

# RAY O' LIGHT NEWSLETTER

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## Marching into Syria

### Obama: Drum Major for Imperialist War

by RAY LIGHT

On August 28, 2013, exactly fifty years to the minute after Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., at the largest and most important civil rights demonstration of the 1960's, began his now famous "I Have A Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., U.S. President Barack Obama began his address "celebrating" the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and King's speech in particular. On September 10, less than two weeks later, President Obama gave a fifteen minute speech addressed to the people of the USA and the Congress laying out his argument for launching a "limited war" on Syria, even while asking Congress to delay its vote, allegedly so that diplomacy with Russia could be given a chance.

In the chief imperialist country in the world where there has not been a serious anti-war movement



let alone a substantial revolutionary working class movement in a long time, a superficial glance at these two events might lead one to be favorably disposed toward the U.S. imperialist chieftain,

(contd. on p. 2)

### Reflections on the Fiftieth Anniversary "Celebration" of the March on Washington

by RAY LIGHT

The good news about the fiftieth anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom is that tens of thousands of Afro-Americans and their allies of all ages, especially those who came to the August 24<sup>th</sup> march, upwards of eighty thousand people, were clearly dissatisfied with the status quo. And many of them carried placards or wore t-shirts demanding justice for Trayvon Martin.

However, in the continuous celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary from August 24 to August 28, the main focus was on two specific things: 1. Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" Speech, given at that historic 1963 march and rally; and 2. The presence and participation of three U.S. presidents especially the current one, the first U.S. president of African descent in U.S. history, on the final, climactic day. In fact, the key role of the three

(contd. on p. 10)

#### Do you know who said it??

On some positions, cowardice asks the question "Is it safe?" Expediency asks the question "Is it politic?" Vanity asks the question "Is it popular?" But conscience asks the question "Is it right?" And there comes a time when a man must take the position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because it is right. And that's where I stand today.

*Hint: Does it sound like a preacher?*

*—Still stumped? See page 11 for answer.*

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(Obama: Drum Major continued)

Barack Obama, and his ongoing bellicose diplomatic, political and military conduct in relation to Syria. But that would be a serious and dangerous mistake.

**What follows is a Question and Answer (Q&A) column by Ray Light, General Secretary of the Revolutionary Organization of Labor, USA on the imminent U.S. imperialist war against Syria.**

***Question #1: In light of his August 28<sup>th</sup> speech, is President Obama becoming more democratic, more progressive, more peaceful?***

Answer #1: No, he is not. Not long before he was assassinated, Reverend King expressed the hope that he would be remembered as a “drum major” for peace and justice. By contrast, though President Obama took time out to acknowledge King’s 50 year old speech, at that very time *he* was actually absorbed in the business of building political support internationally as well as among Republican and Democratic members of Congress domestically for *his planned act of unprovoked imperialist war against the sovereign state of Syria*.

Obama shrewdly wrapped himself in the banner of Reverend King, a Nobel Peace Prize winner who actually took *his* award as a “commission.” In stark contrast to King, Obama has used *his* Nobel Peace Prize as a cover for his aggressive military leadership of U.S. imperialism’s war of terror on the peoples of the world in his seamless transition from the criminal Bush Regime. Now he is wrapping himself in the memory of King to rally support for his new imperialist war plans.

One year to the day before he was assassinated, Reverend King had declared his opposition to the U.S. government’s war in Vietnam. Obama is the current living embodiment of King’s *nightmare* truth: “The greatest purveyor of violence in the world –[is] my own government.” (MLK “Beyond Vietnam” speech at Riverside Church, 4-4-67)

***Question #2: But isn’t it a good thing that Obama is consulting with Congress to get their vote before launching the attack on Syria?***

Answer #2: “Senior White House advisers” claimed that “Obama wanted to return to an era in which the President and the Congress are equal partners.” (*Time*, 9-16-13, page 23) If that were *true*, it would have been an incredibly positive development. However, this assertion is *clearly false* since Obama continues to insist that he has the authority at any time to take unilateral action against Syria *without* Congressional approval. During his fifteen minute speech on the tenth of September, he spent three-quarters of the speech laying out his arguments for attacking Syria and was still insisting on his authority to unilaterally launch this new war.

*Time Magazine* recently stated: “Presidents have long had the prerogative to decide when and where to send the military for limited attacks of the sort planned for Syria, without prior approval from Congress or the American people. Ronald Reagan invaded Grenada. George H. W. Bush invaded Panama. Bill Clinton launched air strikes over the Balkans and fired cruise missiles at Iraq and Afghanistan. Obama already undertook the bombing of Libya and the toppling of its dictator without any approval from Congress.” (*ibid.*)\*

Moreover, according to *The Economist*, “Four American Arleigh Burke destroyers stand ready in the eastern Mediterranean, the 1600km range of their Tomahawk land-attack missiles allowing them to stay well beyond the 300km range of Syria’s Yakhont anti-shiping missiles. There are doubtless American submarines in the area, too, and a British one may be on its way.” (8-31-13, page 18) By the magazine’s reckoning, there are about 200 available Tomahawks to make precision strikes, *roughly twice the number used against Libya in 2011!*

So, with the undeclared triumphant war on Libya under his belt, why *is* Obama consulting with Congress this time?

*Time* supplies the answer: “On the eve of what was an almost telegraphed strike on Syria, the President found himself standing alone. The British Parliament abandoned him. The Arab



\*Given its role as an important imperialist apologist, it is not surprising that *Time* claims U.S. Presidents “have long had the prerogative,” rather than telling the truth that these Presidents have long *violated the U.S. Constitution* by usurping the prerogative to carry out *acts of war against sovereign countries* without a declaration of war by Congress.

(Obama: Drum Major continued)

League could not commit. The United Nations faced Russian obstruction, and the U.S. Congress was unable to cobble together a cogent position, given the low enthusiasm of the American people.”(*op.cit.*, ROL emphasis) In addition, in 2011, Obama had faced significant *bipartisan* opposition in the U.S. Congress in response to his bypassing of Congress in the U.S.-led war on Libya.

In this light, *The Economist* war hawks, who have been pushing the Obama Regime to wage war on the Assad government for more than a year, had just advised Obama to “briskly go through all sorts of hoops before ordering an attack.” In an article entitled, “Hit him hard,” the subtitle is “Present the proof, deliver an ultimatum and punish Bashar Assad for his use of chemical weapons.” (page 9, 8-31-13) Obama’s decision to consult with the U.S. Congress was in complete accord with *The Economist’s* tactical political guidance.

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The good news in all this is two-fold: 1. The British Parliament rejected Prime Minister Cameron’s pressure, and, on August 29<sup>th</sup>, when Cameron recalled them from summer recess, not only the Labor Party but Cameron’s own party politicians rejected his call for a British military response in Syria. This vote by the British Parliament underscored the fact that Obama was again planning to by-pass the U.S. Congress, depriving Congress of its duty to debate and decide regarding a U.S. declaration of war. The British vote only added to the unpopularity in the USA of the new war on Syria that he was about to unleash.

2. The people of the USA, having been lied to by the George W. Bush Regime around Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD’s) as he started the Iraq War (in the post 9-11 honeymoon period with the Bush government), and suffering from the continuing economic crisis in the USA, after a dozen years of an endless “war on terror”, now shocked by the Snowden revelations of NSA spying on *all of us*, are strongly opposed to Obama’s new war on Syria. The members of Congress have been swamped by voters’ expressions of opposition to this imminent war. According to *Time*, “A Pew Poll conducted over Labor Day weekend found that fewer than 1 in 3 Americans, including only 29%

of Democrats, support air strikes against Syria. Republicans are actually more likely to support the President, at 35%...”\*

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However, there is a distinction between the good news about the current overwhelming sentiment of the British Parliament and the people of the USA opposing a new U.S. imperialist war in Syria, on the one hand, and, on the other, the maneuvers of the Obama Regime to launch that war anyway. *Obama’s decision to “consult” with Congress is one key maneuver on the road to an unjust, unprovoked war against Syria.*

**Question #3: Isn’t it good that, on September 10<sup>th</sup>, Obama asked Congress to delay its vote on the “authorization” of an attack on Syria? And doesn’t the Russian proposal for “the international community” to take possession of the Assad Regime’s chemical weapons represent a step toward peace?**

Answer #3:  
Obama’s request for a delay in the Congressional vote gave him and his orchestrated war drive a reprieve. Had Congress voted on a bill to authorize an attack on Syria in the days immediately



following the President’s September 10<sup>th</sup> speech, there is no doubt that the bill would have been defeated in the U.S. House and in all likelihood in the Senate as well. Reflecting the current anti-war mood and will of the people, Congress would have represented a formidable, democratic opposition to an unjust imperialist war. Obama would have faced a big dilemma: with no popular base of support, launch a war on Syria on an anti-democratic, dictatorial basis or abide by the democratic decision and be blocked from waging the war at least in the near future. Either way the



\*No wonder, as Fareed Zakaria reports, “the President he [Obama] most admires for his foreign policy is the elder George Bush.” (*Time*, 9-16-13, page 19)



(Obama: Drum Major continued)

Congressional vote *at that time* would have struck a powerful blow against U.S. imperialist war.

The delay of that vote provides Obama and U.S. imperialism with an opportunity to appear reasonable and willing to consult, to appear “democratic” without having surrendered one iota of power to the Congress. Meanwhile the imperialist regime gains time to fabricate “proof” (such has been done repeatedly by U.S. Presidents in modern U.S. history to push the country into unjust wars and justify them, e.g. the Tonkin Gulf incident in Vietnam) or recast the issue, get the monopoly capitalist-dominated mass media on board to demonize Bashar Assad further, etc.

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Interestingly, the Russian “initiative” evidently came out of a private meeting between Obama and Putin during the G-20 Summit in Moscow last week. In expressing U.S. government outrage that the Russian government harbored Edward Snowden, the NSA whistleblower, Obama had previously announced he would still go to Moscow to attend the G-20 Summit meeting but would refuse to meet with Putin while he was there. Now it has been admitted that they not only met there privately but together produced a new option for Obama on Syria.\* They agreed to cooperate with each other on an effort to take from the Syrian government and “secure” the Syrian chemical weapons stockpiles. *Putin’s cooperation with Obama immediately allowed U.S. imperialism to break out of its international isolation on Syria.*

It has also come out that, last April, on his first visit to Moscow as Secretary of State, John Kerry met there with both Putin and with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov about “replicating the potential model of Libya’s nuclear program which in 2003 was removed under an international agreement.” (*Boston Globe*, 9-11-13, p. A9) When the U.S. and Western European imperialist-led bombings and invasion of Libya took place in 2011, the “securing” of the Libyan nuclear program was just about completed, clearing the way for the imperialist invasion and the defeat and murder of Libyan leader, Moammar Gadhafi. This is the path that U.S. imperialism and (wittingly or unwittingly) Russia’s Putin have in store for Syria’s Assad! Clearly, the international

\*Note how deceptive and dishonest the U.S. imperialist chieftain is.

community’s seizure of Syria’s chemical weapons stockpile is a step toward U.S. war and occupation of Syria!

***Question #4: But don’t you think it’s a good thing that President Obama is enforcing an “international norm” banning the use of chemical weapons?!***

Answer #4: The “red line” drawn one year ago upholding an “international norm” banning the use of chemical weapons is Obama’s immediate excuse for the criminal act of war he is planning to perpetrate on the people of Syria. But already two years ago, Obama, intoxicated with his success in waging a criminal war on Libya, announced that Syrian President Bashar Assad had to go. And several months ago, when Obama first unveiled the same chemical weapons rationale for waging war on Syria, he admitted at that time that the world community did not know whether the Assad government or the Syrian rebels had used chemical weapons. Nevertheless, in that setting, Obama threatened retaliation only against the Syrian government if *it* was found to have used chemical weapons and promised no such attack on the rebels if *they* had been responsible. So much for Obama’s concern for the banning of chemical weapons!



Indeed, in the post World War II period, one clear breach of the protocol banning chemical weapons was Saddam Hussein’s use of chemical warfare against Iran in the Iran-Iraq War and then his use of these weapons against the Kurdish population of Iraq itself. It was U.S. imperialism that supplied their then close ally, Saddam Hussein, the chemical weapons he used and the U.S. government raised no protest at all. In addition, in its bestial war against the people of Vietnam, the U.S. military used Agent Orange extensively. According to the Vietnamese Red Cross, 400,000



(Obama: Drum Major continued)

people were killed or maimed by this chemical warfare and 500,000 children were born with birth defects. Many U.S. veterans of that war have also died from Agent Orange exposure. Certainly, U.S. imperialism has been no stranger to the use of chemical weapons in this period.

Moreover, a recent article in *The Economist*, a British ruling class magazine, argues persuasively that, “Chemical weapons are insidious and ghastly, yes, but so are all sorts of other ways of killing and wounding...the taboo is not rational.” (“The shadow of Ypres,” page 20, 8-31-13) So clearly the chemical weapons red line is actually a “red herring;” it is not the real reason why U.S. imperialism is mobilizing for war on Syria.

**Question #5: What are the real reasons that Obama and U.S. imperialism are planning to attack Syria in the near future? What are U.S. imperialism’s goals in Syria and the region?**

Answer #5: One of the most astute U.S. imperialist strategists, Fareed Zakaria, recently expressed frustration at being unable to fathom “what exactly is the goal of this military action [against Syria]?” (*Time*, 9-16-13) This reflects his concern about the future of U.S. imperialist domination of the Middle East. Zakaria worries that, “we might be inching into a complex civil war, all the while denying that we are doing so.” (*ibid.*)

Aggressive imperialist chieftain that he is, over the past several months Obama has been unable/unwilling to carry out his threat to fully arm the rebels against the Assad Regime because most of the rebel fighters, currently financed by Saudi Arabia and other reactionary Arab sheikdoms, are affiliated with Al Qaeda. And Al Qaeda is a more unpredictable and uncontrollable opponent than Assad. This is the reason that Obama, while mobilizing for war on Assad, is not enthusiastic about replacing his regime. Militarily, at this point, Obama thus needs to calibrate his aggression so as to subdue Assad and bend him and his regime to the imperial will.

*The Revolutionary Organization of Labor, USA* believes that U.S. imperialism *cannot* extricate itself from the Middle East/North Africa region. It must be driven out. This is the experience of Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, the

Persian Gulf states, Iran, the Arab Spring, et al. Even if the U.S. economy itself were somehow (through other oil reserves, alternative fuels, or hydraulic fracking) able to free itself from dependence on Middle East oil, U.S. imperialist military-political-economic domination of the region is still vital for propping up the dollar as the only viable currency for other oil producing and oil consuming countries to use in their oil transactions. Without this control of the Middle East, U.S. economic hegemony will be destroyed.

The U.S. war in Iraq had the unintended consequence of placing the first Arab Shia government into power in the modern history of the Middle East. This led to the strengthening of Shia-led Iran as a regional power to contend with in this strategically important region. For at least the past several years, Israel and the USA have been planning a major attack on Iran. Arguably the most important geopolitical goal of U.S. imperialism in Syria is to transform the country from the most reliable supporter of the Iranian regime into a supporter of U.S. imperialism so that the US/Israeli forces can isolate and attack Iran. Currently, Syria evidently has one of the largest stockpiles of chemical weapons in the world. And Putin and Russia are trying to help U.S. imperialism to get these weapons out of Syrian hands, paving the way for and hastening the day when the U.S./Israeli forces wage a major war on Iran. Similarly, Hizbullah, as the Lebanese Shia’s party-militia can now threaten Israel with 50,000 rockets and missiles. If Syria can be turned, Hizbullah will be vulnerable as well.

As the Black Agenda Report’s Glen Ford has stated, “Temporarily defeated, Obama will be back on the Syria warpath as soon as the proper false flag operations can be arranged.” There is nothing that indicates that Obama and U.S. imperialism are prepared to leave the Middle East/North Africa. For the status of U.S. imperialism as a major power is at stake in the question of war and peace in Syria.

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Revolutionary workers in the USA and around the world need to stand up and oppose the unjust imperialist wars perpetrated by the main enemy of toiling humanity, imperialism, headed by U.S. imperialism. ***Hands off Syria!***

# Factory Building Collapse in Bangladesh Shows Need for Workers' Organization and Power

by ROSE BROWN and PAT KELLY

On April 24, 2013, the eight-story Rana Plaza building that housed five garment factories in Savar, Bangladesh, collapsed, resulting in the death of over 1,100 mainly women Bangladeshi garment workers and the injury of thousands more. (Savar is an industrial suburb of Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh.) This is the worst garment factory worker disaster in history!

Bangladesh is the second largest supplier of clothing in the world today, behind only China. There are 5,000 garment factories in the country. Millions of mainly women garment workers are paid a minimum wage of around \$37/month, among the lowest in the world, producing clothing for top international brands and global retail companies. They supply many U.S. retail stores, including Walmart, JC Penney, Sears, Gap and Dress Barn.

The \$20 billion-a-year garment industry is a mainstay of the Bangladesh economy. These capitalists exert tremendous pressure on state and local politicians to allow shabby and unsafe construction of garment factories and ignore worker safety concerns. The collapsed Rana Plaza building was built on swampland. The top three floors were added to the original building and constructed illegally. According to a Bangladesh government inspection *after* the disaster, it was the use of substandard building materials combined with the heavy machines used by the five garment factories inside the Rana Plaza building that led to its collapse!

After seeing deep cracks in the walls of the Rana Plaza building on Tuesday, April 23, police ordered the building evacuated. A bank and some shops on the first floor were closed on Wednesday. *However, the garment factory officials ignored the police order and ordered thousands of factory workers on the upper floors to continue to produce garments!* (AP, 4/26/13) According to a 5/4/13 *Boston Globe* editorial, factory supervisors threatened not to pay the workers' monthly wage if they refused to work the day that the building collapsed! International finance capital with its drive to maximize profits from the exploitation of workers with total disregard for the lives

of workers everywhere is responsible for this criminal slaughter of Bangladeshi workers.

## Outrage of Bangladesh Workers

There have been massive worker protests in Bangladesh against this mass killing, including the demand for the arrest and punishment of the building owner, the owners of the garment factories housed in the building and the Bangladesh government officials who share responsibility for this tragedy. The *New York Times* reported on April 26 that thousands of garment workers "ramped through industrial areas of the capital of Bangladesh on Friday, smashing vehicles with bamboo poles and setting fire to at least two factories in violent protests ignited by a deadly building collapse this week ..."

Showing his utter disdain for the workers, Bangladesh Finance Minister Abdul Muhith said that he didn't think that the disaster was "really serious – it's an accident." (*Boston Globe*, 5/4/13) Even the government's own information minister, had admitted, "I wouldn't call it an accident. I would say it's a murder." (*NY Times*, 4/26/13)

Responding to the public fury over the mass killings, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina ordered the police to arrest the owner of the collapsed building, as well as the owners of the factories based in the building. Almost immediately, three owners of two garment factories, two government engineers who were involved in approving the design of the building and the building owner, Mohammed Sohel Rana, had been arrested. It was also reported that the Bangladesh High Court froze the bank accounts of all five garment factories in the Rana Plaza.

Following the building collapse, there were almost continuous protests and strike actions of Bangladeshi textile workers and their families around: the conduct of the rescue effort, demanding punishment for those responsible for the criminal murders, demanding compensation and medical care for the victims and their families, safety concerns in other garment factories, and in

(continued on next page)



(Factory Building Collapse continued)

support of an increase in the minimum wage and the right of textile workers to organize into unions without the permission of the factory owners.

### **Class Collaboration from AFL-CIO**

On June 27<sup>th</sup>, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, one of the main social props of U.S. imperialism, stated that, “The AFL-CIO welcomes the news that the U.S. government will suspend Bangladesh’s trade benefits granted under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).” Yet *New York Times* writer Steven Greenhouse reported on the same day, “While Bangladesh fought vigorously to prevent the suspension, worried about the signal it sends to its citizens and to global investors, some trade experts said the suspension would be largely symbolic because it will affect less than 1 percent of America’s \$4.9 billion in annual imports from Bangladesh.” (“Obama to Suspend Trade Privileges with Bangladesh”)

Trumka pointed out that, “Since 2005 over 1800 workers have died in preventable factory fires and building collapses in the Bangladesh garment industry ...” but he never named the greedy corporations responsible for the death of these workers. He never even mentioned the justified outrage and mass protests of the Bangladeshi workers. Nor did he call for the U.S. labor movement to march in support of our brothers and sisters and against the bloody capitalists, including U.S. capitalists, responsible for crimes against humanity in the Bangladesh garment industry.

Indeed, the murder of more than 1100 Savar garment workers was “business as usual” under the capitalist system — an act of ruthless, cold-blooded industrial terror. Future tragedies like the Rana Plaza tragedy cannot be prevented unless and until the working class organizes itself and struggles for power on the road of socialist revolution.

**Remember Rana Plaza!  
End Capitalist Exploitation!  
For Workers’ Power and Socialism!**

## **WHAT IS SOVIET POWER?**

(Speech by V.I. LENIN recorded in March 1919)

What is Soviet power? What is the essence of this new power, which people in most countries still will not, or cannot understand? The nature of this power, which is attracting larger and larger numbers of workers in every country, is the following: in the past the country was, in one way or another, governed by the rich, or by the capitalists, but now, for the first time, the country is being governed by the classes, and moreover, by the masses of those classes, which capitalism formerly oppressed. Even in the most democratic and freest republics, as long as capital rules and the land remains private property, the government will always be in the hands of a small minority, nine-tenths of which consist of capitalists, or rich men.

In this country, in Russia, for the first time in world history, the government of the country is so organized that only the workers and the working peasants, to the exclusion of the exploiters, constitute those mass organizations known as Soviets, and these Soviets wield all state power. That is why, in spite of the slander that the representatives of the bourgeoisie in all countries spread about Russia, the word “Soviet” has now become not only intelligible but popular all over the world, has become the favorite word of the workers, and of all working people. And that is why, notwithstanding all the persecution to which the adherents of communism in the different countries are subjected, Soviet power must necessarily, inevitably, and in the not distant future, triumph all over the world.

We know very well that there are still many defects in the organization of Soviet power in this country. Soviet power is not a miracle-working talisman. It does not, overnight, heal all the evils of the past — illiteracy, lack of culture, the consequences of a barbarous war, the aftermath of predatory capitalism. But it does pave the way to socialism. It gives those who were formerly oppressed the chance to straighten their backs and to an ever-increasing degree to take the whole government of the country, the whole administration of the economy, the whole management of production, into their own hands.

Soviet power is the road to socialism that was discovered by the masses of the working people, and that is why it is the true road, that is why it is invincible.

## To Win Decent Jobs and Genuine Freedom

# We've Got to "Fight the Powers That Be!"

Statement by the Revolutionary Organization of Labor, USA – August 24, 2013

Fifty years after the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the Wall Street ruling class, as well as its social democratic supporters among the Obama Democrats, the AFL-CIO trade union bureaucrats and the NAACP, SCLC, National Action Network and other Black Bourgeois misleaders are here to *celebrate*. After all, most of them have been "getting on" well in the aftermath of the 1960's civil rights movement. They are attempting to portray that historic march as merely a backdrop, a stage upon which the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. made his famous "I have a dream" speech.

As had been true from his civil rights beginnings in the Montgomery Bus Boycott, *it was the aroused and dignified people that transformed Martin Luther King into a civil rights leader*. The people gave his voice substance and strength and his eloquence inspired them in return. King's brilliant speech was a product of the strength that he drew from the 225,000 people gathered at the Lincoln Memorial on that historic day. The real significance of the 1963 March was that it provided all the heroic youth there (mostly Afro-American and mostly from the South) with the recognition that *they were not alone. For, indeed, they had already created a Southwide and countrywide movement for Afro-American freedom.*

Today, the economic and social conditions we face are the worst they have been since the March fifty years ago. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately one out of every six people in the USA is now living in poverty and more than 146 million U.S. people are either poor or low income. More than one-quarter of all Afro-American households are "food insecure."

The sponsors of today's March, however, have failed to organize and lead militant mass demonstrations: protesting the bailout of the Wall Street criminals who created the current economic

crisis; protesting the drastic cuts to the social safety net -- public education, unemployment relief, etc.; or demanding a decent jobs program from the current Obama-led government. They are tied to the U.S. ruling financial oligarchy through the Democratic Party and will do everything in their power to keep the 99% of us from fighting for jobs and justice against the powers that be.



The wise and profound **Malcolm X** sharply exposed the 1963 March. "It was the grass roots out there in the street. It scared ... the white power structure in Washington, D.C. to death...When they found out that this black steamroller was going to come down on the capital, ... they called in these national Negro leaders that you respect and told them, 'Call it off.' Kennedy said, 'Look, you all are letting this thing go too far.' And Old Tom said, 'Boss, I can't stop it, because I didn't start it.' They said, 'I'm not even in it, much less at the head of it.' They said, 'these Negroes are ... running ahead of us.' And that old shrewd fox, he said, 'If you all aren't in it, I'll put you in it. I'll put you at the head of it. I'll endorse it. I'll welcome it. I'll help it. I'll join it ...'" "No, it was "a sell-out ... a takeover" by "the same white element that put Kennedy into power." (Excerpt from Speech by Malcolm X at the 1963 Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference in Detroit) (over)



Malcolm went on to describe the \$1.5 million dollar payoff to the Big 6 leaders that Kennedy provided. One reflection of this fact: John Lewis, who was then the youthful leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), one genuine liberation group among “the big 6,” was forced by the others, along with Walter Reuther and the white preachers who Kennedy brought into the leadership, to change his speech, to tone it down, to take the militancy out of it.

But one thing that President Kennedy and the Big 6 did *not* take into account was the fact that “the genie was already out of the bottle,” the Afro-American masses, and especially the heroic youth associated with SNCC, had already been tested in many civil rights battles against the local, state and U.S. government repressive apparatus. This was especially true in the Black Belt South where the immediate enemy was “legal segregation,” apartheid, and the extra-legal white terror that enforced its oppressive existence. Thus, in building the March on Washington, Kennedy and the big 6 were unwittingly providing *the movement that already existed* with the opportunity to come together, recognize their collective strength, and provide M.L. King the opportunity to articulate the democratic demands, including for the elimination of segregation.

Today, in the midst of the capitalist economic crisis, resegregation is rapidly advancing. **Like President Kennedy in 1963, President Obama today is helping the black bourgeois and white social**

**democratic liberals to jump in front of any potential new movement and channel it into reformist paths that do not challenge the U.S. Empire on its home turf.** What is really needed today is *a new Black liberation movement* such as the one that unmistakably announced itself as a force to be reckoned with on that historic day in August 1963.

Several major recent events underscore the urgency of building a new militant movement, rather than



passively celebrating the emergence of the last one fifty years ago. These include: 1. The Afro-American people’s victory in electing the long time revolutionary black nationalist, Chokwe Lumumba, as mayor of Jackson, Mississippi; 2.

Detroit, the city with the largest percentage of Afro-Americans in the USA, forced into bankruptcy by the white ruling class-dominated Michigan state authorities in the largest bankruptcy of its kind in U.S. history; 3. The Supreme Court decision gutting the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and 4. The acquittal of George Zimmerman in his Florida “trial” for **the murder of Trayvon Martin**, an innocent seventeen year old Afro-American youth.

***This time when we build the movement, let us be true to the words of the Negro National Anthem --- “Let us march on ‘til victory is won!”***

## ***Toward Victorious Afro-American National Liberation!***

### ***For A Socialist USA!***

For *Ray O’ Light Newsletter #79* with more information on the March or to contact the **Revolutionary Organization of Labor, USA**, write to:

Boxholder, 607 Boylston St., Lower Level Box 464, Boston, MA 02116

We look forward to hearing from you!

U.S. Presidents was to make sure that the current mythology about the 1960's Black Liberation struggle against U.S. government-backed legal segregation and national oppression would remain intact: namely, one speech by Reverend King melted the hearts of the oppressors and led to Afro-American freedom.

The fiftieth anniversary events were in accord with the warning with which we opened our *Revolutionary Organization of Labor, USA* leaflet distributed at the march on August 24<sup>th</sup>: (see pages 8 and 9)

Fifty years after the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the Wall Street ruling class, as well as its social democratic supporters among the Obama Democrats, the AFL-CIO trade union bureaucrats and the NAACP, SCLC, National Action Network and other Black Bourgeois misleaders are here to *celebrate*. After all, most of them have been "getting on" well in the aftermath of the 1960's civil rights movement. They are attempting to portray that historic march as merely a backdrop, a stage upon which the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. made his famous "I have a dream" speech.

In 1963 the Afro-American people and their allies were *not* coming to Washington, DC to hear speeches and to see Martin Luther King and other celebrities but to *stage a mass protest, to demand jobs and freedom from a hostile government*. Quite naturally, President Kennedy and the federal government viewed *the organized and serious Afro-American masses* coming to the capital as a real threat.

According to *The Washington Post's* Marc Fisher, "D.C. police officers were banned from taking vacation; other forces received riot control training. Thirty Army helicopters patrolled the skies, swooping low over the Reflecting Pool. Four thousand troops stood ready in the Washington suburbs, and 15,000 paratroopers were placed on standby in North Carolina. The District's chief judge directed colleagues to be available for all-night bond hearings in case of mass arrests. President Kennedy pre-

signed executive orders authorizing military intervention if riots developed." ("Wave of fear raced ahead of the crowd," 8-25-13)

Indeed, according to Joseph Califano, the general counsel to the Army in 1963 and the representative of the Defense Department in connection to the March, "In the still-dark hours of August 28...we positioned 4,000 Army troops at Bolling Air Force Base, the Anacostia Naval Air Station and Fort Myer. We stationed Justice Department officials, Army officers and cameras atop the Lincoln Memorial and planted local police, national guardsmen, FBI agents and Army intelligence personnel in civilian clothing among the marchers." ("A peaceful march didn't simply happen," *ibid.*) Califano said that the Kennedy Administration did everything to get the marchers out of town by nightfall: "We insisted that charter bus companies and trains transport marchers out of town that evening and that District police prohibit buses and cars from parking overnight ... ." Furthermore, "[Secretary of the Army] Vance and I watched apprehensively on televisions in the Army War Room. We were especially concerned about the speech of John Lewis, then-chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Lewis had drafted an angry, incendiary attack on the administration for its lack of support. White House aides had pressed Randolph to get Lewis to tone it down. He finally did." (*ibid.*)

As our leaflet pointed out, however,

But one thing that President Kennedy and the Big 6 did *not* take into account was the fact that "the genie was already out of the bottle," the Afro-American masses, and especially the heroic youth associated with SNCC, had already been tested in many civil rights battles against the local, state and U.S. government repressive apparatus. This was especially true in the Black Belt South where the immediate enemy was "legal segregation," apartheid, and the extra-legal white terror that enforced its oppressive existence. Thus, in building the March on Washington, Kennedy and the big 6 were unwittingly providing *the movement that already existed* with the opportunity



to come together, recognize their collective strength, and provide M.L. King the opportunity to articulate the democratic demands, including for the elimination of segregation.

Today, in the midst of the capitalist economic crisis, resegregation is rapidly advancing. **Like President Kennedy in 1963, President Obama today is helping the black bourgeois and white social democratic liberals to jump in front of any potential new movement and channel it into reformist paths that do not challenge the U.S. Empire on its home turf.** What is really needed today is a *new Black liberation movement* such as the one that unmistakably announced itself as a force to be reckoned with on that historic day in August 1963.

The presence of the three Democratic Presidents, Carter, Clinton and Obama (and the greeting from the invited Republican President George W. Bush who was recuperating from surgery) at the 2013 “celebration” served to promote the illusion that the Afro-American people have “arrived,” that they are no longer oppressed by the local, county, state and federal government apparatus.

On the contrary, as we pointed out in our leaflet, “Today, the economic and social conditions we face are the worst they have been since the March fifty years ago.” And the gap between the Black Bourgeoisie and the Black masses is arguably even greater than it was then. Thus, according to *Washington Post* columnist Courtland Milloy, even at the August 24<sup>th</sup> march, the most “militant” component of the days-long “celebrations,” many, including keynote speaker Al Sharpton, “spoke about civil rights activists who [in 1963] courageously confronted violent white supremacists. *But no speaker so much as suggested that today’s youths take a risk*—say, organizing residents of public-housing complexes to fight developers who want to evict them ...” (“50 years later, black leaders’ words lack their forebears’ fire,” 8-25-13, ROL emphasis)

Obama’s fiftieth anniversary speech called on the Afro-American people to keep marching. But his definition of “marching” was *in support of* the status quo. “The tireless teacher,” “the successful businessman,” “the mother loving her daughter,” all being good citizens. Instead of “keep marching,” Obama could just as easily have said “*stay in your place* and let the government keep on bailing out Wall Street, fomenting imperialist wars around the world, spying on all of us, etc.”

From the same place at the Lincoln Memorial fifty years apart, Martin Luther King and Barack Obama were going in two opposite directions. Today, Barack Obama is the chief representative of the powers that be. He used his masquerade as a “King follower,” to cover his ongoing attacks on the peoples of the world, including the Afro-American people, and his anticipated new war crimes against the people of Syria. Fifty years ago, Martin Luther King, Jr. was not a militant leader. But because the movement with which he was associated was *against* the powers that be, by the time the U.S. ruling class assassinated him less than five years later, he had become an implacable foe of the U.S. imperialist war in Vietnam. And he had recognized that his “dream” was constantly being turned into a nightmare reality.

As the title of our August 24, 2013 leaflet indicates, and a message which was otherwise noticeably absent from the fiftieth anniversary celebration:

*To Win Decent Jobs and Genuine Freedom We’ve Got to “Fight the Powers That Be!”*

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**Still stumped?! See answer below  
to front page mystery quotation.**

Answer: Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1967. During the last year of his life, Dr. King decisively opposed the U.S. government’s war in Vietnam. In response, he was ostracized and isolated by old allies and spied upon and ultimately assassinated by forces of the U.S. imperialist state. In fact, regarding what is now his only well known speech, Dr. King stated: “I talked in Washington in 1963 about my dream, and we stood there in those high moments with high hopes, and over and over again, I’ve seen this dream turn into a nightmare!”



# "Nothing to Lose But our Chains – A World to Win!"

Writings on the Struggle Between  
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of the U.S. Empire.

by Ray O. Light



Revolutionary Organization of Labor, USA

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**LET'S STRUGGLE FOR WORKERS POWER  
IN THE HEARTLAND OF THE U.S. EMPIRE!**

**TOWARD A SOVIET SOCIALIST USA!**

—Ray Light [Introduction, p. xxxi]

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*"The great appear great to us  
Only because we are on our knees:  
Let us rise."*

— Camille Desmoulins

**Revolutionary Organization of Labor (ROL), USA** is a revolutionary working class organization that fights for working class power and the elimination of all human exploitation. ***Ray O' Light Newsletter*** is the regular publication of ROL, USA. We believe, with comrade Lenin, that the working class "... needs the truth and there is nothing so harmful to its cause as plausible, respectable petty bourgeois lies." In the spirit of Karl Marx who taught that "our theory is not a dogma but a guide to action," we welcome your comments.

Comradely, *Ray Light*, Editor

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