black working class needs to become a more identifiable part of the developing strike struggle of the Chicago teachers, and also in defense of the public sector throughout the country as a social safety-net. Defending the public sector needs to be a strong anti-capitalist mantra of the Black liberation movement.

4. The struggle against patriarchy. Patriarchy has been one of the key pillars of capitalist accumulation, male supremacy and women's oppression. It takes on features among African Americans and other oppressed peoples, and within their social and revolutionary movements. While connected and accountable to a national program, a Black working class led women's movement must be an essential and autonomous component part of the Black liberation movement.
5. The fight for a jobs program. Having the highest unemployment rate, the Black working class must be a leader in the fight for a national federally funded jobs program. The struggle against racism must be an essential feature of the fight for a jobs program. In addition to the right to unionize and collectively bargaining, another part of the demand for jobs must include funding for worker and Black family farmer owned cooperatives. The demand for reparations must help to promote a call for the funding of worker and small Black family farmer owned cooperatives.
6. Building a rank-and-file social movement labor movement. The power of the Black working class has been unclear and confused in the perspectives, tactics of the campaigns by the social movements and political organizations led by Black left activists. Yes, automation has rendered a large section of the working class unnecessary for capitalist production. But this line too often is misunderstood as meaning that the working class is no longer a major aspect of capitalist production and capable of disrupting the production and flow of capital.

This view has contributed to a failure by much of the Black left to actively organize within national the trade unions, including making this work part of the focus of most of the Black left located in the South.

7. Reparations must have immediate and transitional demands. The reparations movement must make demands on the state and corporations for its continuing racist crimes and disproportionate impacts of the capitalist system and its periods of crisis on Black people – the police murders of unarmed Black people, the racist and extrajudicial lynching's sanctioned by the Jim Crow system, the denial of jobs and voting rights for the formerly incarcerated, the high Black unemployment, the theft of Black land, the sterilization of Black women, etc. The demand for reparations must also help to expose the brutal history and role of the Black labor and national oppression in creating the primitive accumulation for U.S. and global capitalism and wealth; and why the Black masses should be opposed to capitalism and imperialism.
8. Identify vulnerable targets. While the ruling class appears invulnerable at the present time, it is not monolithic. The BLUN must help the movement forces to identify and understand the weaknesses of the capitalist system, and its most vulnerable points to target, in order to help the struggles to win partial victories and build confidence. To do this requires making a power analysis of the political terrain. Targets should also be visible enough to give the movement a public face for its demands.
9. Deep organizing and leadership development. Too often, movements rely on continuous demonstrations and other mobilizations without seriously undertaking the organizing and

education work necessary to expand and deepen the movement. Organizing, educating, and developing leadership in working-class communities and workplaces should be a central task of the BLUN. Emphasis must be placed on developing and recruiting Black working class young people.

10. Combining electoral and non-electoral tactics. The Black masses ultimately owe the reforms won during the 1950s and 60s to the massive mobilizations that collectively confronted institutions of power through boycotts, sit-ins, strikes, demonstrations, and other forms of direct action. While skepticism and caution around engaging in electoral work is healthy, and made more so by the failures of the Obama administration occupying the highest political office of the state, it should never be raised to the level of principle.

The struggle for African American self-determination must have as a strategic objective, the building of self-determination zones of mass based power. The election of representatives to local government and the use of referenda to engage the masses in shaping government policies that empower the Black masses, should be seen as an important aspect of the work to build these self-determination zones. The election of candidates however, is not a substitute for the social movements, or a necessary starting point for strategies for building these zones. Unfolding initiatives like the Jackson Plan in Mississippi should be an area of work that the BLUN promotes nationally and helps to twain forces to contribute to further developing and advancing this self-determination zone base building strategy.

11. Democratic, collective leadership and culture. No movement can develop without clear demands, arrived at through democratic discussion and debate and recognizable and democratically accountable leadership. Political culture must be an essential component of the work of the BLUN. Culture is an important unifier, educator, mass mobilizer and spiritual sustainer of the Black liberation movement and struggles.
12. Developing short and long-term strategic plans. Too often, movements move from one event to the next without embedding them in a longer-term strategy. Strategic planning must itself be embedded in the BLUN's and movement building organizational structures.
13. Human rights must become the popular slogan and demand for shaping an anti-capitalist and prerevolutionary national and international transitional program and challenge against capitalist globalization. Human rights, must define not only social, economic, cultural and political rights, but to fight for new power relations that enforce, use and refine these rights to further advance the struggle for a more, democratic, human and sustainable world society.
14. A national movement strategy. The nature of the US capitalist state and its austerity drive, despite its decentralized tendencies, requires national solutions, such as a massive federal jobs program, aid to insolvent states, significant reductions in military spending, progressive changes in the tax structure, single payer healthcare, etc. While the movements are not yet strong enough locally and regionally, they must soon begin to pose such demands and form coalitions to fight for them. After 3 – years of intensive work, the BLUN should call on the

forces to convene a National Black People's Congress to develop a comprehensive program for African American self-determination and revolutionary change.

The above are hopefully some useful ideas and principles about what is to be done. The meeting this weekend however, beginning with those present, must do the work to help define where and how or begin.

The above assessment and points about core principles of unity and areas of BLUN concentration are by no means meant to be exhaustive. In future discussions within the BLUN Continuations Committee and Working Groups that must be organized and further developed, the plan of action or the beginnings of such that comes out of this meeting, will not only inform the direction of the BLUN's work, it will be further elaborated on, debated and refined through the process of forging Black left unity. This is only meant to start a general discussion of how the BLUN with a core perspective and basic structures that can contribute to uniting and helping to develop and politicize Black activists rooted in social movements on the ground as a new Black left committed to building a 21st Century national Black liberation movement. It hopefully makes clear, that the BLUN must recruit many more forces to effectively carry out this critical and revolutionary work.

Saladin Muhammad

9/13/12

13 A New Phase for the Black Left Unity Network

The Black Left Unity Network was formally launched in May 2008 in Chapel Hill, NC during the last 7 months of the Bush administration, the Democratic national primaries and at a time when the U.S. was engaged in two imperialist wars – Iraq and Afghanistan. It was a time of the unfolding of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Hundreds of Billions in federal dollars were used to bailout the major banks and corporations while millions were unemployed and losing their homes to foreclosures.

The May meeting brought together over 70 people from 17 states and 20 cities. Many had been active in solidarity efforts building material and political support for the survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita that devastated the Gulf Coast in August 2005, and exposed the government's neglect and ethnic cleansing of the Black majority in New Orleans.

The growing mass resistance being shaped by the U.S. capitalist crisis and the government and corporate attacks on the people intensifying in 2008, especially the high unemployment, housing foreclosures and racist police murders against working-class Blacks and Browns, if organized nationally would represent a major threat to U.S. stability and hegemony in dealing with the global capitalist crisis. Thus, the Obama presidency became a major distraction from focusing on building coordinated national resistance connecting the hundreds of Black majority led local struggles.

As the politics of the Obama administration is in major crisis and trying to regroup and prepare to elect the next person out of the Clinton camp, the BLUN must regroup and launch a new stage of development in trying to rebuild the national Black liberation movement around an anti-capitalist program. This will take the efforts of a conscious Black left that needs to be forged in our efforts to build a broad national Black united front movement.

The objective conditions are pushing more and more people to the edge of disaster in their lives opening new opportunities for the BLUN. We have started this new period with our journal, *The Black Activist*, in the wake of the great upsurge to demand “No More Trayvons.”

While recognizing that BLUN affiliate organizations have their independent programs and organizational processes, the many pulls from the spontaneous struggles that will continue from the deepening capitalist crisis, will require a level of unity, commitment and discipline of the BLUN forces to keep a focus on a national strategy, movement building and political education.

This document is an attempt to lay the basis for a new stage of unity building and BLUN consolidation. It will be discussed, revised, and adopted by the current BLUN CC and then implemented by a committee chosen by the same body to convene the December 21, 2013 meeting.

On the international situation

Through the 1960's the global Black left focused on the following:

1. Imperialism as the avaricious world capitalist system subordinating the world to the European and US greed
2. The greatest alternative was the socialist system, even with the USSR and China split
3. The situation in Africa being led by the national liberation movements
4. Third world allies focusing on countries and movements in Cuba, China, and Vietnam
5. Critical thinkers/leaders such as Malcolm X, Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Sekou Toure, Julius Nyerere, Amilcar Cabral, Mao Tse Tung, Che Guevara, James Boggs, Robert Williams, CLR James, William Patterson, Claudia Jones, Ella Baker, Harry Haywood, Abner Berry, and many others.

We are now living in a new period that will require more study and strategic thinking.

1. Digital technology and global restructuring has led to a new global order and the basis for a new crisis. As machines replace human labor there is a critical decline in the rate of profit - the 2008 melt down will be repeated again and again
2. There has been a resurgence of pro-capitalist forces in the governing parties of the former socialist camp, especially Russia, China, and Vietnam. This is heightening the contradictions within the global capitalist system
3. Alternatives continue to develop in international alignments like the BRIC and ALBA

4. The national liberation movements have become governments who in the main have been subordinated to the neo-liberal policies of the global capitalist system via the World Bank and the IMF, hence capitalist exploitation has continued and the quality of social life has polarized between a new middle class and mass suffering of the majority in places like South Africa and Zimbabwe
5. The global capitalist system continues to use the US as its military "pit bull" governing through a policy of global permanent war against its improvisational theory of fighting terrorism

While the BLUN will continue a program of research and theoretical development we can assert and reaffirm the following:

1. The global capitalist system continues to be the main danger to world peace and the quality of life for the masses of people in every country
2. Pan-Africanism remains a strategic focus to unite African and African descendent peoples everywhere to oppose this system and to fight for the freedom and well being of African peoples everywhere
3. Every local struggle must be linked to its national and international manifestations; hence the fight against more Trayvons must be linked to the fight against drone strikes
4. Socialism remains our strategic goal

The BLUN will join international efforts at unity against the racist global capitalist system.

On the Black Liberation Movement

Black people have always fought for their freedom, even before the slave ships and since then Black people have fought the exploitative practices of racism and capitalist exploitation that have culminated into systemic structures of national oppression. The main logic of the Black Liberation Movement (BLM) has been unity. The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) is a 21st century stage of this process.

There are two aspects to the BLM:

- a. Self-determination – building a movement that unifies the organization that enable Black people to aggregate their own resources and power to chart their own path for liberation
- b. Freedom – the goal has been to be free from the structures of oppression and exploitation

The unification process has been carried out on two levels:

- a. Search for a united movement – a process to unite the many around policies to guide the struggle against all forms of national oppression and capitalist exploitation, but needing a stronger, more conscious and organized Black working-class women's led struggle against patriarchy within the movement organizations, and as one of the main demands for Black liberation.

- b. Search for a vanguard – a process to unite advanced forces around ideological principles that define a long term strategy and program for revolutionary transformation.

There have been many high points to the unification process:

- a. Before the great uprising in the 1960's two of the main unity developments have been the Negro Sanhedrin (1924), and the National Negro Congress (1935).
- b. The greatest achievement of unity during the civil rights movement of the 1960's was the March on Washington (1963) and the Mississippi Summer Project (1964).
- c. Out of the 1960's the civil rights movement led to the a new phase of the Black liberation movement that led to new levels of unity: Black Power Conferences (1967, 68, 69), Congress of African People (1970), Black Panther Party Revolutionary Peoples Convention (1970), National Black Assembly (1972), African Liberation Support Committee (1973), National Black United Front (1980), National Black Independent Political Party (1981) and the Black Radical Congress (1998).
- d. There was also an upsurge in forging higher levels of unity into vanguard organizations: AAPRP, APSP, APP, LRBW, BWC, RWL, RCL, LRS, and People's College.

The main focus of this unity process, while focusing on the community as a whole has always targeted three sectors of the community as the main basis for building the struggle:

- a. Workers (eg, LRBW, BRC, Black Workers for Justice)
- b. Women (eg, Thirds World Women's Alliance)
- c. Students/youth (eg, NABS, SOBU/YOUB/February First Movement)

While the strength and sustainability of the BLUN will require deep study of all of these historical experiences there are some basic conclusions we can state at this new beginning:

- a. Singular events are important momentary wake-ups (Trayvon, Jena, Katrina, etc) but a unity movement can best be built around national campaigns and a program of action
- b. Organizational coordination is important in order to build the BLM as a social movement that can engage our people in the hundreds of thousands
- c. A united leadership of diverse sectors of our the community is essential
- d. Unity does not require homogeneity, hence the BLUN proposes a unity mix of 80-20

Draft program for the BLUN

The general program is to re-build the Black Liberation Movement as a vital force for African American self-determination and the social transformation of the United States and contribute to the end of the global capitalist system. The BLM is a concentration of forces fighting against all forms of oppression and exploitation of the African American people. Our main task is to organize and develop progressive forces within the African American community, as well as to welcome all progressive fighters willing to share in this general movement.

As stated in the organizational plan the first step to implement this general program will be to form the National Council at the top, and begin to build BLUN committees at the base in every city where the affiliated organizations have active cadre. When a committee of activists is formed the first task is a three month study of the basic documents of the affiliated organizations so that maximum unity can be achieved. In the BLUN we are working toward understanding and respect, as well as 80% agreement. At the end of this consolidation period the local committee will be charged with writing a general analysis of their local area based on guidelines issued by the BLUN executive committee and approved by the National Council.

The main focus for the first three years of this new program will be for the BLUN Activist Network to be organized in three movements:

1. The worker's movement
2. The women's movement
3. The youth/student movement

On organizational restructuring of the BLUN

The unity of the Black left must now focus on uniting the BLM where it is strongest and has demonstrated the greatest sustainability - the actually existing organizations carrying out the struggle on the ground. We need not start from scratch because we can build on our organizational victories. This is the greatest challenge we face. Despite the good work of many organizations committed to Black liberation, we recognize that most face challenges related to questions of resources, leadership and issues of patriarchy that needs to be a more conscious focus of their work and the internal and external unity process being developed by the BLUN.

Our first task is to convene the December 21st meeting where organizations committed to building the BLUN will make presentations addressing the following questions: 1) how are you looking at the current period?; 2) around what main issue is your organization engaging?; 3) how does your organization see its work contributing to shaping a national strategy for the Black liberation movement?; 4) how can the BLUN unite Black left forces to rebuild an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-patriarchy and internationalist national Black liberation movement?

Next, we need to create a National Council of the BLUN composed of representatives beginning with the existing affiliate organizations and those participating in the December 21st meeting based on unity around the basic three core principles of the BLUN 1) We are Black people fighting for power and liberation; 2) We fight to end the system of capitalist exploitation, patriarchy, homophobia, and all forms of oppression; 3) We organize by connecting the local battlefronts rooted in a working-class perspective to build national unity of action and international solidarity with other struggling oppressed people. Representatives must have a willingness to make building the BLUN a major part of their organizational mission and priority, where they commit cadre time and financial resources. This will be the main policy making body for the BLUN.

To address the issue of gender balance as part of the effort to address patriarchy and its related issues, BLUN affiliate organizations should have 2 representatives to the National Council, female and male and 2 alternates, male and female to insure that the alternate continues the gender balance.

At the first meeting of the National Council, the task will be to begin the rebuilding process of the BLUN including its own rules and operating procedures.

There needs to be three more aspects to the new organizational structure of the BLUN.

- a. National activist network - cadre from the organizations affiliated with the BLUN will form fractions within social movements and mass mobilizations and promote a call for the holding of local Black liberation movement assemblies to bring Black organizations and activists together to discuss and coordinate efforts to build mass bases of Black power. Each fraction will be part of a BLUN Working Group that will prepare an annual report on the state of their respective social movement, eg, workers, women, students, culture, Black Studies, LGBTQ, multi-national organizations, etc. A main task will be to promote the BLUN journal.
- b. A women's Commission – cadres from each organization and working-group as they are formed will assign a woman to be part of a BLUN Women's Commission that will take the lead in developing and providing education, training and special campaigns to infuse the struggle against patriarchy and male domination within the BLUN and throughout the Black liberation movement. It should have 2 representatives on the National Council.
- c. Local BLUN committees - cadre from organizations on the National Council will come together to form a leadership committee to play a leading role in the BLM in their local city/state. This is the context for individuals to become members of the BLUN, through local committees. A major task is to form study groups around the BLUN journal among the BLM activists in their area.
- d. BLUN executive committee - key individuals to cover areas under the direct selection and policy governance of the National Council: A National Coordinator (to be the main spokesperson, and chair of the executive committee), Editor of the BLUN journal, Administrative secretary (to handle the organizational files), Financial secretary (to handle the finances), International Secretary, Secretary of the local councils. Each position will be filled as qualified candidates are chosen by the National Council.

The process will be to establish the National Council first and then the NC will approve of the executive committee. The NC will have at least two face to face meetings per year, and approve a report to be shared with the national BLM. The Executive Committee will meet face to face every two months and approve a report to be shared with the National Council and the BLUN membership.

The overall policy of the BLUN will be approved by the national assembly held every two years. Every individual member of the BLUN will have a vote, and the National Council must then ratify all decisions made at the national assembly.

14 Proposal: A BLUN Meeting to Advance the Politics of Black Liberation

The right wing resurgence financed by the capitalist elites have focused on taking control over state governments and building a social movement and infrastructure like the tea party, including a caucus in the U.S. Congress, and the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) among other groups, to help promote an unfolding fascist strategy to deal with the major U.S. and global capitalist crisis.

The attacks on basic rights, laws, policies, the social safety-net and on oppressed and working-class peoples organizations and the increasing government and racist repression against working-class Black and other oppressed people, has created a climate that has declared open season for the police, vigilante and racist murders of Black people every 28 hours.

There are many mass organizations, social movements and revolutionary groups fighting around issues representing our peoples many forms of oppression and exploitation that are reinforced by the system of national oppression that we all face as an oppressed nationality/people.

However, there is no national Black united front to unite these battlefronts into a movement of national resistance with a program to build areas of contending power that both defends against the attacks, and helps to position the Black liberation movement to contribute to an offensive and revolutionary strategy.

The Black liberation movement needs both a national Black united front movement and a process that unites the Black left with a main base in the Black working-class and in the mass organizations and social movements that embody hundreds of thousands of Black workers, the unemployed and working-class communities.

The election of Chokwe Lumumba in Jackson Mississippi is part of the Jackson-Plan formulated by the MXGM, to build, expand and politicize mass based power in counties throughout the Mississippi Delta. This is an important development that the Black liberation movement must politically contextualize, and support and promote as part of a national strategy in this period.

The question of bases and areas of contending power must be part of the strategic thinking of the Black liberation movement as we work to move from a defensive position to a revolutionary offensive. Not seeing the various areas as part of a national and international strategy is part of the problem in building revolutionary unity of the forces of the Black liberation movement.

There are Black organizations that have been around for awhile as well as those emerging over the past 10 years that have concentrated their work in various sectors, locations of the country and social movements. The programs of many of the organizations are very similar in terms of aims and goals, but their unity has not been fostered by the spontaneous struggles. Most have also not defined how they see their work as being part of a national (and international) strategy for Black liberation and revolutionary change.

Building this united front movement must be carried out by conscious forces, a Black left that unites and works for this development as a revolutionary task of the Black liberation movement in this period.

The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) is calling a meeting of BLM forces to advance a theoretical discussion about building revolutionary Black power, and beginning a process of developing a program of coordinated action. The unity of the Black left to build a national Black united front movement becomes a first task toward rebuilding the national Black liberation movement.

This is a one day meeting of invited participants to be held on December 21, 2013 in Washington, DC. The meeting will be taped, transcribed, edited, and published in the third edition of the BLUN journal, The Black Activist (May 1st). We see holding local and regional BLUN forums around the document with a goal of forming BLUN Committees.

Our goal is to advance the unification process for a left leadership of the Black liberation movement and the overall struggle against the US capitalist/imperialist state and the global capitalist system.

A proposed organizational plan will be sent out for your review and feedback prior to the December meeting.

15 Opening of the December 21, 2013 BLUN Meeting of Black Activist Organizations in Washington, DC

Comrades,

Welcome to this meeting to discuss the work of our various organizations, our understanding of the nature of the oppression faced by our people in this historical period and stage of capitalism, and how our work and unity can contribute to the liberation of our people and the revolutionary transformation of U.S. and global capitalism.

This meeting represents an important juncture in an almost 8 year journey to unite Black activist organizations rooted in the mass struggles of the Black working-class, to work together to rebuild a national Black liberation movement that is anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-patriarchy and internationalist.

The protests against the oppressive conditions created by US imperialism's racist system on national oppression which has its deepest impacts on the Black working-class, while an important aspect of Black resistance to oppression, do not usually focus on building areas of mass based strategic power to force major reforms and fundamental changes that alter the balance of power in favor of revolutionary change.

Most of the local struggles are fighting around issues that derive from the structures and policies of a national and international capitalist system. However, they are mainly fought as local struggles, without seeing these struggles as part of common national and international battlefronts attacking the local structures of a U.S. led international system.

The unity of Black activist organizations within and connected to a national and international framework can help us to better define the targets of the systemic forces, and to coordinate national and international actions that mobilizes the power of the Black working-class.

This unity begins to establish the nucleus for a conscious Black left unity tendency that develops institutions, national organizations and activities that connect Black activists organizations in common education, movement building assemblies and summations, and in launching local, statewide, national and international campaigns. This Black left unity tendency can be an important galvanizing force for developing and connecting the new militants being radicalized by the spontaneous struggles.

We have seen the challenges facing national liberation movements throughout the world in dealing with the question of what path for self-determination, capitalism or socialism. These struggles have mobilized the power of the masses against the forces of capitalism and imperialism, but the transfer of power has too often entered into subordinate and dependent relationships with the forces of capital, establishing at best a Black and oppressed nationality bourgeoisie that becomes partners with the global capitalist ruling-class.

Unlike most national liberation movements, we are struggling inside of an imperialist state that along with the U.S. ruling-class is the leading military and economic force of global capitalism. A Black left within the U.S. must have a clear and sober understanding of how the struggle for self-determination becomes a struggle for revolutionary Black working-class power that helps to alter the balance of power for revolutionary change. This recognizes that the U.S. imperialist state also oppresses and exploits other oppressed nationalities and peoples, workers, women and social sectors denied human rights that can be influenced by the Black liberation movement.

The capitalist crisis has intensified the exploitation and repression of working class Black and other oppressed nationalities. The election of Obama was financed in large part by sections of the U.S. ruling-class to put a brake on the emergence of a national Black struggle around an anti-capitalist democratic program. While there continues to be many local struggles during the Obama administration, they don't take on the character of national demands against the federal

government's complicity with the U.S. and global capitalist ruling-class because of the reluctances to challenge the Obama administration.

This reluctance stems in part from the vile racist attacks on Obama and Black people by the right-wing and neo-fascists, and from the lack of unity of the Black left with a race/nationality, class and gender analysis working to organize and mobilize the Black and broader working-class around a Black working-class led national agenda. Instead of the Black left uniting to develop a Black working-class led agenda, it divided.

The unity of the Black left thus requires an example of the willingness to unite by Black activists organizations with a credibility of organizing and mobilizing the Black masses to fight back against the government and capitalist attacks.

The BLUN draft program document has proposed structures, tasks and timetables that represent the organizational consolidation of Black left organizations at a pace that is dictated by the intensifying conditions of oppression created by the capitalist crisis.

What is needed and how to get there, must be a collective recognition of what needs to be done. It must take into consideration the factors of linking largely local organizing, consciousness and campaigns, into a national movement framework. This is an essential part of the unity process that must be led by the organizations involved.

The starting point is the forming of a Continuations Committee with committed representatives from the various organizations to work on the draft document and to lead the BLUN up to the formation of a National Council that begins the formal consolidation and expansion of a Black left to work to rebuild a national Black liberation movement.

This meeting represents a step to make the transition from a Black left network of individuals to a network of organizations.

We need to have unity around the 3 fundamental BLUN principles:

- a. We are Black people fighting for power and liberation
- b. We fight to end the system of capitalist exploitation, patriarchy, homophobia, and all forms of oppression
- c. We organize by connecting the local battlefronts rooted in a working-class perspective to build national unity of action and international solidarity with other struggling oppressed people.

A Black left must anchor our fight for Black liberation among Black workers and the poor; must advance the leadership of women and young people, and must rebuild the Black liberation movement as anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-patriarchy.

Today our voices will be heard on key questions. We want:

- a. to gather our diversity of experience and beliefs
- b. to find our unity and areas of difference
- c. to learn from each other and prepare together for the future.

Forward Together!

STATEMENTS

16 BLUN Presentation at Black Is Back Conference November 13, 2010

Greetings Comrades,

It is important that we are here today.

The voices of Black people in the millions, raising demands for justice, and organizing for power and self-determination must be heard loudly throughout the U.S. and throughout the world. They must not be drowned out by capitalist attempts to foster a popular fascist movement, or by ambivalence about criticizing the reactionary policies and alliances of the Obama administration.

This mobilization and the Black is Back Coalition must see itself as part of a developing trend with other efforts toward forging a national program of action for African American self-determination amidst the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Black people are engaged in hundreds of mainly local spontaneous struggles throughout the country against the many conditions of racist national oppression created and maintained by the capitalist system. Our people have never stopped struggling against oppression. However, the local struggles are not connected by a national program of action, and therefore don't give a proper indication that power and radical change is what our people want and what we need.

As the economic crisis deepens, these spontaneous local struggles become more desperate and hard pressed to win against a national climate and alignment of political and economic forces, and can act in competition with each other for limited reforms, instead of in concert. This is especially dangerous with the increasingly fascist populism that is scapegoating and targeting Black power who they are symbolizing by Obama, as the cause of the economic crisis.

There are some views that argue that a national mass struggle paralysis of Black people began with the election of Obama. Brothers and sisters, this paralysis existed long before Obama. It is probably correct to say that it has gotten worse since the Obama election. It is important to have this understanding, because many often confuse expressing opposition to Obama, as a program of action.

There was a brief period of awakening during the Obama campaign where the Black masses were mobilized, but there was no national Black united front broad and deep enough among the Black masses with a program of action, to give direction to this spontaneous energy, and to establish a

definite pole of political consciousness that demanded and fought for accountability to key demands.

This lack of intervention was because of the fragmentation and decline of the Black liberation movement. We must rebuild the Black liberation movement as a mass based movement, and not simply as small organizations unconnected to the people's struggles as workers, women, tenants, students, the unemployed, small farmers and against environmental racism among other crimes against our people.

This fragmentation and decline has allowed opportunist forces with Black faces that end up collaborating with the political parties and corporate forces committed to protecting the rule of capital and its control over the state, to emerge as the misleaders of the spontaneous struggles, and to further confuse the Black masses about the meaning of African American self-determination and national liberation.

Too often the demand for Black power is made without Black people having a sense of our real power in society. The Black power we demand must be organized and mobilized by our movement to impact on the pillars of the system that oppresses our people.

This means organizing the Black working class independently of, and in their relationship with other workers and working class movements in society in building and mobilizing power that challenges and influences the structures of capitalist and imperialist power.

To do this, there must be a conscious collaborative effort among the Black left to work in the main social and political movements engaging hundreds and thousands of Black people throughout the U.S., helping to give them political direction, a better understanding of the capitalist system and its contradictions that leads to the capitalist crises, to provide forums and networks that enable them to interact with others in developing strategic regional, national and international demands and to form strategic alliances that build and mobilize as mass bases of transformative power.

Power is not a declaration. There must be strategic points of concentration and mobilization that indicate the power. Organizing in the U.S. South, a region where U.S. and global capital has a major concentration, where the majority of Black people in the U.S. reside, and where a major part of the U.S. military industrial complex is located, must be one of the strategic areas of concentration for any political and revolutionary for power inside of the U.S.

The Black left must influence the consciousness of Black workers in the labor movement. The trade unions are not only the largest organizations of the working class. They have major resources and hundreds of millions of dollars that could support key social movements, but that mainly go to support the political campaigns of the Democratic Party.

The International Longshore Workers Union Local 10 in the bay Area of California continues to provide a leading example of mobilizing Black and working class power. Their one day strikes

demanding the end to Apartheid in South Africa, the freedom of Mumia, end the occupation in Gaza and justice for Oscar Grant. This was a Black working class led action and demand against the state. These and other actions and struggles must be connected and expanded.

The Black Left Unity Network, a developing unity tendency committed to the regroupment of a Black working class led and mass based Black liberation movement, is calling for the various unity efforts to unite around building a mass movement for a Black Manifesto Against Racism and for Human Rights.

The BLUN is calling for conscious Black liberation activists to organize and engage with the Black masses in linking their demands to a national program of action in the form of a Black Manifesto. To work toward connecting local struggles to regional and national frameworks that mobilize critical masses around the various demands and actions.

The BLUN is calling for the various unity efforts and networks to send representatives to a meeting to discuss working together to promote and organize for a Black Manifesto.

We feel that a national Black Manifesto Assembly should be convened before the 2012 presidential elections. This will help to prepare and position the Black masses to deal with exercising areas of mass based Black and working class power that represent areas of contending power to force radical changes.

The decaying of the capitalist economy and the social impacts on our people, demand that we unite and find a way to rebuild mass based Black national resistance, as we continue to work for the development of a revolutionary process and solution.

Let's work for a Black Manifesto.

By Saladin Muhammad

The Black is Back March, November 13, 2010

17 What is to be Done when Revolutionaries Run for and Win Elected Office?

The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) views the election of Chokwe Lumumba to Mayor of the City of Jackson, Mississippi, as an important development for the Black liberation movement. The Jackson Plan, the main program outlining the Malcolm X Grassroots Movements strategy to build power in Jackson and wider parts of Mississippi referred to as the Kush district, needs to become part of a wider discussion among the Black activists and allies committed to and supportive of rebuilding an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist national Black liberation movement.

One of the critical challenges facing a revolutionary movement is the process of making change in the march through history toward revolutionary transformation of the fundamental structures of society. This always points to reform, but there is a difference in the revolutionary fight for reforms and reformism. One is a march to a new future and the other becomes an end in itself.

One case is the defensive struggle: fighting a case of police violence, to get a cop busted; to fight against someone being evicted; to fight for a living wage; to fight against school closings; etc. All of these are important fights and must be waged. In fact the masses of people will spontaneously wage them in their own interests. We have to join these struggles.

The question is what do we bring that is unique to being a revolutionary? First we must recognize that our struggle is being waged within an environment, where bourgeois democracy has convinced millions that the U.S. capitalist system can reform itself depending on who is elected to the government. It is necessary to deepen the understanding of how these spontaneous struggles reflect the workings of the capitalist system and the greed and corruption of the ruling capitalist class.

Second we have to link these reform struggles together making a fight for one into a fight for all. Third we have to work to transform the consciousness of the Black led working-class from that of being simply the main social strata employed by and creating the wealth for capitalism, into a class for itself, acting as a conscious, organized and leading force challenging the policies, structures and ideology of capitalism. This means politicizing, mobilizing and helping it to understand its collective power and revolutionary potential.

Another case is the offensive struggle. This is connected to revolutionary work in the electoral arena. The state is mainly the mechanism of capitalist class rule as they have rigged the game in their favor. However their so called democratic system can be played in our favor, even if on a tactical basis and not in terms of strategic transformation.

A negative example is Bobby Rush of Chicago, former Black Panther. Despite his militant anti-capitalist history, he was elected to Congress and became a reformist. His base is within the democrat party and no revolutionary forces look to him even for information.

This indicates that the revolutionary in government may have become detached from a revolutionary strategy, and from the mass base led and influenced by the revolutionary movement. It also indicates that the revolutionary has become part of the status quo following the dictates of the capitalist controlled political parties that exist to protect capitalism. Even the one open democratic socialist in Congress is a better example: Bernie Sanders (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernie_Sanders)

The main tasks of an elected official can be listed as follows:

1. Represent the movement and advance the movement's program into the mainstream dialogue.
2. Use information sources and inside information to expose the ruling class and their political puppets.
3. Use every means possible to support the struggles and demands of the oppressed and exploited masses, to polarize the class forces for them to see clearly the real enemy as part of a strategy to help them prepare for higher levels of struggle.
4. Use every means possible to hold back the repression of the state on the social movements and political organizations challenging the exploitive economic and social policies and practices of the corporations and the state.

A major question is how to wield power. There is no real people's democracy in this country, only the forms that "look" like democracy. Money and media control public opinion and popular consciousness. Further, elections are winner take all, so if a party gets 49% of the vote they get nothing, whereas in many European countries there is proportionate representation.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proportional_representation)

What we have is either bourgeois or working-class rule of society - this is the raw reality of the situation. This understanding is important in struggles for national liberation, especially for Black people inside of the U.S., where the history of white supremacy has too often obscure the class aspects of national oppression, and thus removed the conscious working-class aspects of the struggle against national oppression from the program of Black power. When the movement can grab executive power it must be wielded without hesitation to advance the program of the movement

In the end the process of revolutionary reform always involves intensifying the contradictions between the capitalist class and the masses of workers and poor people. The objective contradictions already exist. The masses of Black people already are mainly against the policies, programs and impacts of capitalism, and for policies, programs and impacts of identified socialism. A major question is how to mobilize and politicize the Black led working-class to bring it forward as the social force best able to lead the struggle against capitalism and to embrace socialism as a viable alternative. (<http://www.people-press.org/2011/12/28/little-change-in-publics-response-to-capitalism-socialism/>)

Of course the capitalist will go into frenzy and attack on all fronts - this is good. On the cultural front, they were so afraid of Ice T forming public opinion against the police (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fg7-lxZfZPc>) that they turned him into a TV cop. (<http://screenrant.com/law-order-svu-ice-t-mcrid-119208/>)

Where to Begin

Mississippi has the highest number of Black elected officials of all 50 states. It is important that the Black masses in particular see something different from the election of Chokwe and the Jackson-Kush Plan. The name implies a movement to build power and an expanding base of struggle against the status quo. This power and expanding base has regional and national implications for shaping either a new or old understanding of the meaning of Black power. We need a new understanding. The mayor operating within a climate of mass mobilization around key issues must point out that her/his administration will focus on placing people's needs over corporate greed.

To prioritize the needs of the most exploited and oppressed people in Jackson to help give expression to a people's centered and driven human rights politics, a mass campaign that produces a social movement that presses for the people's demands and develops institutions that begin to reflect the elements of a new economy, the main focus on developing the economy must be wider than the development of cooperatives. The Mississippi Summer Project focused on voter registration and fighting segregation as the main objectives. This time we have to target poverty as the main issue and the need for mass self organization to fight on class terms for Black liberation.

Too often social movements center their work around the new mayor, and stop taking on their mass struggle character and defining the issues and priorities that are important for the masses of the people, turning the political movement into a top down affair. This was the experience of Harold Washington's election in 1983 Chicago. So-called successes are looked at in terms of who gets appointed by the new Mayor. For the social movements to stop when a Mayor is elected actually places the revolutionary mayor in a weaker position to deal with the forces of capital which is one of the functions of a mayor within a capitalist system.

This means placing the question of cooperatives in the context of a struggle that mobilizes a wider base as part of a campaign for jobs and raising the minimum wage to create a livable income for workers to stimulate the economy. Cooperatives would only involve a very small percentage of the workers, and will not be able to attract the broad base of the working-class, including the unemployed and many of the homeless.

Mobilizing broad participation must define core elements of the cooperative project. Workers seizing plants and their machinery that are planning to close, and the city government using eminent domain and other laws to seize plants and businesses that have already closed begins to define the division of labor of revolutionaries in government and the mass movement that needs to be built.

Leading political organizations like the MXGM must have a program that builds working-class led forms of people's democracy and control that is to the left of Chokwe's progressive and left

leaning public positions, recognizing that part of his role is to push the state to be accountable to the needs of the people, who must be made conscious of their interest by the revolutionary forces. This will often mean mobilizing the mass base to create the political climate to push government and the corporations to address major issues.

Capitalism has its own strategy for addressing racism and sexism. The two top candidates for the 2008 Democratic Party primaries a Blackman and white women. The Republican Party under G.W. Bush appointed Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, and a Black to chair the Republican Party. This was part of its strategy to attack affirmative action and other social programs designed for oppressed nationalities, as with section 4 in the Voting Rights Act. Race without class, cannot be the mantra of the Black liberation movement.

The survival and growth of a local anti-capitalist struggles and contending power base building strategies are dependent on their connection to a growing and strong national anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist movement. Jackson, Mississippi becomes an important front of struggle as well as a learning laboratory for the Black liberation movement.

In a word this means the beginning is struggle, not an invitation to a conference. We have four months before the conference. This is enough time to target strategic forces at our base and to begin networking their leaders into planning to advance resistance and struggle. This means the conference will not only advance the tactic of the cooperative, but whatever else emerges. This is the context for the class wide demand to unite all who can be united at this stage of our struggle.

A BLUN Discussion Paper - 1/12/14

Saladin Muhammad and Abdul Alkalimat

18 A Solidarity Economy Must be Part of the Black Liberation and All of the Movements for Radical Social Transformation

The Black Left Unity Network, Black Workers For Justice and the Southern Workers Assembly recognizes the importance of this Jackson Rising New Economies Conference and are appreciative of haven been invited to participate. The very theme of this conference – New Economies, implies if not out rightly states, that there is a growing dissatisfaction among the masses with the capitalist economy.

We know that the capitalist economy and its insatiable drive for profits over the human needs and rights of the people and the protection of the planet, has deeply impoverished the working-class and many in the middle-class, with its deepest economic, social, political and environmental impacts on working-class Black and other people of color and their communities.

In Mississippi, a state in a region with a brutal history of racist economic and political oppression, underdevelopment, and divisions among the working-class, and where the struggle for democracy was most profound, people are beginning to understand that without working-class and peoples power, that democracy never fully develops, and is always threatened by the interests and power of the 1-percent.

Foreign direct investment has been a major factor in shaping the priorities of the Southern economy and the social policies. Between 1979 and 1986, there were nearly 90 new foreign owned companies established or expanded in the South-nearly, 30 percent more than any other region in the country. Since the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993, nearly all of the foreign auto assembly transplants have located in Southern right-to-work states. These transplants have received \$billions in state and local government subsidies, taken away from needed infrastructure development and repairs. As a result they have caused underdevelopment for the most oppressed working-class communities.

High unemployment is a major aspect of the economic crisis and a permanent feature of capitalist globalization. The working-class cannot be expected to pool funds to start worker cooperatives, especially of the scale needed to address the high unemployment and its many social impacts.

The emphasis of the working-class must be on extracting capital from the corporations as core to a transitional and transformative economy and society. The example set by UE Local 1110 Republic Windows and Doors workers in Chicago should become a main trend in forming worker cooperatives. Upon learning that the company was closing their plant, the Republic workers seized control of the plant and equipment. With Support from the community, labor movement and other allies, they were eventually able to form a worker's cooperative.

Workers and communities must also claim a right to ownership of the corporate assets left in our communities in the form of empty plants, workplaces and land obtained from major subsidies and low wage labor. Campaigns must be organized by workers and communities to take control of these properties and to demand subsidies and financing from local and state governments and the banks to help form worker cooperatives.

The cooperative networks and growing movement cannot stand alone, seeing itself as simply another business model trying to compete and survive in the capitalist economy. The building of a transitional and transformative solidarity economy requires the building of strong bases and spheres of working-class contending power in the capitalist economy.

It would be a strategic error to promote the solidarity economy exclusively around building cooperatives without including the building of a strong rank-and-file democratic labor movement and structures of democratic people's governance that seek control over the economy and the social and political institutions that impact the lives of the masses of people.

Cooperatives need to be understood as being part of an anti-capitalist program for a radical social transformation that prefigures the new society and liberation that our movements are fighting for. Part of the economic role of cooperatives should be to provide support to the movements and struggles for workers power and self-determination.

What made the Jackson Rising New Economies Conference attractive to our organizations is that it grows out of a developing strategy in the form of the Jackson-Kush Plan to build zones of Black working-class led mass based power as a new battlefield and basis of contending power. These zones could expand throughout the U.S. South and other parts of the U.S. as part of a transitional strategy to build dual power.

Former Freedom Fighter and Mayor of Jackson Comrade Chokwe Lumumba, saw developing a solidarity economy as an integral part of a Freedom Agenda that forges a unity of the Black Freedom movement and all human rights movements into a transformative force.

Chokwe understood that building a solidarity economy in Jackson would be seen as a challenge to the status quo, and as part of a strategy to push back against the austerity policies seeking to make working-class and poor people bear the burden for the economic and social crisis.

A solidarity economy while developing projects that begin to engage some workers in a system of worker control must have a program that begins to organize and mobilize the power of workers in the fight for jobs, social programs and unionization that reaches, educates and mobilizes the widest base of working-class power as a social movement for a solidarity economy.

There are forces at this conference wanting to build labor unions, a Southern Workers Assembly, campaigns to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, and for immigrant rights who are ready to help organize and build power for a solidarity economy as part of a Freedom Agenda.

We are hoping that this conference puts in place commissions that bring together the various social movements to begin developing Freedom Agendas that incorporate the building of labor organizations, worker cooperatives and peoples assemblies as fundamental institutions for democratic people's governance and the onward struggle for an anti-capitalist social transformation.

Saladin Muhammad 5/3/14
Jackson (Mississippi) Rising Conference

19 Open Letter to the Jackson Rising Conference

Brothers and Sisters, Comrades and Friends:

The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) salutes the bold initiative of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM) and co-sponsors to call the "Jackson Rising: New Economies Conference."

The BLUN recognizes the city of Jackson as a new battlefield in the struggle for Black liberation and revolutionary change in the interest all oppressed and exploited people. The holding of this conference is part of a radical agenda to join the long march in opposition to the brutal exploitation and oppression of the capitalist system. When the masses of people begin to build cooperative structures that exclude capitalist exploitation in favor of utilizing the wealth produced by the workers for social equality, then we believe they can begin to glimpse a society that is truly “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” We know we don’t have this now, but this conference is a step in that direction.

We are writing this letter to express our solidarity with the conference and its basic aims. However after carefully looking over the conference program listing the many workshops, we don’t see anything about the challenges faced by cooperatives in the capitalist economy, especially now with the structural crisis that is impacting all aspects of economic, social and political life of the working-class.

Without including an analysis of the government policies and economic trends and their impacts on the Black and general working-class in and surrounding the city of Jackson, the conference will fail helping the people, especially from Jackson to develop an understanding of the areas and class base of power that needs to be built to help grow and defend cooperatives as an economic model that represents an aspect of the economic transformation they want to shape the political direction of the City of Jackson and greater Mississippi.

If working-class power is not organized and mobilized to challenge the attacks by the forces of capitalism, no project is secure from the economic and political trauma that this structural crisis is causing throughout society.

The BLUN views the City of Jackson with the people’s assemblies and political leadership from movement organizations like MXGM as a developing new battlefield for the Black liberation movement led struggle for democratic people’s governance.

Comrade Chokwe understood that there are two main social forces seeking to influence the direction of local and all levels of government – those representing the banks, corporations and other moneyed interests, and the masses of people who must work and/or depend on social programs to try and survive. There is a major and essential aspect of the vision and legacy defined by the life of Comrade Chokwe Lumumba as a freedom fighter and once Mayor of the City of Jackson that is represented by his slogan “The people Must Decide.” He believed that the organized power of the oppressed and exploited peoples is the critical component for building and sustaining institutions, be they economic projects or democratic governance, especially if they are to function differently from those guided by capitalist principles that place profits for the company and its shareholders over human needs and support for the transformation of the system that oppresses the people

We face a deep structural crisis of capitalism that threatens world peace, that threatens the global environment, and that attacks the quality of life for the vast millions in every society.

The fight for a better life in one city or in one region is a step but only national and global forces can create a new system. As we fight for reforms, and fight we must, one of our main tasks is to

educate the working class about the system of economic exploitation and how we must organize to fight and transform it.

The Black working-class must play a leading role in the movement for Black liberation and in building a powerful workers movement

Black people are a special target of capitalist exploitation through national oppression and pervasive racism, with a particular emphasis on the Black working-class and the U.S. South. A conscious and organized Black working-class is critical to forging the unity of all workers that builds the power to challenge and beat back the forces of capitalism that are attacking the democratic reforms won and the cooperative projects being pursued by people in Jackson. The lack of an alternative vision and organized Black working-class leadership is largely responsible for the unchallenged failures and betrayals of the Obama administration. The Black liberation movement must be rebuilt on a solid Black working-class foundation; leadership and vision of an anti-capitalist society, as it is critically building a national defense against attacks projects in battlefronts like Jackson that are being led by forces of the Black liberation movement.

We support cooperatives as important projects and part of a strategy of building centers of unity and anti-capitalist counter institutions to help generate the necessary political consciousness and basic resources we need for Black liberation and revolutionary change.

Every cooperative that helps working and poor people survive and improve their quality of life is a victory against the corporate strategy and must be supported. However, it is important to recognize that cooperatives and all businesses not tied to and controlled by the major financial institutions and corporations are always in danger of being coopted by the capitalist system unless they fight to be part of the movements to build an anti-capitalist alternative.

The Conference should propose a set of political demands that assists the Jackson People's Assemblies to call for the Jackson City Council to enact the following or similar public policies:

1. Pass a livable wage resolution for city workers and employees of any contractual agency with the city
2. Follow the city of Richmond California to use eminent domain as a tool to help end homelessness in Jackson Mississippi
3. Pass a resolution calling for the unionization of all Jackson City workers and that supports the right of private sector workers to unionize and engage in collective bargaining for a contract that provides protections, improvements and that empowers.
4. Require all banks handling city funds to demonstrate a just and equitable policy on their loans and mortgages for all citizens
5. That the Jackson City Council establish a fund to assist workers and communities in forming cooperatives

BLUN members will be participating in this conference to help build unity for the future. BLUN member will have BLUN buttons on to identify ourselves for focused discussion.

Long live the legacy of Chokwe Lumumba!

Forward with the Unity of militant activists building the fight for Black liberation and the Emancipation of the Working Class!

Forward with the cooperative workers movement!

Free the Land!

20 Two Tactics: Implementing a National Strategy for Black Liberation: Thoughts on the Jackson Rising Economic Conference

The recent events in Jackson Mississippi, especially the mayoral election and now the call for a conference on political economy, raise exciting new possibilities for the Black liberation struggle. In light of this the Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) is very committed to facilitating discussion to engage forces around the country in thinking through the strategic and tactical issues that apply to Jackson as well as sites of struggle throughout the country. We are initiating this process with these few remarks.

1. The Black liberation struggle requires revolutionary leadership in thinking through both strategy and tactics. Strategy is the general plan for an entire stage of the struggle, summing up what forces will strike the main blows against the enemy. Our strategic orientation now is to rebuild the Black liberation movement under the leadership of Black workers and the most exploited impoverished sections of our community. Black liberation, while national in form, must have a clear working-class content/program. Tactics are the actions we take to carry out the strategy. Tactics change as needed to carry out the strategy.
2. A general organizational approach for our strategy has been raised in the Chokwe Lumumba mayoral campaign: “The People Must Decide: Educate, Motivate, Organize.” This recognizes that there must be two aspects at play, the spontaneous movement and the organized forces of militant resistance. The strategic education we need is about the nature of the global capitalist system and how it is responsible for the exploitation and oppression of Black people. This will motivate. There will be many organizational forms. In general this is a strategic affirmation of the necessity for self-determination and the leadership of the Black working-class.
3. The Two tactics for Black liberation have to do with fighting a local struggle that can unite the entire strategic forces while at the same time fighting for specific projects that engage some of the strategic forces. The former will also be part of a national program for Black liberation that can be taken up by fighters in all areas, while also in some cases there will be local tactics that mainly apply to a specific location.
4. A good example is the “No More Trayvon Campaign.” The terrible murder led to a great wave of spontaneity that began to be shaped by more advanced forces – key slogans to unite the

many, a march in Florida to concentrate and focus; research on 28 hours to deepen the understanding of how violence is being waged on a national scale, etc. There were local demonstrations and national initiatives that united the many.

5. The May Conference is a local initiative that can educate, motivate, and organize a sector of people to stabilize their economic condition, but it can have national and international ramifications about the BLM struggle against capitalism inside of the U.S. imperialist state and leading economic and military force of global capitalism. People who are in any particular cooperative stand a good chance of stabilizing their incomes, relationships, and family life. This will be a very small percentage of the working-class. The critical question is its strategic nature. There are three aspects to this: will it be part of an anti-capitalist motion? Will it be part of a motion to mobilize the Black working-class in the fight for self-determination as a basis for dual, contending and transformative power?
6. If the coop is part of an assault on capital it will have strategic value. For example, if the city uses eminent domain and seizes property and turns it over to workers and goes on to define it as a corrective to the evils of capitalism. Or, if the workers strike and the company closes down, and then the workers seize the property and organize the company themselves. These would be examples of a revolutionary anti-capitalist approach to building a workers cooperative.
7. If the coop is connected to outreach to all workers and poor people it will have strategic value. If the coop is about food and makes sure that people self organize so that no one in the community goes hungry, or if a coop organizes to take care of the elderly, or the children, or to provide legal or medical assistance, and in each case promotes a vision of a new kind of society where workers control of the economy and prioritizes the needs of those neglected by capitalism, it will be strategically important.
8. On the other hand, any kind of worker coop is a good thing as a local initiative that will impact some people. When this is what is in play then it needs to be accompanied by a general initiative that can appeal to all workers and connects to a national campaign of Black liberation. This is why we support a campaign for raising the minimum wage to a livable wage – from \$7.50 to \$15.00 and a federally funded jobs program. This wage demand would unite all Black workers and get them in play simultaneously with the coop initiative. In fact more workers would be in shape to start cooperatives. The wage demand would also build a front with local small businesses and build community because the additional money would circulate locally. It is important to promote, that in order for a cooperative economy to grow, that there must be a workers movement with organized labor power that drives the development of the economy.
9. This has direct implications for the May conference. We need to add strategic issues to the conference. A plenary on the evils of the capitalist system seems imperative. Black people oppose capitalism and support socialism –this is something that we have to begin dealing with openly and in the mainstream and we have to prepare to take blows- the fight is on. The cuts in education, the closing of plants, gentrification, homelessness, the attack on voting rights,

and democratic rights in general, those factors that intensifies the national oppression of Black people, must be examples citing the evils of capitalism. It should point out that efforts to use natural and human resources (labor) to benefit the majority, especially the working-class and poor in places like Venezuela and Cuba that have offered aid to victims of Hurricane Katrina, low cost oil for poor communities, free medical training to create doctors for underserved communities in the U.S. and throughout the world, are under attack by capitalism. A slide show could help with such a presentation. It's also important to look at what has occurred in Mississippi since the civil rights victories. (<http://www.people-press.org/2011/12/28/little-change-in-publics-response-to-capitalism-socialism/>) This might take the form of a focus on the wage demand and why capitalism tries to keep the wages so low. (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/wage-labour/>)

10. MXGM, as a BLUN organization sponsoring this economic conference advancing an anti-capitalist perspective, it is important that we begin in this New Phase of the BLUN, to engage BLUN forces to be supportive of this opportunity to focus on political economy and how to advance the struggle in Jackson Mississippi. We will work to bring a BLUN delegation to the conference. We will be focusing on the local and the national as our main mission is to collaborate with movement forces to rebuild the national Black Liberation movement.

1/12/14

21 Moral Mondays: the Emergence and Dynamics of a Growing Mass Human Rights Movement

Introduction

The Moral Mondays Campaign in North Carolina that is mobilizing thousands to speak out against the legislative attacks on Black, working-class and poor people throughout the state is being talked about across the country, as it expands to other cities.

Moral Mondays in North Carolina has a particular history that needs to be understood to recognize its political aims and the dynamics in moving it forward as a mass campaign and human rights social movement. Broad campaigns and movements for social justice have twists and turns that are influenced by the strength and bases of the class and political forces acting within the movement.

The critiques of social movements by many progressives too often rely on what's written by the mainstream media without any contact with left and progressive forces active in those social movements. They also tend to analyze social movements as if there is only one permanently leading political tendency and that other tendencies are merely tailing with no internal struggle,

strategy and independent initiatives. The history of the civil rights movement where Dr. King was the mass spokesperson, points out the internal dynamics within mass movements.

Yes, there are many that see the Moral Mondays as mainly a struggle against the Republican Party control of the State legislature, and as part of an electoral strategy to prepare a Democratic Party base for the next state and national elections. This is clearly one of the strong tendencies, but not the only tendency active in shaping the direction of the Moral Mondays.

The unity-struggle-unity and independent initiative of SNCC is an example of forces representing the most oppressed sectors of the Black masses operating within the civil rights movement and how they were able to influence its direction.

Historical Background

Moral Mondays grew out of a People's Assembly movement known as Historical Thousands on Jones Street (HKOJ) that was formed in February 2007. The Black masses is the social anchor of the HKOJ, even though its composition and program is broader.

Reverend William Barber II, NC State President of the NAACP, along with others engaged in struggles for social and economic justice and human rights mobilized to convene a People's Assembly in February 2007 where a 14-point program was developed, and the HKOJ coalition was formed that included the 120 branches of the NC NAACP and 150 community, labor and social justice organizations.

Rev. Barber had been active in struggles around education, voting rights and other issues mainly in Wayne County and the city of Goldsboro where he lives, and pastors his church. In 2002, he came out in support of the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union-UE Local 150, that was organizing at two of the city's main employers' of state mental health workers, speaking on the Goldsboro City Hall steps lifting up the right to organize and collective bargaining.

As a leader of the Goldsboro branch of the NC NAACP actively supporting labor and other Black, working-class and poor people's struggles, Rev. Barber stood out as an emerging statewide leader capable of changing the largely inactive character of the majority of the NC NAACP branches. In 2006 with the help of progressive ministers and allies who were registered NAACP members he was elected NC State President of the NAACP.

The HKOJ began holding annual mobilizations to the NC General Assembly each February, declaring the General Assembly as the People's House and calling on legislators to implement the People's Assembly program. Rev. Barber's leadership and the HKOJ mobilizations began to radicalize and transform many of the 120 NC NAACP Branches, including the recruitment of a large and active youth wing.

The HKOJ and its demands on the General Assembly began when the Democrats held the majority in the State Legislature. After a ruling by the International Labor Organization (ILO) a agency of the United Nations to a complaint filed by the UE initiated International Worker Justice Campaign finding North Carolina being out of compliance with international conventions and treaties by denying public sector workers collective bargaining rights, a bill was president to the NC legislature by an ally in the Democratic Party, calling for the repealing of the ban on collective bargaining rights for public sector workers. Despite the Democratic Party having a majority, and that support was shown by organized labor and many community and social movement organizations, the bill never got out of one of the committees to make it to the floor for a vote by the General Assembly. It is clear to many in the Moral Mondays that the Democratic Party is not in favor of empowering the working-class against the forces of capital that largely dictate and shape the policies of the state.

Strategy

Moral Mondays have mobilized thousands to take away the moral high ground from the religious right whose so-call moral agenda is racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic and divisive and tries to appeal mainly to the white working-class. Moral Mondays have injected a liberation theology creating a popular social ministry radicalizing many faith leaders as part of the fight-back against the neo-fascists that not only have a base in state legislatures and the U.S. Congress, but also a social base in the white working-class that has been growing and mobilized during the Obama administration.

The next step in the moral argument will be to challenge the capitalist system as Dr. King did. Moral Mondays must embrace the demand for human rights, elevating the demands for social justice above the laws of U.S. imperialism. Human rights are international, inalienable and place's the struggle in an international context.

An important part of the HKOJ strategy that has yet to be implemented, is the building of local peoples assemblies in every major city and county to bring together social justice forces as a peoples movement infrastructure. This would help to build mass based power to impact not only on the legislative and local political districts, but also to build organizations and solidarity to empower the people working in and relying on the social and economic institutions where state policies are carried out.

Tactics

The civil disobedience phase that resulted in the arrests of 941 Moral Monday activists was a very important tactic. Some viewed it as replicating a tactic of the Southern civil rights movement led by Dr. King to give it a historical political connection. Others viewed and engaged in it as a tactic to help raise the level of militancy of the mass struggles; and to expose the increasing repression and

role of the state in pushing austerity policies and denying democratic and constitutional rights to the people's movements.

The trials of about 50 of the Moral Monday's arrestees so far have helped to expose the repressive role of the state. They brought out how the police agencies were secretly coming into the Moral Monday meetings and conducting surveillance, and how the court's rulings were inconsistent and sort to divide and create confusion among the arrestees.

There was a struggle within the Moral Monday's campaign following the first court conviction. There was a call for the for Moral Monday's leaders and mobilizations to raise the demand to drop the charges of all Moral Monday arrestees and overturn the convictions, to highlight the struggle against the state criminalizing the right to protest. However, the actual struggle around this demand which still needs to grow stronger had to be independently initiated by the labor arrestees and their allies.

Moral Mondays have help to create a statewide climate of mass fight-back that can encourage and support local fight-backs led by local organizations and social movements. North Carolina is referred to as ground zero in the mass fight-back against the right.

In generalizing the attacks on the people as morally unconscionable in an effort reflect the multi-class and multi-racial breath of the Moral Monday mobilizations, it is important not to downplay the racist and depression level impacts that the cuts and policies are having on working-class Black, other people of color and women; how the media criminalizes these disproportionately impacted communities; and why there is greater police brutality, government repression, vigilante attacks and mass incarceration of the people in and from these communities.

The Black Workers For Justice made a call at No More Trayvons rallies it sponsored, for people to come to the Moral Monday the following day with signs, banners, etc demanding - Justice For Trayvon Martin and Stop the War on Black America. A couple hundred signs were distributed and held high by Black, people of color and many whites. There was an increase in the turnout of Black people at the Moral Monday following the court's not guilty verdict of Trayvons murderer George Zimmerman. As one radical minister said; Moral Mondays is a real opportunity to provide an anti-racist education to the large number of whites participating in Moral Mondays.

Tactics vary in the Moral Monday movement, depending on the initiative of the organizations and movements participating. There was a Moral Monday rally in Washington, NC, a working-class city with a significant Black population, opposing the closing of the Vidant Pungo hospital recently purchased by the Vidant Medical Center, a regional monopoly serving 1.4 million people in 29 Black Belt counties in Northeastern part of the state. An information picket has also been launched at the stores of billionaire tea party and ALEC financier and NC State budget director Art Pope. These actions show the potential of the Moral Mondays in helping to expose the domination

by the corporate class over state government, and the importance of challenging the capitalist economic base in the struggle against austerity.

Mobilizing Labor's Rank-and-file

On September 21, 2013, the Southern Workers Assembly (SWA) organized a labor fight-back conference that brought together North Carolina rank-and-file members, leaders and organizers of several unions and organizing campaigns to hammer out a Workers Democracy Campaign to raise the visibility of labor in the Moral Mondays movement, and to carry out and promote the fight-back at the workplace and the right to organize. This conference took place after the arrests of the SWA Moral Monday labor delegation and its holding of a series of public hearings in 3 cities to bring forth their issues and demands.

Following the conference and the agitation of the SWA, we began to see the following rank-and-file actions - teachers, parents and students held "Walk ins" at the public schools in cities across the state wearing red t-shirts in protest of over crowded class sizes, low teachers pay and the state budget cuts in education; UFCW members held a Flash mob inside of a Wal-Mart store on working poor conditions and the right to organize; the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) continue the struggle and demand on the R.J. Reynolds Corporation to bargain with the tobacco workers organized by FLOC; the NC Public Service Workers Union-UE 150, held rallies at mental health hospitals and delivered demands to the headquarters of the state's Department of Health and Human Resources; and the Fast Food workers campaign to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour helped to popularize and energize the growing struggles for workers democracy and power that are beginning to converge.

This conscious effort to organize and raise the profile, voice and influence of labor is a growing aspect of the Moral Monday's movement. The SWA has been building a rank-and-file movement trying to push labor activism and social movement unionism from the bottom up. Some national unions whose main memberships are outside of the South have contributed financial support, but most have not made a serious effort to mobilize their rank-and-file as part of and in support of Moral Mondays.

The passage of a resolution at the AFL-CIO National Convention in 2013 on Organizing the South was partly influenced by the success of Moral Monday's mobilizing of thousands in NC, recognizing its potential to expand South wide as another civil rights movement. Representatives and allies of the SWA played an important role in developing the language of the AFL.CIO resolution, and for its introduction into the national convention. An officer in the NC state AFL.CIO active in Moral Mondays led a workshop at the convention on organizing in the South

Toward building a national movement

Another weakness in the Moral Monday's has been the lack of demands on and criticisms of the federal government's complicity with the dictates of big capital and its impacts on the states. This is due in part to not wanting to appear to be attacking the Obama administration, especially when he is constantly experiencing racist attacks from the right. This is also a result of the lack of a popular understanding that Obama is the President of an imperialist state-dominated international economic system; and that corporate power demands that he protects this system. Helping to raise this consciousness is one of the important tasks of the left within this movement.

The Supreme Court's removal of Section-4 of the Voting Rights Act, and the U.S. Congress sequester shutting down of parts of the federal government has enabled many to begin to see the power and rule of the corporate class over the federal government, even under Obama administration.

The spreading of the Moral Mondays to other cities throughout the South and across the country will help to sharpen the connection between the struggles against corporate domination of the states and the struggles against corporate rule over the federal government.

<http://clclt.com/theclog/archives/2014/01/07/moral-monday-style-movements-emerge-in-south-carolina-georgia>

One of the important lessons and strengths of the civil rights movement was that it did not allow the federal government to hide behind states rights as a way of refusing to deal with state laws throughout the South that collectively created Jim Crow, as racist system of national and colonial oppression. The civil rights movement challenged those considered by some as allies like President's Kennedy and Johnson, even though they signed an Executive Order, Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act.

The spreading of Moral Mondays is a very important. However, they must be led by people's movement coalitions, democratically involving the people's organizations, and not by a single organization however sincere, dedicated and articulate the leader.

To connect and better coordinate the work of civil rights organizations in Mississippi in 1962, and to prevent a single organization from calling all of the shots, the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) was formed as a sort of a united front involving the NAACP, CORE, SCLS and SNCC.

The Moral Monday's radicalizing of the clergy and their church members is very important. However, the emphasis on Moral principles, must not give clergy an automatic right to leadership in Moral Mondays over those in the social movements and mass organizations. That was initially the thinking at the founding of Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957.

It is also important not to misinterpret Dr. King's call for America to have a moral conscience as simply meaning that the minds of those in legislative positions need to change. He was talking about the immorality of a system that places profits and wars over human needs being fundamentally changed.

The student sit-ins at the Woolworth store in Greensboro, NC spread throughout the South and influenced the tactics of the civil rights movement, and Ella Baker's efforts that helped found the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were independent initiatives that helped to influence the tactics and political demands of the civil rights movement.

In sum we have to place this Moral Monday campaign within our understanding of the period we are in. The main question is whether we are in motion, whether we are organizing and mobilizing to fight back.

When people fight they raise questions about power and oppression. When people fight back they learn because they know that learning is how they can fight better.

The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) must help to spread the Moral Mondays and similar movements to other cities across the country. Part of the BLUN role must be to mobilize radical thinking people rooted in the mass struggles to join the fight; work to raise the level of thinking of the people being radicalized by the struggle; and work to organize cooperation of the radical forces to help advance the strategy and tactics that can guide the movement on to victory at this juncture.

Saladin Muhammad
Black Workers For Justice &
Black Left Unity Network 1/25/14

22 The Ferguson Rebellion: Why Rebuild the National Black Liberation Movement?!

The national Black Community and all people of justice must make our voices heard and actions felt against the government sanctioned police killings of unarmed Black people taking place throughout the U.S. The murder of young Michael Brown in the St Louis, MO suburbs of Ferguson, adds to the thousands of police killings of unarmed Black people, occurring at a rate of one every 28 hours.

The corporate media criminalization of working-class and poor Black and Latino communities is designed to create a racist social and political climate that defines the victims of oppression as the threats to so-called democracy and law and order, trying to justify, especially to white society the militarization of the police and the occupying of Black communities. The surplus homeland

security funding has given police departments over \$75 billion in military equipment. The Pentagon currently offers hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of surplus military weapons to St. Louis County Police. <http://www.ebony.com/news-views/the-fergusonpalestine-connection-403>

This U.S. militarization of the police is part of the U.S. global strategy of empire, carried out by the pentagon representing the highest command level of the U.S. military industrial complex. The U.S. government's 3 billion yearly in military aid to Israel helps to point out the connection between U.S. imperialism and the Zionist settler state of Israel and why the Israel military has trained more than 9000 U.S. police at the federal, state and municipal levels.

Militarized police are now being deployed in other cities across the U.S. carrying out solidarity protest with Ferguson. They see this support as an expression of a developing national resistance that has not yet formed a national Black united front, a people's front and a program of action to unite and provide a national political direction to connect the various local solidarity efforts and local fight backs against police killings.

Without the pressure of national mass resistance and active international support of demands that both address the police murder of Brown and other unarmed Black victims that have taken place, and that pushes to condemn these killings in the international community as crimes against humanity, the promised investigations by the U.S. Attorney General and government agencies, will once again find the police killings as a local matter, making the rule of justice the domain of the U.S. courts whose role is to protect the image and organizations of the state.

In order to deal with the Police killing of Brown, the immediate demands must be linked to and elevated by national demands as an oppressed people under attack, citing Brown's murder as part of a pattern of state sanctioned repression. The Black liberation movement must call for these police killings to be tried in the International Criminal Court as crimes against humanity, calling for concrete international intervention to help bring pressure on the U.S. government to end its military occupation and attacks on basic civil and human rights of Black and other oppressed peoples inside of the U.S.

The cry of the Black masses for justice being expressed by the rebellion in Ferguson and throughout the U.S. is a cry for change and for the power to make radical change. It is not a cry for a failed democracy, even when led by a Black president who has shamefully tries to use his position as U.S. president to convince Black people that the system of national oppression has ended and that we now live in a post racial democratic society. His urging of the Black, oppressed and working-class masses to have faith and tolerance with the repressive and exploitive policies and practices of the government and the capitalist system, has discouraged the national Black resistance that has been a missing link as a major national social force responding to the crisis of U.S. and global capitalism.

While immediate demands for local justice must be made for the jailing of the killer cop, the removal of the militarized police from Ferguson, the firing of the police chief and all those in authority defending the murder of Michael Brown, it needs to be clarified that the people have no confidence in these agencies of the state. There should be a call for the forming of peoples monitoring committees, including international representatives that monitor every aspect of U.S. level investigations, media coverage and court actions to make a national and international report through progressive, allied and social media.

Obama should not be called in to talk to the people of Ferguson, allowing him a platform to send the false message that the federal government will act, knowing that his main message will try to split the united sentiment and forces in Ferguson and throughout the U.S. He should be criticized for not speaking out and taking federal action against these police and vigilante killings that have taken place during his administration and that have become a national epidemic placing the lives of Black and Brown people, especially the youth at serious risk.

Elevating the rebellion in Ferguson to a hotspot of an expanded national resistance requires the Black left to form a strategic unity to build the national and international capacity to raise the political consciousness, demands and level of struggle that mobilizes mass based Black and working-class power. Without clear political demands and coordinated struggle, it is difficult to deal with ultra-left errors and actions by agent provocateurs that are often hard to distinguish in the spontaneous struggles.

The continuing of protest in Ferguson, throughout the country and internationally is very important to shape public opinion and pressure for justice for the Brown murder and demanding an end to the occupation and oppression of the Black communities and people. However, national resistance must go beyond street protests to impact the economy and political system that is responsible for this militarization and police occupation to repress and contain Black resistance to the oppressive economic, social and political conditions that creates super profits for capital as the masses of people face a depression level existence.

The August 16th blockade of the Israel ship at the San Francisco harbor demanding the end of the Israel bombing of Gaza and the occupation of Palestine was an important exercise of power. Similar actions and tactics must become part of the national resistance carried out in every major industry and sector demanding concrete justice for Brown and all unarmed victims of police killings and to empower the masses of Black and oppressed people to have greater control over the police, and to advance the struggles for self-determination and revolutionary change. Self-determination must build forms of contending and transformative power that begins to takeover aspects of the functions of the state and the local economies.

The Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers were inspired by the 1967 Detroit Rebellions that took the struggle against racist national oppression into the auto and eventually other industries, thus positioning the Black liberation movement to

carry out struggle inside of the labor movement and at the point of capitalist production. These forms of Black worker organization must be rebuilt to help shape the Black and general working-class consciousness and mobilize their power against the system of Black national oppression and U.S. and global capitalism.

There has yet to be a call for workers to strikes in Ferguson as part of the rebellion. Nor has there been a call for strikes in other cities throughout the U.S. in support of the Ferguson rebellion. Brother Clarence Thomas a rank-and-file leader of the ILWU Local 10 and of the Million Worker March, in speaking at the site of the rally of several thousand blocking the unloading of the Israel company cargo ship, declared that as an African American he understood growing up that the police was an occupying force. He likened the rebellion in Ferguson to the resistance in Gaza and pointed out that these two fronts of resistance were communicating with each other and these actions that impacted trade and production needed to take place across the U.S.

<http://youtu.be/PcJHInq4YIo>

The forces of U.S. capital and the imperialist state know clearly that national resistance by the Black masses would become a catalyst for a general resistance of all oppressed people and sections of the broader U.S. working-class inside of the U.S. Ferguson is showing this potential.

To expand and deepen the national resistance, new alignments and national frameworks must be built that help to mobilize mass based power around demands as an oppressed people deeply exploited under the capitalist system. The Latino national political strike on May Day 2006 demanding immigrant rights and in protest against the Sensenbrenner bill, sets an example of the type of national resistance mobilization needed to fight against the state sanctioned police killings of unarmed Black, Brown and indigenous peoples as the three main occupied communities inside of the U.S.

The Black left should view the rebellion in Ferguson and the national and international solidarity being expressed as the opening of a period of national Black national resistance under the Obama administration that has discouraged such resistance over the a past 6 years, promoting a Black leadership class that aligns with capitalism and the state on U.S. domestic and foreign policies.

There will be many voices and political interests calling for justice and peace in Ferguson and throughout the U.S. as the national resistance develops. While we must struggle against the push by reformists to deal with the murder of Michael Brown and the Ferguson rebellion as a local issue, to be resolved only by a charge and court action against the killer cop and the appointment of more Blacks to the police and local government, the Black left must focus on spreading and deepening the Black national resistance.

The Black left should focus on organizing a national Black united and people's fronts and forming of worker-student-community alliances and a Black and women of color led national campaign lifting up the police killings of Black and youth of color as an act of genocide, as its main bases

within the united fronts to help prepare and deepen the political and strategic character of the national resistance.

This new period requires the focus on developing a national program of action for Black liberation. The Black Left Unity Network has called for the holding of a National Assembly for Black Liberation and a national discussion and shaping of a Draft Manifesto toward developing a national program to be ratified at the National Assembly.

The 1960s rebellions representing a transition from civil rights to Black power recognized that they needed to hold national Black power conferences to consolidate this emerging new phase of resistance and political alignment. While there were different class forces at these national conferences, they were important in helping to elevate the national Black political consciousness and placing the Black power struggle within the context of the anti-colonial national liberation struggles in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean at that time.

Linking the Black liberation movement to the global struggles against U.S. led capitalism and empire, will not occur spontaneously. This is truer now than during the 1960s, because the election of Obama as U.S. president has confused many about how to understand the political character of the oppression of Black people inside the U.S. Without a clear understanding, the spontaneous struggles can be taken in any direction, depending on the alignment of forces providing the most organized political leadership on the ground throughout the U.S.

We must always be mindful that there will be major efforts to pull this growing national sentiment generated by the Ferguson rebellion and the issue of police killings of unarmed Black people into the realm of bourgeois politics under the Democratic Party, as it prepares for the 2016 presidential election period. While this must become a major issue raised by the Black masses as part of a national mandate for to end the military occupation of Black and oppressed communities, it must be part of an international demand and campaign that builds pressure on the U.S.

We are seeing the mainstream media project the line that the rebellion is being instigated by “outsiders.” This contemptuous and racist view of the Black masses suggests that the very history of white minority rule over the Black majority in Ferguson – the police, city council, planning commissions and the economy and the very way that this death squad murder of Michael Brown has been handled by the militarization of Ferguson is not enough to anger the masses to take action.

First, it is important to see the police killings in Ferguson as part of a national condition faced by working-class Black communities, and by many Blacks venturing into white middle-class communities. So Black people in Ferguson while engaged in rebellion; should not be seen as the only battlefield of the growing resistance to police killings of unarmed Black and Brown people across the U.S.

The presence in Ferguson of Black liberation and revolutionary activists from other cities expressing solidarity, should help make the call for Black national unity for national resistance, not simply promoting their various organizational as correct absent a united front of struggle.

For the fragmented Black left not to recognize the need to unite to advance the struggle in this period when the state sanctioned police killings of unarmed Black people are viewed throughout the U.S. and international as atrocities of Black national oppression, is to be sectarian and to bow to spontaneity.

It is time to raise the banner of the Black liberation movement rebuilding its national character to provide leadership for national resistance and a program for Black liberation.

23 Black Workers: A Call to Action for Rank-and-File Democratic Social Movement Unionism!

A Black Left Unity Network BLUN Labor Working Group Discussion Paper
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The Occupy Wall Street movement has drawn major attention to the rule by the capitalist 1% over the 99%. However, for many, especially within the working class, the role of Wall Street as a center of finance capital has little if any direct meaning in their daily lives.

The early OWS protests and encampments were important media attractions showing a growing alienation and resistance by mainly white middle-class forces whose social privileges are now under attack by the 1%. They help to point out the scale and scope of the economic crisis, while not necessarily the depth. These protests also did not reflect the real power within the 99% to directly challenge the main economic base of the capitalist 1% — the points of production and service.

With the entry of labor and social movement activists especially from working- class Black and oppressed nationality communities, OWS began to take on targets, demands and tactics that rely on mobilizing the organized power of the working class and its most marginalized sectors.

The leadership by the Transport Workers Union Local 100 in New York, a trade union whose membership is 80 percent workers of color, and

International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 in San Francisco, Calif., with a Black-worker-majority membership, were central to influencing labor's involvement in the OWS

movement and in helping to transform aspects of the OWS class and people of color character in New York, Oakland and other cities.

Rank-and-file members and activists within TWU Local 100 and ILWU Local 10 who pushed for their union's involvement in OWS were also members of the Million Workers March Movement. In 2004, ILWU Local 10 initiated the call and national organizing for a Million Worker March that mobilized 15,000 rank-and-file trade unionists, the unorganized and the unemployed on Oct. 4 at the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C.

When looking at the actions of Occupy Oakland, it is important to remember that the social consciousness for resistance by Black people and the working class in Oakland was also partly shaped by the Black Liberation movement represented by the Black Panther Party that was born and headquartered in Oakland. The BPP promoted the struggle against capitalism. They called for placing human needs over profits, opposition to state repression and for international solidarity. Some of the members of the ILWU Local 10 were members of the Oakland chapter of the BPP.

ILWU Local 10's port shutdowns in opposition to South African apartheid, for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, for justice for Oscar Grant, and in support of labor rights for public sector workers in Wisconsin also draw on this history of resistance in the Bay Area.

It is part of the continuing and further shaping of ILWU Local 10's tradition and view that the social demands and movements of the working class and the oppressed must also be taken up as part of the demands and actions of the labor movement. This has established ILWU Local 10 as the conscience of the ILWU national union and in many ways of the U.S. labor movement.

TWU Local 100 that defied New York State's anti-union Taylor Law in 2005 by striking before the Christmas holidays — impacting production because thousands were unable to get to work and disrupting the most profitable period for sales in the city where Wall Street is headquartered — gave special meaning to Local 100 as the first union in New York to publicly announce support and mobilize for OWS.

Because rank-and-file trade unionists and social movement activists have intervened in the Occupy movement and directed it to focus on targets and struggles against housing foreclosures and in defense of public education and worker rights, among others, the role of Wall Street in the deteriorating conditions impacting the working class and the oppressed communities has become much clearer.

Emerging rank-and-file class-struggle perspective breaks with business unionism

The Dec. 12 blockades of the West Coast ports linked the demand for the right of peaceful protest for OWS and social movements to ILWU's struggle against the EGT grain export terminal in Longview, Wash., in defense of labor rights for truckers in Los Angeles and longshore workers in

Longview. The driving force behind EGT is a major U.S.-based international corporation Bunge LTD, whose 2010 profits were \$2.4 billion.

This has made Oakland, a part of the Bay Area which includes San Francisco, not only a flashpoint of the Occupy movement, but a catalyst for the emerging rank-and-file social movement unionism that challenges the forces and policies of capitalism in this period. This emerging rank-and-file class-struggle perspective breaks with business unionism that separates labor struggles from the wider struggles and social movements of the working class. This must also be seen as an important development for the Black Liberation movement.

Business unionism defines the parameters and scope of working-class militancy and struggle by the union contract. In doing so, it restricts the tactics and scope of the trade unions in struggles against capital around social and political issues and international solidarity that affects the working class and oppressed people in the U.S. and internationally.

Like the demand for regulation of the banks, utilities and corporations, the union contract should be viewed and used as an instrument by the workers to restrain the exploitation of workers by capital with core assurances for the working class, not something that holds workers hostage to the dictates of capital.

The West Coast port shut-downs have triggered an important and growing debate within the labor movement, and among some identified as labor's left intelligentsia, about so-called rules and parameters of the working-class and social movement struggles against capital where the workers have unions.

This debate, while not a new one, is taking place in a new period that represents the worst economic and social crisis since the Great Depression and one of the sharpest attacks on trade unions and labor rights since the period following the Reagan administration's attack on the airline traffic controllers.

It is also taking place in a period where various sections of the capitalist ruling class have been able to finance and use the election of a Black president as a double-edge sword. One section recognized the fragmentation within the Black Freedom movement and the Black working class and financed the campaign to elect a Black president to project an image of the U.S. Empire as having achieved post-racialism. This strategy seeks to hold back the development of massive national Black resistance as a powerful social force in this period of capitalist crisis.

The other section financed and fostered a racist and neo-fascist popular movement in the form of the Tea Party, whose attacks against the government take the form of racist attacks on Obama. This is designed to derail and split the unity of the working class, which the scope and scale of the capitalist crisis are objectively forging.

This is one reason why it is important that this emerging rank-and-file

movement must be anti-racist, against all forms of social oppression, and independent of both the Democratic and Republican parties. Black rank-and-file trade union activists, especially the Black left, must be an active and visible part of this debate.

The EGT struggle is an example of forging this unity. ILWU Local 21, representing the workers at the Longview Port, is predominately white with a conservative history. However, ILWU Local 10, a majority Black local union with respect throughout the U.S. labor movement, was the first to step forward to support and to help build the ILWU's wide and growing national support for this struggle.

The fact that the EGT struggle has emerged at this stage of the capitalist crisis, and when there is a popular movement challenging the rule and policies of the 1%, makes it more than a single, narrow economic trade union struggle. It represents and symbolizes an important front in the struggle against capital — an understanding that must be part of the politicizing of today's struggles.

The EGT struggle will have a decisive effect on the power, direction and tactics of the U.S. labor movement and the working-class struggle. We should expect to see major efforts by ILWU national business unionists to split the ILWU rank and file from the growing solidarity that can strengthen the fightback against the EGT — and against the entire capitalist class that backs EGT's drive to break the ILWU and ultimately destroy the organized labor movement. This is a critical struggle that, depending on its outcome, could be either a decisive turning point that emboldens labor or just the opposite.

African-American and labor alliance needed to challenge capital

The current stage of the capitalist economic crisis and the role of the state in weakening and trying to dismantle trade unions to protect the dominance of capital make the unity between labor and the social movements of the most oppressed critically important for the survival and expansion of organized labor's shrinking base.

Forging an African-American and labor alliance is crucial for building the wider multinational unity that is needed to effectively challenge capital on its many fronts. This includes the struggles for human rights and African-American self-determination.

The struggle for human rights — for self-determination and democratic control over the political system, over the most important aspects of the economy, and over the social institutions that impact the lives of the millions of working-class and oppressed peoples — must be seen as a transitional program that better aligns and positions the social movements for a more revolutionary change.

Organizing a strong labor movement in the U.S. South — a historical and continuing failure by the U.S. labor movement that undermines labor's strength as a national movement — must become

a major focus of social movement union-ism and the struggle for democratic control. The majority of the foreign direct investment in the U.S. is concentrated in the South, making it a strategic center in the global economy.

As more than 55 percent of Black people in the U.S. live in the South, a strong labor movement becomes a key base of power in the struggle for democratic control, for African-American self-determination and against global capitalism and imperialism.

Even after the victory of passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, won mainly through mass protests, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. understood by his support of the Memphis sanitation workers that a Poor Peoples Campaign needed workers' power to help make impacting demands on the forces that control the economy and all levels of government.

The program of the MWMM is applicable for today's struggles and for building rank-and-file democratic social movement unionism embody- ing new trade union activists coming forward in this period. However, in order to build the initial rank-and-file infrastructure for consolidating this tendency, the MWMM must better organize and institutionalize its core network.

As capitalism's strategy for resolving the crisis has always been to make some concessions to sections and layers of the working class, based on the imperialist culture and social system of white supremacy, it is important that a program to promote and build the unity of the working class must be developed around and led by the most exploited and oppressed sections of the working class.

Black Workers Take the Lead!

24 8th Pan-African Congress: Black Labor and Black Liberation by Abdul Alkalimat¹ Black Left Unity Network (USA)

Greetings, comrades and friends, brothers and sisters all:

I am honored to share some thoughts on Black labor and Black liberation in order to help open our 8th Pan-African Congress. Where else if not at 8PAC can we join a global process of rethinking

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Black liberation in the 21st century? We are living in a time of great global transformation and everyone needs to delink from the old experience of previous generations. Of course we learn from all that has preceded us, but we must dare to be in the now, in the revolutionary transformation of our economies, cultures, and the ways we do things in the everydayness of life in all of our societies. The Pan African Congress movement must continue on, and enable us to share our strategic visions and to implement global collaboration as we face our common global enemy.

African people in the US are mainly descendants of Africans captured as slaves and forced to work for the benefit of their captors. This is why we are here at this 8th Pan-African Congress as an African American delegation, to maintain a link with our common history of resistance in Africa and the African Diaspora since those terrible days of the European slave trade. We in the US are the African descendants who are the deepest probe into the West, deep into the life of what started out as a genocidal European settler colony and is now a global experiment for the future of humanity. People are in the US from all parts of the world, making their home in the midst of the greatest concentration of capitalist class exploitation, racist oppression and all other forms of domination including male supremacy and marginalization of the aged and those with health challenges. The US has more people in prison relative to its population size than any other country in the world and nearly half of these people are Black.

We urge you to learn from our experience and not fall victim to the illusion of US democracy leading the so called "free world." In a word, don't fall for the illusion that the first African American president Barack Obama makes the US any different than it has always been. As I will make clear, Obama has not made things better. If anything, the conditions that we face (and you face all over the world) are worse! He has fallen way short of our expectations. But he has lived up to the expectations of the bankers with his billion dollar bailout, of the military with his policy of permanent war (although he declared the invasion of Libya was not a war) and his spy agencies like the NSA implementing an end to global privacy.

The general historical context we are living in is a global technological revolution. This revolution is being carried out so as to benefit the global 1% of super-rich banks and corporations. The fundamental contradiction is the great polarity in all our societies between the rich and the poor. Many of the national liberation movements in Africa and the civil rights movement in the US have vaulted a few Black people into the higher capitalist classes. But this has usually been at the cost of their delinking from the masses of Black people and adopting the neo-liberal policies of the World Bank and the IMF. Our broad movement served those few, but they abandoned us. We must press on. They can no longer lead or define the path for Black liberation.

My argument is that the fundamental basis for Black liberation is a class question. Only when Black workers and the masses of our people, marginalized in dire conditions of poverty, can transform society and create equitable conditions for all can we begin to achieve Black liberation. Today I will

describe the exploitation and impoverishment of the Black masses in the US. On this basis we can begin to think about rebuilding the US Black liberation movement in the 21st century and the global Pan-African movement for world revolution.

Historical Periodization of Black Labor

By way of introduction, let's consider the role of Black labor over the history of the US. There have been three main stages in this historical experience, each adding a new systemic experience. First there was the full employment of slavery. After the Civil War that ended slavery, Black people joined the employed with ever-present unemployment due to the cyclical crises of industrial capitalism and complicated by the pervasive structures of racist employment practices. Finally, for several decades now Black people have started to be delinked from work, permanently unemployed, due to the technological revolution guided by neo-liberal policies. At every previous stage of US history, Black labor was at the center of accumulation on which the rulers of the US stand. Now as Black labor is thrown aside, we face the dangers of the genocidal conditions that stalk the Black masses in both urban and rural communities that are being torn asunder.

The origin of this is the European slave trade. Slavery was a labor system for the maximum use of African labor. Joined with technological innovation, Black labor drove the US economy, especially with the production of cotton. The mechanical cotton gin increased productivity in a very dramatic way. When cleaning the cotton entirely by hand, it took one slave a complete day to clean one pound of cotton. Later with the hand-powered cotton gin, one slave could clean 150 pounds per day. Even later with the steam-powered gin, one slave could clean 1000 pounds per day.

Fueled by this ever-more-productive labor, the economy exploded. In 1790, the US produced 6,000 bales of cotton. In 1810 this was up to 178,000 bales of cotton. By 1860 slavery produced four million bales of cotton. Put another way, in 1820 cotton was more than 50% of all US exports and by 1825 US-produced cotton was 80% of the world's commercial supply. Cotton had become King. Between 1830 and 1860 more money was invested in land and slaves for cotton production than all the rest of the entire US economy put together! In 1790 there were 700,000 slaves and by 1860 there were 4 million, of whom more than 70% toiled in cotton production.

This economic condition did not entirely end with the Civil War in the 19th century. It was finally ended in the mid-20th century with another technological innovation, the mechanical cotton picker. As the mechanical picker came to the cotton fields, the sharecroppers were literally driven off the land in the Great Migration of Black people out of the rural South into the urban industrial North. From 1910 to 1970, more than six and a half million Black people migrated from the South. Five million left after 1940 as the mechanical picker came in. Thereafter, only half of the Black community was in the South, and only 25% remained rural. Everything began to change. The historical mass Black experience of rural labor, under slavery and sharecropping, was bracketed by two technological innovations: it began with the cotton gin in 1790 and ended with the mechanical cotton picker in 1942.

In sum, 1790 to 1942 saw increases in production through stages of elimination of rural human labor. Then job elimination happened in industry. In 1913 Henry Ford had introduced the assembly line for making cars. This led to a great demand for labor in the factory system. When he hired Black workers at \$5 a day this was a big increase from the starvation wages people had gotten picking cotton. But several decades later, digital technology combined with the profit motive led to robots making cars and the city of Detroit in ruins. At its peak in the 1930s Ford's River Rouge plant in Detroit employed over 100,000 workers; today 6,000 workers work there. Across the US, Black factory workers live in conditions of permanent unemployment. If they have unemployment checks and social welfare support, even that is being taken away.

The fundamental role of Black labor has been to produce and circulate commodities, processes that are at the heart of every capitalist economy. Black people have mainly been workers, a fundamental part of the global proletariat. The current technological transformation of the economy and social life in general is eliminating jobs. Black workers in the US are now under attack in this technological environment. This impacts the young and the old. If you are still at work, you face longer hours, lower wages, layoffs, and disappearing health benefits and sick leave.

Current Conditions

This brings us to the current conditions. The data here covers the years of Barack Obama, who took office in January 2009.

Consider wealth: The US is dominated by a superrich capitalist class. The top 1% own 38% of the wealth. The bottom 60% own 2.3% of the wealth. One family, the Walton family who own Walmart, owns more than the bottom 40% of the US population. (Walmart operates today in 27 countries, including South Africa.) In this polarized context, the total US median wealth for white families is \$97,000 and for African Americans it is \$4,900. (Figures as of 2010)

Now consider jobs: Since Obama came into office, more than 600,000 public-sector jobs have been lost. This has long been the sector employing more Black people at the highest wages, so those lost jobs hit Black middle-income workers hard. Black unemployment continues to be about twice that of the total population, and is especially acute for Black youth where in some cities Black youth are over 50% unemployed. Over half of the Black unemployed were out of work for more than six months. Black workers in all regions of the country are more unionized than their portion of the entire work force, especially in large metropolitan areas and in the South.

Let's look at income: Since 2008, 95% of new income has gone to the top 1% of income earners. US household income declined from 2007 to 2010, by 5.4% for whites and by 10.1% for Blacks. Black family income was 63.5% of whites in 2000 but declined to 61% by 2010.

Now think of the family: Currently fewer than 1 in 5 Black households include two parents. So by and large mothers and grandmothers—or state agencies—are raising Black children. Since 1960, the percent of African American women who are married has dropped from 51% to 29%.

We live in poverty: More than half (52%) of female-headed households with children under 5 years of age live at or below the official poverty line. This includes 46.5 million Americans, 7% of all white people, 25% of all Black people, 40% of all Black children.

Our health places us at risk: 38% of Black men and 54% of Black women are classified as obese. Black people experience two or three times white people's rates of illness of the heart, stroke, cancer, asthma, influenza, pneumonia, diabetes, HIV/AIDS and homicide. Further, 20% have no health insurance.

Out of work, we are sent to prison: One in fifteen Black men are in prison. Over the course of a lifetime, one-third of Black men will spend time there. When confronted by the police, Black people are four times more likely to have the police use force. Every 28 hours, a Black person in the US is killed by police or some kind of security force. The typical inner-city urban Black community faces police occupation, and most Black youth are stopped and harassed frequently and so develop their so-called criminal record.

In poverty we face homelessness: Black people are seven times more likely to be homeless than whites. One out of 141 Black people are homeless. And 56% of homeless veterans are Black.

Even in this land of plenty many of us go hungry: One in four African American households are food insecure and have trouble feeding themselves. Black people are three times more likely than whites to rely on food welfare programs. A total of 90% of African American children will receive government food assistance at some time before reaching the age of 20.

The US is not a utopia for Black people. Black people from the African Diaspora who migrate to the US come with high expectations, but they must remember that their children grow up as African Americans and face the conditions described in this paper.

Strategy for Black Liberation

Any strategic program for Black liberation requires that we think about class formations and the struggles that will realign the classes in unity for Black liberation. This means it is necessary to promote unity in action against a common enemy that represents the capitalist system and its police state. In opposition to the mass propaganda of racist capital, we have to assert that the majority of Black people are opposed to the capitalist system and in favor of socialism! The Pew Research Center reports that 51% of Black people view capitalism negatively and 55% view socialism positively. (<http://pewrsr.ch/tCcgou>) As usual, the Black masses are ready for politics that the Black movement activists have for the most part not yet formulated and advanced as their ideological banner. This has to change.

As indicated by the description of the current conditions, there are three terrains of struggle: the state, the economy, and the community. All of these are structural representations of racism, sexism and class oppression. During the hard segregationist period, racism was dominant and the Black middle classes played leading roles in the resistance. Now we have moved from de jure racist structures (by law) to de facto (in fact), and class differences have led to the geographical dispersion of the community into class-specific enclaves. Black liberation is primarily the mission of those most exploited and oppressed. They alone have it in their interest to fight the capitalist system because they have no chance of any kind of reform agreement.

There are four critical class formations destined to be critical component parts of the fight for Black liberation.

1. Small capital: There are small businesses, farmers, and cooperatives that operate within the capitalist system but are in contradiction with big capital. For example, raising the minimum wage (\$7.50 per hour) to a livable wage (\$15 per hour) would not only raise millions out of poverty but would circulate the money through small capital and grow the economy. Further, giant monopolies like Walmart are driving small business into ruin and killing the local infrastructure of communities. Small capital can be predatory or utilitarian. Their relationship with the Black liberation movement will determine their direction of development.
2. Professionals and students: This wing of the Black middle class is undergoing its own form of proletarianization. Teachers are now in unions. Formerly small entrepreneurs, medical professionals work today for large hospital and health corporations. The same goes for lawyers. Students are being squeezed as higher education is leaving them behind and proving not to be a secure passage to a good job. Certainly members of this class formation have historically been an essential component of the freedom struggle. As these forces begin to fight in their own interests, the key will be the extent to which they align themselves with the working class and masses of poor people that make up the majority of the Black community. One historical example of this was the Black Panther Party's Serve the People programs. Stores contributed food for the free breakfast program and lawyers and doctors set up free clinics for the people. This kind of service for the people will be crucial in the coming period.
3. Black workers and the temporary unemployed: As previously stated workers are the base of the Black community. They are the majority and the heart of its social and cultural life. Here we can see many sectors of Black workers. At the base there are workers who work full time and still are listed as below the poverty line. Many of them work in the fast food industry or for big retailers like Walmart. They are leading the fight for a livable wage of \$15. Next to this group are the temporary unemployed, people being laid off having long term unemployment compensation cut short. This creates desperate situations and heightens the social crisis of homelessness, health problems without insurance, hunger, drug abuse, and internal fratricidal violence within the community. Of course the majority of workers have the need to continue fighting for union organizations since without this self organization workers are at the mercy of the bosses. The orientation of the union faces a crisis in two major respects: Does it educate

the workers against the capitalist system as well as organize the workers to fight for better contracts and higher wages and benefits? This includes employed workers fighting on behalf of unemployed workers. Does it organize the workers as a class force to fight for progress on all social and political questions outside of the workplace?

4. The permanent unemployed: This is a new formation that we have to understand. What is its role in history? As Fanon instructed, each generation has a mission that it must fulfill. This applies to each class formation. Can a class or class formation in itself become a class or class formation for itself? People cast aside by capitalism with no hope of ever having a stable job or a way to survive within the system will begin to discover that they have to fight to survive. They will not fight to save capitalism, making their quality of life contingent on someone being able to make a profit. They will fight for a new system in which the moral and political mandate for society is to care for all its members without capitalism's usual collateral damage. This is a new class in human history. It will become the bedrock for a Black revolutionary agenda. It is the wretched of the earth. It is the last that must become the first.

With these four class forces in mind, we can theorize how their convergence will rebuild a new phase of the Black liberation movement. The first and critical development is that each must first fight for their own interests and exhaust the possibilities of a reform deal with the system. Will higher education extend a new open admissions policy with supportive financial aid? Will workers be able to unionize and fight for a living wage and better working conditions? Will survival programs help to stabilize those who face permanent unemployment, including the elderly? This is not the 1960s, when deals were made and the Kennedy-Johnson programs co-opted the social movements with reforms. This is neo-liberal austerity at its peak. The ruling elite is showing no mercy. It is in the struggle for these necessary developments that these class forces will begin to rediscover the need for broader national and even international movements for liberation and social transformation.

This is beginning to happen. The spontaneous movement is showing signs of real energy. One example is the response to the 2005 Katrina disaster, when the ruling elites implemented an ethnic cleansing program on the city of New Orleans. The refugees formed Peoples Assemblies and devised strategies to fight back. One of these led to a People's Assembly in Jackson, Mississippi that persisted and in 2013 elected a Black liberation fighter as mayor (Chokwe Lumumba of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement). The murder of a Black youth, Trayvon Martin on February 26, 2012, sparked protests in several hundred cities united around the slogan, "No More Trayvons! Stop the War on Black America!" The masses of Black people are not taking their suffering lying down.

As part of this we have to make clear that we are in danger of a Great Forgetting as the generation of activists of the 1960s is passing or at least facing their own financial and health crises. Those of us who are still active face the task of rising above the historical polemics of the past, moving past old grudges and personal clashes to find new possibilities for unity. Remember the old slogan:

Unity without uniformity. If we infect the youth with past sectarian battles, the fate of the future is sealed. Our task is to share the past from the perspective of the future, accepting the necessary criticism that must come if we are to move forward.

One such effort is the Black Left Unity Network. We are networking with organizations that have activists on the ground, immersed in fighting campaigns of the above mentioned class forces, especially workers and poor people in the Black community. Some come from the struggles in the socialist camp, variously supporting the Soviet Union, China, and/or Cuba. Some come from the nationalist camp, whether in culture, in the Black Belt south, or focusing on the African Diaspora. Some are new to the struggle and are representative of the emerging generation of activists. These kinds of realignments are at the heart of the rebuilding the Black liberation movement in the US and the revolutionary Pan-African movement on a global level.

Comrades, Brothers and Sisters,

Forward to the work that must be done!

Amandla!

Venceremos!

Power to the people!

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LEAFLETS

25 May Day and the Black Working-Class

May Day must be celebrated by the African American working-class as it remains a vital section of the African Diaspora whose enslavement; labor and racist national oppression have been essential factors for the development of U.S. and global capitalism.

The Black left must have as its main social base the Black working-class. It must promote and mobilize the Black working-class for May Day as an action of working-class internationalism in the struggles against U.S. and global capitalism's ravishing of the lives, communities, institutions and the planet to create untold profits and power for the world domination by an international capitalist class.

Core to the historical U.S. corporate and government strategy to protect capitalism, has been to suppress the Black working-class consciousness and organization as a leader of the Black liberation struggle to prevent the forging of working-class internationalism as an essential feature of the struggle for African American self-determination.

If the national Black liberation movement is to be rebuilt as a revolutionary force, the Black left must forge an anti-capitalist unity, and must promote and mobilize for May Day as part of the cultural shaping of the anti-capitalist Black working-class consciousness.

All Out For May Day!

Black Left Unity Movement
Labor Working Group

26 Stop the War on Black America! We Charge Genocide! Human Rights for All!

The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) expresses our rage and refusal to accept the courtroom verdict of the murder of Trayvon Martin by white supremacist George Zimmerman and the failure of the Sanford, Florida police department and local government to immediately arrest and charge Zimmerman. We stand with the family of young Trayvon Martin in their continued grief over the unjust killing of their son and the prolonged injustice of a legal system that is unaccountable for the safety or justice for our communities.

We know that justice or answers to our many questions about this Verdict will not be found in the same criminal injustice system at the local, state or federal level. What we do know, is that this and other murders of many of our people are a crime against humanity and a violation of human rights that must be judge by the Black, oppressed and exploited masses in the U.S. and throughout the world who are struggling against global capitalism's injustices and for human rights.

Throughout U.S. history, Black life has never been fully protected by the legal, political or economic systems. US Imperialism at home has often meant the repression and violent social control of Black communities. The crisis of capitalism requires new forms of social control grounded in historic forms of oppression and the expansion of White Supremacy described by the 1857 Dred Scott Act - that Black people have no rights that whites are bound to respect.. Within one month after the U.S. Supreme Court declared open season for racist voting suppression symbolized by their verdict on the Voting Rights Act, the Sanford court declared open season for the whites to kill Black and Brown youth if they feel threatened by the way they dress, are in the wrong neighborhood, or play Hip Hop music.

As we saw at the time when Trayvon was murdered in 2012, we are again seeing the emergence of many networks as part of the spontaneous response of the outraged masses. There will be many mobilizations this time, involving and led by various class, political and ideological forces demanding justice from their various perspectives.

What was missing in the response to Trayvon's murder and the extrajudicial and white supremacist murders of Black and Brown mainly young brothers every 28 hours, that must be corrected this time, is a force united and strong enough and anchored by the unity of the Black left, to bring about the convergence of these mass actions and forces around a program of action.

The Black left must advance a program that fights for structural changes and forms of people's democracy and democratic governance, to restrain the repressive structures and policies of the state and capitalist elites as part of the struggle for radical social transformation of the system.

Part of what must define the Black left, must be a recognition that these atrocities are produced by the capitalist system where white supremacy is one of its three main pillars (the others being patriarchy and imperialism), and the willingness to find points of unity with others to fight against and for the radical transformation of the capitalist system.

We call on forces within the Black Left to unite in our rage against this Verdict and stand together in our short term responses, and in longer term movement building strategies to mobilize the power of masses of Black and oppressed people... We refuse to accept or forget this injustice and the broader injustices it represents. Our cry must be – Stop the War on Black America! We Charge Genocide! Human Rights for All!

Black Left Unity Network Continuations Committee

27 Ferguson is the Heartbeat of Our Movement

The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) Stands with the many forces that have come to Ferguson to stand and fight for justice. We come to fight for Michael Brown and all the others who have been killed at the hands of murderous police and racist terrorists.

The Ferguson Rebellion is a catalyst for a long overdue national Black resistance to the state sanctioned police killings and attacks on Black people.

These killings and attacks are national in scope occurring every 28 hours across the U.S. The fight backs are going on in California (Ezell Ford), Florida (Marissa Alexander), New York (Eric Gardner), Ohio (John Crawford), and so many other places. Of course we are still holding forth the battle cry “No More Trayvon Martins! No More Oscar Grants!”

These fight backs must be linked nationally as a critical battlefield of a larger Black liberation struggle for self-determination and social transformation of the entire society. The leading role of the U.S. in the global economy that is in crises has brought about the increase in the wars and militarization internationally and inside of the U.S. The Black liberation struggle is therefore a vital component of the global struggles for a more just and sustainable world.

There are many forces in Ferguson this weekend. Many have come from all parts of the St Louis region. Many have come from all over the US. Many have come from other countries. All have come to fight for justice. The BLUN salutes everyone who has thus come. In times such as these we need everybody.

We need a national movement to coordinate and focus our struggle.

The BLUN, a growing network of Black liberation forces believes that the Ferguson Rebellion has created an historical moment and need for Black liberation forces to have a serious discussion about how to link the many battlefronts of struggle against Black national oppression around a national program that consciously mobilizes mass based Black and allied power.

STOP THE WAR ON BLACK AMERICA!

In the spirit of Martin and Malcolm, of Fannie Lou Hamer and Ella Baker contact the BLUN at blklibassembly@aol.com and join a Regional Organizing Committee to help rebuild the national Black liberation movement!

Visit our websites:

www.blackleftunity.blogspot.com

www.blackleftunity.org

www.jblun.org

www.blackactivistzine.org

28 African Americans: The Struggles for Peoples Democracy in Tunisia, Egypt, Throughout North Africa and the Middle East Region are Linked to Our Struggle!

African Americans must closely watch, learn from, and support the people's demands and struggles in the North Africa countries of Tunisia and Egypt, as they represent a growing movement of people's resistance in that region and continent against decades of U.S. supported dictatorial and oppressive governments.

The rebellions of the youth, worker strikes and women in those countries demanding democracy and the removal of the oppressive government rulers, are more than a single demand for an elected government.

Who knows better than Black people inside of the U.S., who lived and worked as slaves denied basic democratic and human rights under an elected government. Today, even with an African American President, we are seeing the major banks and corporation who are the beneficiaries of the wealth and power accumulated from slavery, continue to extract trillions from the U.S. government, and directing U.S. foreign policies that provide billions annually to support repressive governments, wars and occupations throughout globe, while failing to provide for the needs and human rights of the masses of people inside the U.S.?

Without changes in the actual power relations of the oppressed masses of people to the economic, social and political institutions and government at all levels that affect their lives, resulting in an elected peoples democracy, we must not be fooled into believing that the U.S. government's calls for democracy seeks changes that empower the oppressed masses of people.

As we work hard to support the people's revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East, we must also demand that the U.S. respond to the people's demands for democracy in countries where the U.S. government played a direct role in overthrowing the elected government, as was the case in Haiti.

The people in Haiti have been demanding the return of President Aristide, who was elected by an overwhelming majority of the Haitian people. The U.S. military forcible took out President Aristide out of Haiti to another country, then set up military rule in Haiti to facilitate a sham election of a U.S. controlled president.

As we struggle inside of the U.S. against corporate controlled government actions that are responsible for the massive unemployment, the budget crisis of the states and the cuts in vital social programs and attacks on pensions that workers worked hard for to support themselves and

families in retirement, we must see the direct links between the U.S. support for oppressive governments throughout the globe and the oppression of Black and working people inside of the U.S.

African Americans must show our support for the people's struggles worldwide against oppression and the denial of human rights, by mobilizing the masses inside of the U.S. demanding democracy that empowers the masses of people, following their example of pressing forward until real democratic change is won.

Black Left Unity Network

2/14/11

29 Black left Unity Network's Call to Actions: U.S. Hands off Syria! Not Another War!

As the Obama administration beats the U.S. war drums to build congressional support for launching a U.S. military attack on Syria, claiming that it would be an act of humanitarian intervention, the Black left stands with Dr. King who said NO to imperialist wars.

Organize, be visible:

The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) calls on black people and people of conscience to remind the Obama Administration and in particular members of the Congressional Black Caucus that the non-violent struggle led by Dr. Martin L. King Jr. was not for the election of a Black president that would continue the role of the U.S. as the "World's Greatest Purveyor of Violence," Dr. King's characterization of the U.S. in 1967.

To send an unmistakable message to the Obama administration on where our communities stand on this question, we are asking that Black people and people of conscience to continue to take to the streets, parks and monuments named after Dr. King as sites of Black led struggle over the next week to demand that the Administration not violate international law and over sixty years on the prohibition of war with its attack on Syria. An attack and war that we believe will only benefit the interest of the U.S. military Industrial complex and their quest for profits and global domination.

Contact Congress directly:

Contact your member of congress and demand a NO vote on the Authorization for war. We want to specifically target the members of the Congressional Black Congress to force them to stand with our tradition of opposing U.S. aggression abroad.

To find your congressional representative or member of Congressional Black Caucus you can use this site. <http://capwiz.com/fconl/dbq/officials>

The members of the Congressional Black Caucus are listed below.

Call members of CBC and tell them:

1. The fact that the U.S. is unable to garner support for its pending attack on Syria demonstrates that very few nations have accepted the Obama's Administrations arguments for why it is important for it to violate the charter of the United Nations and wage an illegal war. The black community stands with the world on this issue and not the political elite who only want to advance its agenda.
2. Tell members of the Congressional Black Caucus that it has a responsibility to the historic positions of the black community, and to strongly oppose Obama's call for attacking Syria as a betrayal of this history.
3. The U.S. does not have the moral right to determine what nations deserve to be "punished." That concept is abhorrent and represents the thinking of racist colonists who assumed the right to impose their brand of "justice" on the world's people. As black people still suffering the consequences of racist oppression we reject that kind of white supremacist thinking and actions.
4. Reject war, support a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Syria, a conflict that the U.S. helped to create with its support to "rebel" forces that rejected any peaceful solution and opted for war from the very beginning of the crisis in Syria.

Call them on Monday and next week at their D.C. offices (call the switchboard at 202-224-3121).

Other actions:

- Write Op-eds and letters to editors of your local newspapers.
- Call into local black radio stations to express your opposition to yet another war
- Organize sign-on letters for local faith community leaders to be sent to congressional representative

BLUN full statement can be found here

Members of Congressional Black Caucus:

House Representative / Party / State – Congressional District

Karen Bass / Democratic / California – 37th

Joyce Beatty / Democratic / Ohio – 3rd

Sanford Bishop / Democratic / Georgia – 2nd

Corrine Brown / Democratic / Florida – 5th

G. K. Butterfield / Democratic / North Carolina – 1st

André Carson / Democratic / Indiana – 7th

Delegate Donna Christian-Christensen (non voting congressional delegate) / Democratic / U.S.

Virgin Islands – At-large

Yvette Clarke / Democratic / New York – 9th

William Lacy Clay, Jr. / Democratic / Missouri – 1st

Emanuel Cleaver / Democratic / Missouri – 5th
Jim Clyburn / Democratic / South Carolina – 6th
John Conyers, Jr. – Dean / Democratic / Michigan – 13th
Elijah Cummings / Democratic / Maryland – 7th
Danny K. Davis / Democratic / Illinois – 7th
Donna Edwards / Democratic / Maryland – 4th
Keith Ellison / Democratic / Minnesota – 5th
Chaka Fattah / Democratic / Pennsylvania – 2nd
Marcia Fudge / Democratic / Ohio – 11th
Al Green / Democratic / Texas – 9th
Alcee Hastings / Democratic / Florida – 20th
Steven Horsford / Democratic / Nevada – 4th
Hakeem Jeffries / Democratic / New York – 8th
Eddie Bernice Johnson / Democratic / Texas – 30th
Hank Johnson / Democratic / Georgia – 4th
Barbara Lee / Democratic / California – 13th
Sheila Jackson Lee / Democratic / Texas – 18th
John Lewis / Democratic / Georgia – 5th
Gregory Meeks / Democratic / New York – 5th
Gwen Moore / Democratic / Wisconsin – 4th
Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (non voting congressional delegate) / Democratic / District of
Columbia – At-large
Donald Payne, Jr. / Democratic / New Jersey – 10th
Charles Rangel / Democratic / New York – 13th
Cedric Richmond / Democratic / Louisiana – 2nd
Bobby Rush / Democratic / Illinois – 1st
Bobby Scott / Democratic / Virginia – 3rd
David Scott / Democratic / Georgia – 13th
Terri Sewell / Democratic / Alabama – 7th
Bennie Thompson / Democratic / Mississippi – 2nd
Marc Veasey / Democratic / Texas – 33rd
Maxine Waters / Democratic / California – 35th
Mel Watt / Democratic / North Carolina – 12th
Frederica Wilson / Democratic / Florida – 24th

No Attacks on Syria and Stop the War on Black America

www.Blackleftunity.org

30 Wilson Pulled the Trigger, but the US System Killed Michael Brown

Stop the War on Black America!

We are all shocked and saddened by the brutal cold blooded murder of a young Black man, Michael Brown, 18 years old in Ferguson, a suburb of St Louis. But it was not an accident or something that was abnormal. NO! It is the system, its normal for this society to kill Black people and it's got to stop.

The system killed Oscar Grant (Oakland, California: January 1, 2009)

The system killed Trayvon Martin (Sanford, Florida: February 26, 2012)

The system killed Eric Garner (New York, New York: July 17, 2014)

Now it has killed Michael Brown (Ferguson, Missouri: August 9, 2014)

We say the system killed them! The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement has documented that every 28 hours in the US a Black person is gunned down by the state or their vigilantes. This does not include the countless brutal cop beatings like the attack on Marlene Pinnock in Los Angeles, CA. To fight back we have to understand who the enemy is, and that means understanding the nature of this US system.

The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) would like you to think about five basic issues:

1. The town of Ferguson is 67% Black but the politicians and police are almost all white. In this historically slave state this form of rule continues the tradition of racist rule. Even the Black police are in place to support the system and not demand Black empowerment for self-determination. No real change can happen unless the people self-organize to take power.
2. The US Congress is behind giving the police department's Military gear from the Pentagon. The US ruling class knows that the crisis in this country (no jobs, low pay, poor health insurance, home evictions, cutting people off welfare, and prisons) will produce militant resistance and they have prepared a military force to protect their property. In other words the billionaires are prepared to fight all over the world and in every city in the US to maintain their power to rule.
3. Local police departments are being trained by the Israeli armed forces. The US uses Israel to protect its oil needs and has armed it with modern weapons including nuclear bombs. They are at the cutting edge of a fascist police force in the 21st century and local police forces are being sent to learn from Israel in order to do to the US workers and poor people what Israel is doing to the Palestinians. Israel learned from the Nazi treatment of the Jews, so they become Nazi.
4. The US media defends the police and calls for order and not justice. The TV, Radio, and newspapers are usually full of lies and distortion. We have to rely on each other to find out the truth. In fact when one speaks to the press they often pick and choose what to report, and fail to tell it like you might tell it.
5. Black leadership within the system have focused on reform and not changing the system. We know that this kind of murder will go on, as stated, somewhere every 28 hours. This is not

time to call for order, but time for change and to prepare the consciousness and organizational capacity to work for real fundamental change.

The Black Left Unity Network: Building a movement to change the system

The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) is a network of individuals and organizations focused on rebuilding a nationally coordinated Black Liberation Movement. We have a long tradition of Black people learning how to unite and fight back against all forms of racist oppression and economic exploitation. We have a long history of workers, students, women, youth, and people from all aspects of the Black community of being in the struggle. Many of us older people remember the 1960's and everybody has heard about it – Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, SNCC, the Black Panther Party, and the demand for Black Power.

Now we must rebuild to mobilize the many elements of Black power to challenge and defeat these attacks, joining with others throughout the globe in struggling for revolutionary change. As we fight for good jobs, living wages, decent housing, good food, affordable healthcare and quality education for everyone, we must connect these struggles to a program and strategy to defeat this oppressive system and to bring into being a system where human life is treasured with dignity.

We urge you to join in the process of rebuilding the National Black liberation Movement:

1. We have a national discussion list to join in a conversation with people all over the country who are in this fight with you. Contact us so we can hook you up to get these very important emails.
2. We have a Facebook page for you to post messages and get documents that can help you understand the many local struggles going on. You can add your information and help build the linkages we need for our national movement.
3. We have a journal for serious articles that you can study and raise your consciousness. To do what we have to do we have to study. Their schools are so horrible that they teach us to hate study, but to build our movement we have to learn how to love study. Our journal is called THE BLACK ACTIVIST and is available free online at <http://iblun.org>
4. We have a directory of the leadership of our movement, people on the frontlines of our struggles and people who provide the intellectual power, creativity and areas of specialization we need to do what some will seem impossible, to make revolutionary change in this country. We call this the Directory of Black Liberation Theoreticians:
<http://brothermalcolm.net/SOLDIERS/>
5. We have a BlogSpot that is an anthology of important articles and documents from all over the world that helps to counter the lies and distortions of the main stream press:
<http://blackleftunity.blogspot.com/>
6. We are forming Regional Organizing Committees for Black organizations and activists to work together to build Black liberation Unity Assemblies in cities throughout their region and to

prepare for participating in a National Assembly for Black Liberation to adopt a national program of action to launch a conscious national movement to struggle for Black liberation.

If you want the struggle against Black national oppression to be more than the spontaneous responses to the corporate and government attacks on Black people, and want to build a movement to change this racist, exploitive, corrupt and murderous system, join the BLUN. If you are engaged in a local struggle and would like to get coordinated national support contact us.

NOW IS THE TIME!

Join The BLUN

National 252-314-2363

Local

31 Self-Determination is a Human Right: Forward to Black Liberation: An Invitation from the Black Left Unity Network (BLUN)

The Moment we are in:

1. We are in the midst of a great uprising from many sections of our communities and it continues to spread. Slogans are taking on a magnetic quality drawing people in by the thousands: Hands Up, Don't Shoot! We can't breathe! Shut it down! Black Lives Matter! And when the masses march – This is what democracy looks like!
2. The massive militarization of local police and their murderous ways are linked to the global politics of the imperialist US state. The Israeli Defense Force trains local police like in Ferguson. This is also linked to the recent report proving the US is a terrorist state by torturing while the CIA lies to Congress and the American people.
3. The economy is in a mess with deepening unemployment. The US refuses to join the movement for a green environment. Our school systems fail and disappoint our children. Everybody knows that politics from city councils up to congress are giving us no hope for social justice.

The Movement we need:

1. The spontaneous mobilizations are a great beginning and give us hope that we can move our mobilizations from hundreds to thousands to millions as we have done before.
2. A movement is important because it represents developing a general program for the struggle, forms of coordination, a schedule of local-regional-national actions to concentrate our power, and a space for political dialogue to raise the consciousness of the masses of people to prepare

to take power and reinvent democracy and institutionalize forms of social justice in the economy and all aspects of social life. Only this leads to the change we need.

3. Every sector of society has the responsibility to self-organize. We are fighting to reinvent the Black Liberation Movement based on a worker-student-community alliance. Black women must also have self-organization within this process.
4. As a major region of the global economy and where more than 55 percent of the Black masses are located, the U.S. South must be a major point of concentration for organizing and mobilizing the power and influence of the Black working-class in the labor and social movements fighting for human rights and social transformation.

The Method we propose:

1. We need unity of thought. The BLUN has developed a draft manifesto. (<http://www.blunblog.org/2014/10/draft-manifesto-for-black-liberation.html>) We invite you to read it, discuss it and propose any changes that should be considered by all. This move is beyond slogans so that we begin to speak in one voice as we join all battle fronts, link the local with the national and the international, and focus our fight against the imperialist state and the capitalist system. The BLUN also has a journal, The Black Activist: <http://jblun.org/>
2. We need to identify leaders especially from the Black working-class. The BLUN has a Black Liberation Theoretician Directory. Add your name and others so that all can be included who contribute to the discussion and formulation of plans for struggle. <http://brothermalcolm.net/SOLDIERS/>
3. We need to organize. We are proposing a National Assembly for Black Liberation to be held in October 2015. This will be a time to adopt the manifesto for Black Liberation, elect a national council, and plan a program of action to be coordinated on a national level.

Contact the BLUN: blklibassembly@aol.com

12/11/14

