



New Unity Movement

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Address all correspondence to the Secretariat P.O. Box 27561 Greenacres 6057

We Fight Ideas with Ideas

“WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!”

Introduction

The stirring call of Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto for workers to put aside their national and other differences, and to unite in their class interests is arguably more urgent today with the multiple threats we face – not only as a working class – but as part of global society. The planet is facing the very real and present danger of irreversible breakdown as a result of global warming; biologists and medical scientists are warning us to brace for more and harsher viral pandemics in the future; capitalism continues unrelentingly to widen the gap between rich and poor, while racist demagogues the world over continue to sow discord among people on the basis of miniscule, superficial differences.



Power of organised worker unity

In a recent interview, German novelist Ingo Schulze remarked that the organised labour movement in Europe in the first part of the twentieth-century had sufficient power to prevent both world wars. The critical condition was for the movement to transcend national loyalties, and to organise mass general strikes across the continent. But, as we know, the workers’ leadership put country before class, and the rest is – as the saying goes – history.

Many times we have had glimpses of the power that an organised, united working class can bring to bear

on a situation, and the potential of united action to change the course of history.

In our own case, the waves of anti-apartheid revolt following the Soweto uprising in 1976 is a good example.

The need to build class consciousness

While it might be tempting to regard working class unity as a kind of silver bullet (that is, as a quick-fix magical solution), many cautionary lessons have been learned along the line in the struggle to attain such unity. One is reminded of Lenin’s warning that the working class is not automatically drawn to socialism.

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Again, with reference to our own history, during the era of segregation and apartheid, the white working class was concerned - not with the overthrow of capitalism or uniting all workers in the struggle for socialism – but with its own position as a labour aristocracy within the system of racial-capital, and sought only to defend and advance its own privileged position. The same has always applied to the organised working class movements in the countries which have become known as the “Global North.” Generally-speaking, the labour movements in these countries are bloated bureaucracies concerned with scrabbling for advantages within the system. These workers are the direct beneficiaries of the colonial plunder of the “Global South,” and are thus not concerned with overthrowing a system which so highly privileges them – for them it would be like killing the golden goose.

What this comes down to is a question of *class consciousness*. In Marxist terms, when workers are aware of themselves as an exploited class within the capitalist system, they are referred to as a “class within itself.” However, when they become aware of the need to unite to overthrow the capitalist system, they become a “class for itself.”

Clearly, a key task facing the progressive Left is to hasten the development of class consciousness which results in the global working class becoming a class *for* itself. In the words of Ingo Schulze: “Today it is about forming alliances between those who are oppressed, disenfranchised, and disadvantaged, across all countries, continents, and skin colours. It is not a question of judgment, but of survival. We are all aboard the Titanic, and we have to change course.”

Rank-and File-Committees

In recent articles, the World Socialist Website (WSWS) has been highlighting the emergence of so-called “rank-and-file safety committees.” In essence, these are organised groups of workers who have broken rank with their reactionary unions. There is the example of the Volvo Rank-and-File Committee

(VRFC) which has engaged in protracted industrial action at Volvo’s New River Valley Plant in Dublin, Virginia, USA – against compromise deals between the company and the collaborationist United Auto Workers union (UAW).



A similar RFC has arisen in India, where Hyundai was forced to close down its plant in Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu for several days in late May after workers staged a sit-down strike to protest the lack of protection from COVID-19.

Largely in response to the need for protection against the coronavirus pandemic, there are active moves to build the newly-created *International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC)*.

According to a WSWS article, “Already, workers have begun to fight back, from autoworkers, health care workers and educators in the US and Europe, to oil and railway workers in Brazil, to public transport workers in India.” The important point is that RFCs are a direct rebellion against the official “corporatist” trade unions who see their role as facilitating and implementing – not opposing – management policy.

The RFC movement could be a breath of fresh air. Particularly positive is its emphasis on the need for international worker solidarity. This takes up the call of the Communist Manifesto, and addresses the reality of a world-dominating capitalist order. Capitalism will not be defeated in one country. Socialism will not survive in one country. The call for workers of the world to unite has never been more necessary.

DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM – SOME THOUGHTS

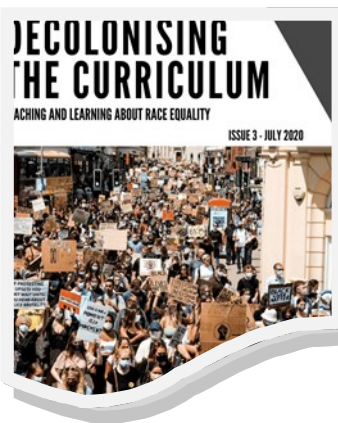
What exactly does “decolonising the curriculum” mean?

There will be broad agreement that we need to eliminate Eurocentric bias as a key requirement, while at the same time recognising that one needs to avoid throwing out the baby with the bathwater. In other words, we must ensure that we retain in the decolonised curriculum what is relevant and necessary. This means asking such questions as: Do we get rid of Shakespeare? Presumably, most people would regard that as absurd. On the other hand, lauding what Europe has often referred to as its “civilising mission” would certainly need to be addressed, and the content of this contemptible notion transformed.

Today we strenuously reject the argument that because modernity followed in the wake of colonisation, and that areas outside of Europe were incorporated into the capitalist system, this means colonialism was a “good thing.” Only a Helen Zille would argue that the cost in human lives and wholesale social disruption were a price worth paying for tarred roads and railway networks. It is interesting to note that one of the great icons of “free enterprise” – while praising the potential of capitalism as a progressive force in society – was honest enough to recognise that colonialism benefited only some, and that it was disastrous for others. We are talking here of Adam Smith. “Contrary to neo-liberal myth, Smith was keen to highlight the gross imbalances of power, destructive economic inefficiencies, and horrific cruelty of global commerce.” (Marcello Musto, 2020). Thus, a prerequisite of decolonising the curriculum is to tell the true story of colonialism – of how it benefited (and continues to benefit) the colonisers, and of its ruinous consequences for the rest of society.

Retelling the story of colonialism will not, of course, be unproblematic or even uncontested. Recently an interesting study (by Robert Nichols, 2021) highlighted a key dilemma confronting analysts. Indigeneity is usually associated with “first occupancy” of the land, not with ownership of the land, as the concept of “ownership” was alien to pre-capitalist society. So, if indigenous people did not own the land, how can the land be said to have been stolen from them? This is raised here simply to illustrate the kind of challenge confronting those who would re-interpret history from a non-coloniser perspective.

There is a view that Africans must decolonise the curriculum for Africans. This is very close to the kind of thinking inherent in Identity Politics – where experience (in this case, of the pain of colonialism) is foregrounded. In other words, only the colonised can tell the story of their colonisation since they are the victims. It would mean that someone like Basil Davidson and his 1974 classic “Africa in History” would have to be disregarded. This, too, would be absurd.



Another danger to be guarded against would be that of simple transference. For many, history is about “great men.” Africanisation of history should not mean substituting the story of one great (European) man for that of an African great man. A key question arises: does decolonising the curriculum mean Africanising the curriculum? “No! Of course not!” would have been the response of a Ben Kies, whose purview encompassed *ALL people* in his 1953 classic “The Contribution of the Non-European People to World Civilization.”

There is a view that decolonising of the curriculum will be permitted to proceed only to the extent that it does not threaten ruling class interests. This is implicit in the following quote from Noam Chomsky:

“The whole educational and training system is a very elaborate filter, which just weeds out people who are too independent, and who think for themselves, and who don’t know how to be submissive, and so on – because they’re dysfunctional to the institutions.”

(He might have been talking about Brian Isaacs who was fired by the WCED for this very reason).

All of which suggests that decolonising the curriculum is a project which will be undertaken within a very specific context – that of a neoliberal world order. Thus, as we alluded to earlier, such a project will be subject to immense contestation. There is every likelihood that it will follow the contours of power. Thus, as Marx reminds us: “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas. That is, the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force.”

This truth will be reflected in all official attempts to decolonise the curriculum. Given the current relation of social forces, decolonising the curriculum will be a project to reform the curriculum, not to transform it. It cannot be otherwise when we see on whose behalf and in whose interests the educational system of this country is being managed.

New Unity Movement



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PO Box 27561, Greenacres 6057
Website: www.newunitymovement.org.za

STATEMENT BY THE NEW UNITY MOVEMENT IN REACTION TO CHARGES LAID AGAINST RETIRED JUDGE SIRAJ DESAI BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN ZIONIST FEDERATION

The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) has laid charges against retired judge of the high court, Siraj Desai.

The SAZF complains to the Judicial Conduct Committee that Judge Desai is guilty of actions and conduct “entirely unbecoming of a judicial officer”. Because of this, they also find him unfit to be Legal Services Ombudsman, a position he was appointed to after his retirement.

Their dissatisfaction stems from Judge Desai’s public support for the struggles of the people of Palestine against the unlawful occupation of Palestinian territory and the continued eviction of Palestinians from their property to make way for settlement by Israeli citizens, reminiscent of the activities of the Apartheid government of South Africa. Would the SAZF rather have appointed as ombudsman for legal services a judge that takes kindly to acts akin to those committed by DF Malan and HF Verwoerd who were the diabolical architects of and laid the foundation for untold misery in South Africa?

The callous indiscriminate bombing by the Israeli Defence Force of Palestinian areas where there are schools, houses and hospitals is a crime against humanity. Similarly, their contemptuous attack of worshippers at the Al Aqsa Mosque, disrespect of the highest order, is a grave violation of human rights. Any judge speaking out against such crimes should be lauded. Judge Desai did no less.

The saying goes, “If you wish to beat a dog, you will find a stick”. By laying spurious charges against Judge Desai, the Zionist Federation shows its desperation to justify Israel’s continued disregard for the rights of the people of Palestine. The majority of the members of the United Nations have condemned the activities of Israel towards Palestine and it is only by the support of the United States of America in the UN Security Council, that Israel has escaped sanction for its deeds.

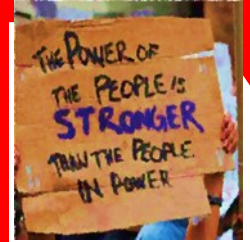
Mickey Titus

Joint Secretary: New Unity Movement





New Unity Movement



WE ARE NOT FREE

SO THERE IS NO REASON TO VOTE!

Once again municipal councillors will be urging the people of South Africa to vote for their parties. Once again they will be making promises that they know they are unable to keep. They duped the people over and over again for decades before, so they feel this should again be possible. As long as any government is dictated to by local capitalism and international imperialism no change can be brought about by elections that could make life easier for the poor people of South Africa.

Voting and political participation are supposed to protect and promote the common good for all people. The facts, however, prove that 27 years of “democracy” has brought very little improvement to the lives of the majority of South Africans. Let’s look at the facts.

Increasing Poverty, Increasing Inequality

When we look around us in most parts of South Africa it is easy to see that there is widespread poverty of the worst kind. Poor people do not have enough money to buy essentials like food, clothing, medicines and many other household needs, let alone to pay the rent, water, electricity etc. In the last calculation, 55.5% (30.4 million) of the population live in poverty, the number increasing from one election to the next!

A further tragedy shows that South Africa’s youth are trapped in poverty from an early age, with 43.5% of the citizens under the age of 17, living in households where the income is less than a living wage. In these situations, parents cannot afford the school fees (when education is supposed to be free!) of their children. This does great harm to our youth. If children are poor, they are less likely to go to school and even if in school, they will not perform as well compared to students who come from privileged backgrounds. This is the start of a vicious cycle that continues into adulthood, ultimately resulting in more than half of South Africans below the age of 35 being unemployed. The poor live in false hope that things will get better.

Service delivery protests all over South Africa have become a widespread occurrence in recent years. Residents take to the streets in protest against poor services received in their communities, hoping that their voices will be heard and their problems fixed. Communities are raising their voices about issues such as access to electricity, housing, water and sanitation, security – promises that politicians from **all** parties made in past local elections so that people can vote for them. They are making the same false promises in the upcoming municipal election. But we know that nothing changes from one election to the next. In fact, the living standard for the poor just gets worse. This forthcoming municipal election will not bring about a better life for the majority of people of the country. Some of the faces of councillors will change but the system will remain the same. The whole electoral system is designed to put the interest of political parties above the needs of the people. We have seen

that politicians are merely canvassing for your vote so that they can earn high salaries while the country goes to the dogs.

The cycle of poverty is a life without power and therefore is a life without freedom. At election time, the poor (the majority of people) do not have power or the means to determine the candidates who are supposed to represent them. The resultant corruption, lack of service delivery and ever-increasing levels of mistrust and discontent are manifestations of the lack of political freedom of the poor. So *we have no reason to vote because a vote for any candidate is a vote for increasing poverty.*

The effects on power and freedom of absolute poverty are only worsened and exaggerated when they occur alongside extreme inequality, as is the case in our country. South Africa is a more unequal society in 2021 than it was in 1994 and is now the most unequal society in the world. 1% of South Africans own 70% of the wealth of the country. The widening gap between the rich and the poor is underpinned by the shrinking of the rights of workers, whose right to protest is also being curtailed. The very high levels of inequality in our country means that the poor people of the country struggle or are unable to meet their essential needs and therefore do not have the time or power to be free. Even the quality of the provision of basic goods and services, especially education and healthcare, remains skewed. The schools where the majority of poor learners attend remain under-resourced. Inequalities are also evident in our health system, where resources are concentrated in the private sector which caters for less than 20% of the population.

By contrast, the relatively affluent have an influence over the economy, not only as a consequence of their greater purchasing power but also because of their direct and indirect links to policy makers and politicians. Laws are made to favour the rich, for example, lower taxes for businesses and having a VAT system that places an extra financial burden on the poor. We also witness daily corrupt practices by many business people and politicians who work hand-in-hand stealing from the State coffers for personal enrichment at the expense of the poor. *We therefore have no reason to vote because a vote for any candidate is a vote for increasing inequality.*

Increasing Unemployment

Since 1994, any attempt that has been made to alleviate the levels of poverty, the extent of inequality and unemployment

has failed dismally. In fact, conditions have worsened. South Africa's official unemployment rate is on the increase. In the past 10 years, the unemployment rate has increased from 21,5% to almost 33% - one of the highest in the world. This might be the official number but it is estimated that as much as 46% of the population is actually excluded from the formal work sector!

The unemployment rate is even higher among youths, at around 55%. This means that there are 6.2 million unemployed South Africans between the ages of 15-24 which ranks SA's youth unemployment as the highest in the world. That appalling figure gives an indication that the level of youth unemployment is a ticking time-bomb, because a whole generation is being robbed of any hope of a future with secure employment, a living wage or a decent life. Most youth come from poverty situations as children into being unemployed as youth.

Why is the country in this situation? Because South Africa had decided in 1994 to be part of the global capitalist system. And to be a player in that set-up, it has to follow the instructions that the overseas capitalist masters dictate. It is these leading foreign politicians and international agencies that have demanded the liberalisation of trade policies – free trade, the lowering of and eventual elimination of import tariffs, low company taxes – and a host of other measures that are to the financial benefit of foreign investors and to the financial detriment of the people of South Africa. Billions of rand annually flows out of South Africa. The consequence is the large-scale unemployment in our country. The ugly reality of the global capitalist system will bedevil the lives of millions of South Africans and not any of the councillors and their gangs will be able to do a thing about it.

All that can be achieved is to lie, to mislead you and by so doing to keep the whole destructive global system alive. As long as South Africa is part of that capitalist system we will not be free. So ***we have no reason to vote because a vote for any candidate is a vote for increasing unemployment.***

Increasing Wastage of Resources

In our present circumstance of desperate need, it is essential that every rand should be used to bring relief to provide adequate healthcare, education social services etc. Instead mil-

lions are lost on an almost daily basis because of mismanagement, corruption, theft and self-enrichment on the part of many government officials (of the highest ranks). If corruption has a home, it's South Africa. It is plainly impossible to give an adequate description of the corruption, embezzlement and corporate fraud pervading the country. The government parastatals, from local municipalities to national departments are virtually out of control, bloated and invested with fraud, deceit, corruption, and abuse of power. Money and corruption are ruining the land and crooked politicians are betraying the working class. Examples are too numerous to mention, suffice to state that many politicians who are being accused of corruption find themselves once again on the voter's role for the coming elections - an ominous sign that the stealing will go on unabated after the elections.

The country's foreign debt for loans that this government had taken now stands at 57% of our GDP. This means that more than half of total yearly revenue does not belong to the country but to the foreign lenders such as the World Bank and the IMF. To put things into perspective ESKOM's foreign debt alone is over R400 billion! And still this government continues borrowing more money because the State coffers are empty. The government has wasted billions since the last election through the gross mismanagement of public funds. State-owned companies are not applying proper controls and appear to forever be on the brink of collapse waiting for another bailout from the government. In spite of the billions of Rand squandered by government at both national and municipal level, we are told that there is no money for the needs of the poor of the country. Don't even trust the party leaders of other political parties who claim to be fighting for the poor but privately living like fat-cats. So ***we have no reason to vote because a vote for any candidate is a vote for increasing wastage of our resources.***

**YOU CAN'T FIX A BROKEN 'SYSTEM'
BY VOTING TO KEEP THE SAME 'SYSTEM'**

THE TRUTH ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is an imperialistic dominated industrial capitalist society in which only a minority of persons enjoy full citizenship. The exploited majority (workers and rural poor) were, and still are denied or deprived of the benefits and privileges accompanying the status of full citizenship, despite having been accorded in 1994 a 'vote' in an election contrived to put in place a neo-colonial type of government. Centuries of landlessness and detention in run-down rural labour camps styled 'bantustans' and in Group Areas or Ghettos have spread poverty, unemployment, lack of education and skills, job discrimination and vicious gender discrimination. The majority suffer under inhuman conditions of squalor, ill health and, social violence unsurpassed in modern societies. These areas continue to be exploited as sources of cheap labour.

Broken down tribal social practices and institutions are held in place by paid autocratic agents of the State. Despite claims that 'democratic transformation' took place in 1994 more than 3000 'traditional' kings, chiefs, headmen, captains, etc., are paid billions of rand a year to maintain a decaying social order.

"NO REAL HUMAN RIGHTS ARE POSSIBLE IN AN ABNORMAL SOCIETY"

The Worker was produced by the Publications Collective of the New Unity Movement.

The Secretariat

Michael Titus / Michael Steenveld

083 255 6329 / 071 645 1590

michaeltitus@vodamail.co.za / mikesteenveld2020@gmail.com

Visit us at <http://www.newunitymovement.org.za/>