

Fulfilling Martin Luther King's Legacy: Defeat the Right and Imperialist War

Institutional racism, state violence and militarism still plague the international community

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*This 92nd anniversary of the birth of **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** comes at a time of great historical conjunctures inside the United States and around the globe.*

For the last ten months the country has been imperiled by the worst public health crisis in more than a century where nearly 400,000 have perished due to the COVID-19 pandemic amid the infections of more than 24 million people.

The public health disaster is a direct result of the failure of the outgoing administration of **President Donald J. Trump** to adequately address the advent and rapid spread of the virus, seeking instead to downplay the pandemic while the widespread sickness and death throughout the land has prompted an unprecedented economic downturn. Millions are jobless and facing imminent foreclosure and eviction absent of much needed drastic federal, state and municipal interventions aimed at guaranteeing housing, food, water and education for the majority of working and oppressed people.

COVID-19 and its concomitant social ills has not for one minute eased the level of institutional racism, economic exploitation and state repression which has been the hallmark of U.S. capitalism and imperialism for several centuries. The brutal police and vigilante executions of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Hakim Littleton, among others, exemplifies the character of the ruling class during this period.

Fortunately, in line with our tradition of resistance to injustice, millions are rising up to mobilize against the wanton arrest, prosecution, injuring and killing of African Americans and other communities of color. These demonstrations and rebellions since late May in particular, has alerted the world that the U.S. can in no way claim to be the paragon of democracy and human rights in which it describes itself.

In response to this renewed mass uprising among the people, thousands have been arrested and dozens killed. The administration has deployed state and federal forces into municipalities with the expressed intent to suppress the unrest. Both locally and nationally, the ruling interests have sought to denigrate and demoralize anti-racist activists.

These efforts have failed miserably in the last few months. People continued to come into the streets to protest while at the same time they have registered and voted in record numbers sending a clear message that racism and state repression must end immediately.

The Trump administration launched a well-funded propaganda and psychological warfare

campaign to convince its supporters that the inevitable electoral defeat on November 3 could have only occurred as the result of massive fraud. Despite the rejection by the majority along with the court systems at all levels, in regard to these endless misrepresentations of the actual situation in the U.S., the right-wing has persisted in promoting these lies to the point of advocating the declaration of Marshall Law which could only be consolidated through a neo-fascist coup.

The Significance of the January 6 Coup Attempt in Washington, D.C.

Despite the shocking events of earlier this month when thousands of Trump supporters stormed Capitol Hill, these developments should not have taken any politically conscious person by surprise. The administration had signaled the need for extra-judicial and violent actions against not only working class and oppressed peoples but also others who would dare stand in the way of such a program of reaction.

The ultimate realization of a neo-fascist and racist coup of this character would in fact disenfranchise tens of millions of principally African Americans and other voters from oppressed communities. It requires the throwing out of all the advances won through more than a century-and-a-half of protracted struggle related to civil rights and universal suffrage.

Even some among the spokespersons for the ruling class through its media outlets and other public platforms contemplated the apparent complicity of not only the White House and members of Congress in the attempted coup. Obviously, which has been the case historically, the overlap between military, intelligence and law-enforcement personnel easily became operational. It has been the policy of successive Democratic and Republican administrations to further militarize the police and to continue to replenish the prison-industrial-complex where more than 2.5 million remain incarcerated as millions of others are subjected to grossly overreaching judicial and law-enforcement supervision.

How can these ultra-rightist and militarist forces be defeated? We know from the history of the U.S. that the racist and reactionary forces are deeply embedded in the security apparatus of the capitalist state. If sections of the ruling class which are in disagreement with the Trump program attempts to purge these reactionary elements from the bureaucracy it could trigger even more violent unrest. One key aspect of the failure of the January 6 putsch was the lack of support among the highest levels of the military and intelligence structures. Although the Trump administration prodded the generals, intelligence heads, state politicians and the leaders of the Senate, including Vice President Mike Pence, to engage in the attempt to overthrow the electoral will of the people, these forces did not feel compelled to engage in a dictatorial solution to the contemporary crisis of racial capitalism and imperialism.

This is not to say that under a different set of circumstances such a coup would not gain the allegiance of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, leading political officials, government bureaucrats and directors of intelligence agencies. Only the masses of people properly organized and militant could be in a social position to reverse a right-wing coup through the use of general strikes, school boycotts and direct action. Consequently, our objective is to enhance the capacity of the working class, the nationally oppressed and other popular sectors of the population to guard against the advent of fascism and for the acquisition of genuine democracy and social emancipation.

Imperialist Militarism as an Outgrowth of Domestic Racism and Neo-fascism

During the last year of Dr. King's life, he took a firm position in opposition to the U.S. genocidal war in Vietnam. King linked the struggle against imperialist war abroad with the need to eradicate poverty and institutional racism inside the country. Such a view in 1967-68 as well as in 2021 places one at loggerheads with the ruling class.

Nonetheless, we know that the actual enemies of the masses of people in the U.S. are in Washington, D.C., on Wall Street and other areas where the exploitation and repression of the majority remains in force. The peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean are not the inherent adversaries of the working class and nationally oppressed. In fact, the working and struggling masses of the world are the natural allies of the people within the U.S.

Therefore, we must be forthright in our solidarity with the peoples of Palestine, the Western Sahara, Yemen, Zimbabwe, Cuba, Venezuela, and all other oppressed and struggling nations throughout the globe. The total liberation of these geo-political regions will assist in the efforts of people inside the U.S. in their struggles to win genuine freedom and self-determination.

Let us continue our fight to prevail over the forces of racism and reaction in the U.S. and internationally. The securing of a federal holiday in honor of Dr. King some 35 years ago was not an end within itself. These concessions from the ruling class must be utilized to push the movement towards newer heights of achievement.

We salute all organizers in the city of Detroit, the state of Michigan, nationally and internationally. We will continue to march towards the objectives of eliminating all forms of injustice and oppression in our lifetimes and for future generations to come.

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Author's note: These remarks were delivered at the Virtual 18th Annual Detroit MLK Day Rally and Cultural Program held on Monday January 18, 2021. This event brought together over 30 speakers and cultural workers to honor the social justice and antiwar legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Azikiwe, a co-founder of MLK Day in Detroit in 2004, has served as both a speaker and emcee at all of the previous rallies, demonstrations and cultural programs. Others presentations at this event were delivered by Jesus Rodriguez Espinoza, editor and publisher at the Orinoco Tribune based in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; Darnell Summers, former GI war resister, musician and target of the United States government's counter-intelligence program (COINTELPRO); Aurora Harris, Detroit poet, author and lecturer at the University of Michigan-Dearborn; Blair Anderson, former Black Panther Party member and political prisoner; Sammie Lewis, organizer for Detroit Will Breathe (DWB); Nakia Wallace, co-founder of DWB; Tristan Taylor, co-founder and organizer with DWB; Anthony Ali, artist and organizer with DWB; Sarah Torres, event co-chair, musician, technician and member of Moratorium NOW! Coalition; Saydi Sarr, co-founder of the African Bureau for Immigration and Social Affairs (ABISA); Clarence Thomas, retired member of the International Longshoreman and Warehouse Workers Union Local 10 (ILWU); Efren Peredes, juvenile lifer and prison organizer; Jae Bass, Detroit spoken word artist and

organizer for DWB; a Peoples' Spirit of Detroit award was given to DWB for their pioneering role in the anti-racist movement; Yvonne Jones, Moratorium NOW! Coalition organizer and spokesperson for the Racial Profiling Across 8 Mile billboard campaign; among many others. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on Detroit, the entire event was held online. Here is the link to the entire program streamed over [You Tube](#).

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