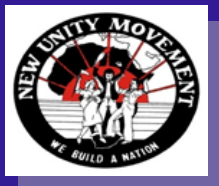


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WE FIGHT IDEAS WITH IDEAS

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HERITAGE DAY, 2023: THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

National Heritage Day in South Africa is an invention of the ANC-government. As early as two years into its rule in 1996 it declared 24 September a day for the “Rainbow Nation” to celebrate our diverse range of cultures and traditions.

From the beginning, many South Africans have seen 24 September – coinciding as it does with the start of springtime – as an opportunity to enjoy braaivleis, sunshine and rugby. Many, too, have seen the Day as an opportunity to revel in group-identity forms of celebration. The rulers are keen that we revel in our Zulu-ness, our Coloured-ness, our Jewish-ness. Whatever keeps our attention off our unity as an oppressed and exploited majority. It’s a way of strengthening the divisions in our society, but in a palatable way.

We are encouraged to dress, dance and sing in ways that emphasise our ethnic differences.

But there are those who “cry the beloved country,” who see our “culture and traditions” in terms of “working class culture” and in terms of “traditions of struggle” against all forms of class, race and gender-based oppression. Who see the elevation of identitarianism as an attempt to dilute if not undermine, solidarity in the fight to overcome the domination of racial capital in this country, and, indeed, in the rest of the world.

It is not a new struggle. The ANC in 1994 only became the latest in a long line of ruling class agents tasked to quell the “restless natives.” 2023 sees 80 years since the birth of the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) and the decisive forward-thrust of the culture and tradition of Non-racialism and of Non-collaboration. In this time, ruling class agents have come and gone, but capitalism has remained, and has mutated in ways to maintain its hegemony. The more things change the more they stay the same.

Heritage Day should be seen as an opportunity for pause and reflection on our proud history of struggle, and on our gains, sacrifices and losses as an underclass ruled by predators. We should take pride in our resilience as fighters against injustice and inequality, and renew our commitment to the anti-capitalist struggle. This is the heritage we should be celebrating – our heritage as a class united in the anti-capitalist struggle for a non-racial

peoples’ democracy.

In a 2020 edition of *The Worker*, we referred to an article by Greg Ruiters, in which he observed that the ANC’s strategy was to promote a politics of “colour-blindness.” It is worth quoting a relevant piece from that edition, where we go on to say:

According to Ruiters, the ANC-government operates within a constitutional dispensation in which all citizens are regarded as equal before the law even while the vast majority of us continue to labour under colonial, apartheid and neoliberal inequalities which make us the most unequal society in the world. What the ANC has in fact done was to try to pull off a massive deception. By declaring themselves the standard-bearers of “non-racialism” they are actually massively distorting the meaning of non-racialism AND ignoring the country’s history of capitalist exploitation in order to justify their upholding of the neoliberal status quo. It is an ahistorical approach that ignores how deeply racialism is interwoven into our history.

We need to celebrate and glorify the heritage and traditions which truly matter – the heritage and traditions of class-based unity in struggle. Our task is to participate in the process of building a left-wing movement for socialism in this country which foregrounds our humanism over our separateness. The struggle continues.

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FROM THE IINTERNET**On Heritage Day**

Heritage Day is a South African public holiday celebrated on 24 September. On this day, South Africans are encouraged to celebrate their culture and the diversity of their beliefs and traditions, in the wider context of a nation that belongs to all its people. [Wikipedia](#)

What do you do on Heritage Day?

One of the most traditional ways to celebrate Heritage Day is to do it the way South Africans do, with a barbecue. This social custom is an easygoing way to enjoy time with friends and family, enjoying the beautiful weather and cooking over an open fire.

“NATIONAL BRAAI DAY” - AN ARTICLE BY RODNEY ZEEBERG

There is a serious misconception doing the rounds in our country; it is the misconception that our unifying heritage can be found in our national tradition and love of braaivleis and the social rituals that go with this activity. Furthermore, the spectacle of national sport codes such as Rugby, Soccer and Cricket are sold as unifying vehicles that must unite us as a nation. The romantic appeal of these social activities is readily accepted by a people generally fatigued by overall struggle and hardship, which are extremely draining on the human spirit. For this reason, serious political thought and views on our real heritage, are frowned upon. On the face of it, there is nothing wrong with celebrating national victories and enjoying public holidays in the jovial atmosphere created around braaivleis fires. My gripe is with the almost zealous devotion with which we attach these activities to Heritage Day. Our powers that be have gone so far as to reduce Heritage Day to ‘National Braai Day’! The private sector is making a killing out of this; with no one giving this spurious intention of diluting such an important day to ‘another fun-filled day’ any second thought.

Our national heritage has a much deeper meaning than any unifying sporting spectacle like Rugby and socializing around an open fire with a ‘chop and dop’ can ever have. I fully understand the magnetic appeal of such an invite for people who slave more than half their lives away for someone else’s benefit. This is not a critique against them. My disgruntlement is with the powers that be and the captains of industry and commerce who openly profit through the sale of meat products and the clinching of multi-million viewing and broadcasting deals. None has anything to do with our heritage. After Madiba’s unifying gesture of national unity and reconciliation at the Victorious 1995 Rugby World Cup, our children still drowned in their own excrement in the pit latrines of their schools, our workers were shot in cold

blood fighting for a living wage in Marikana (at the orders of company executives who easily pocket a million rand a month); and after having achieved the most disgusting title of the ‘most unequal country in the world today’, what heritage are we to happily celebrate with them? To them I say, NO THANK YOU!

Ours is a heritage forged in struggle for freedom; not for cheap votes with a cap, t-shirt and a small bag of groceries; ours is a colonial past of heroic resistance of an oppressed people; ours is a heritage of national and local political mobilization and organization, that often ended in brutal repression and massacre; ours is a heritage of a proud labour force that produced the national wealth and built the modern society which we all live in today; ours is the heritage of blood, sweat and tears that made us the resilient working class we are today! This heritage is not to be found in the colours of a flag or rugby jersey; nor does it reside in one ‘tribe’ or culture. No, it pulsates in the veins of all farm workers, mine workers, factory workers, administrators and even the mass of unemployed workers all over the spectrum. Our colour is RED and is feared by those who try to impose the commodified green and gold on us. A proud heritage should culminate in genuine freedom, equality and justice for all; not their cosmetic changes that benefit the new corrupt political elite and their masters.



The Need for a SACOS

The South African Council on Sport (SACOS) was the umbrella organisation that co-ordinated the struggle of all the non-racial sports federations in South Africa to gain their place in the international sports sun during the time when sportspersons who were classified as “Non-White” or “Non-European”, were not allowed to represent South Africa at international level. SACOS was the pride of the non-racial sports fraternity and was rightly regarded as the sports wing of the liberation movement of the time.

Sadly, despite valiant efforts to continue its work as a bulwark against the daily onslaughts of racism by the establishment machinery, SACOS was cut off at the knees for the sake of expediency and greed at the time of negotiations with the Apartheid regime.

In 2022, when many ex-SACOS players and administrators realised that SACOS would have been 50 years old in 2023, the idea arose to organise celebratory events dedicated to the role played by it. “Remembering SACOS Committees” were established in different provinces in the country to co-ordinate these efforts.

One such event was a Remembering SACOS Fun Walk which was held simultaneously on the 19th March 2023 in Gauteng, the Eastern and the Western Cape. It turned out to be a very successful venture (in the Western Cape it attracted more than 1200 participants) and was an enthusiastic mix of nostalgia, defiance, gatvol endurance of the present setup, hopeful resistance, camaraderie and joyous participation. It was the result of collective and individual resolve to put in the hard yards and make a success of an idea which, ostensibly, started when people realised that 2023 would be the 50th anniversary of the foundation of SACOS, but, one rather suspects, was slumbering somewhere in the recesses of many a mind in many corners of our country. The response to the call was overwhelming and hinted at something more than attending a Fun Walk on a Saturday when people had nothing to do.

Whatever the motivations on that day, it was soon followed by a number of significant events across the country with an equivalence of enthusiasm. What should we read into this fervour? What should we make of this flurry of activity that celebrates an organisation that has ceased to exist in all but name?

Was it Nostalgia?

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Did people rally to the call because they genuinely wanted to pay homage to a grand old dame and thank her for the role she played, period? Did they harbour fond memories and felt it was the right thing to do to commemorate and celebrate amongst kindred spirits?

Was it a Cry for Help?

We’ve heard the pleas that sport has died in many communities giving sway to delinquent and anti-social behaviour. Some people say that it is because SACOS is no longer there. If this is the case, then what is expected from a SACOS?

We’ve also heard the plea that elite sport has drowned out community or neighbourhood sport. Are we just being requested to counter elite sport and build neighbourhood sport?

Are we being asked, (apart from the *mens sana in corpore sana* call and to overcome delinquency and anti-social behaviour) to enthuse the sports fraternity again with the political ethos of SACOS, to defend the still-oppressed against the onslaughts of racism, classism/elitism and professionalism (money sport)?

Having noticed the passion, one can be sure there are many more questions being pondered upon regarding our involvement with the sports setup in South Africa and its intersection with the socio-political situation within which it is inextricably interwoven.

So, if the WHAT boils down to:

More sport in communities

More sport at schools

Engendering a non-racial ethic at all sporting levels

Engendering a spirit of resistance amongst the still-oppressed sporting fraternity,

then the HOW is what must engage us going forward. Possible paths we could choose to go by are:

A Celebratory Route

Stage periodic celebratory events like the 19th March 2023 Remembering SACOS Fun Walk, hold exhibitions of SACOS archival material, hold acknowledgement and award events for SACOS sportspersons and administrators etc.

The “Independent” Route

- Form new clubs and sports organisations.
- Community coaching and involvement (Like so many that have sprung up, amongst others, in athletics and tennis in the Eastern Cape and soccer in KZN and Gauteng)
- Organise sport independently including interschool sport (rugby, cricket, soccer, athletics, netball etc).

This would include - cutting links with the ruling class and their agents (education authorities, municipal and provincial sports initiatives);

- resisting the influence of the ideas of the ruling class (classist/elite sport);
- guard against corrupt and quisling leadership in our sport;
- using the boycott strategically.

The “Entryist” Route

- Work with existing clubs and unions in existing sports organisations.
- Work with existing Provincial & National School sports organisations
- Reconsider our attitude to Provincial & National Colours and Teams.

The above are but some of the ideas that have surfaced since the SACOS 50th anniversary celebrations became a serious topic and emanate from a broad spectrum of persons who were involved in SACOS in one way or another. Is there an appetite for such a venture? How viable is such a “SACOS Project”?



The Intransigence of Education Departments

One sometimes wonder what makes education departments around the world intransigent in their decisions. What should be a simple decision becomes a long drawn out battle. One's experience in education in SA is that our energies are used to fight battles which should not have arisen in the first place if the department had acted logically in consultation with the forces it opposes.

The one issue is the sacking of principal Wesley Neumann who quite rightly with the Heathfield High Community recommended to parents to keep their children at home in June 2020 when the rate of infection of COVID-19 was quite high. President Cyril Ramaphosa closed schools in July 2020 supporting schools who believed that students were in danger of succumbing to the virus. How did WCED react to Heathfield HIGH? They came onto the school with all their might charging Mr Neumann with a host of charges of disobeying WCED's instruction that students return to school. WCED used almost R2 million rand to haul Mr Neumann to a disciplinary hearing. The hearing was the longest lasting one year and a half. WCED eventually found him guilty and offered him a demotion to another school as a head of department. He refused and in May last year they dismissed Mr Neumann.

WCED disrupted a school that was producing good results and offering extra-mural activities to students after school. Not many schools of the poor offer good academic teaching and extra- mural activities to its students due to lack of funds and a host of other reasons.

The school community has not accepted the decision of WCED and after it was announced by WCED that Mr Neumann was dismissed the students refused to go to school for two weeks because they wanted Mr Neumann back at school. Mr Neumann urged the students to return to school so that they could continue with their education. The students returned to school and completed the second term also writing the June examinations in 2022.

Mr Neuman took the matter to the ELRC and it supported WCED. The present MEC for Education David Maynier has like Pontius Pilate washed his hands off the firing of Neumann. What a cowardly act! Here he had the opportunity of righting injustice. He has turned a blind eye.

The teaching community, the parents and students in SA must support Mr Neumann in his bid to be reinstated. Mr Neumann is a teacher of integrity. What he and the Heathfield community did was to save the lives of its children.

Instead of lauding what Mr Neumann did WCED decided to hound this principled person out of teaching. Mr Neumann could easily have taken up WCED's offer. Many teachers would have but Mr Neumann is standing by his principles. All teachers, parents and students should support him. He is an icon to all of us. Imagine if all our teachers opposed injustice in our schools what independent and critical persons would be sent out into our communities.



Wesley Neumann principal of Heathfield High School

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