

BRC: A Step Forward In Uniting The African American People's Struggle

The struggles of African American People against national, class and gender oppression are taking place within the context of a more pronounced international corporate strategy to increase profits.

Globalization as a corporate strategy of international capitalism, is driving the restructuring of labor and consumer markets worldwide. It is reshaping the formal political relationships between different countries to weaken and eliminate areas of national sovereignty over economic and social policies; it is establishing new national policies--emerging in particular areas like the South (and Southwest) around questions of voting rights and immigration, that dismantle areas of Black political power and deny access to vital services and resources; it is eliminating affirmative action as a regulatory policy aimed at addressing past and future patterns of institutionalize racism; it is lowering the wage levels and standard of living by forcing people to work for welfare subsistence; and vital needs such as health care, education and public services are being negatively effected due to downsizing and privatization of jobs.

The competition between workers of different races, nationalities and genders for jobs and access to services and resources, has intensified to a level of desperation. To take the focus off of government and the corporations as the real source of the crisis, African Americans, particularly women and youth, and other oppressed nationalities, are being scapegoated as the cause of the crisis.

A national framework (international in scope) for unifying African American people's organizations and struggles throughout the U.S., is critically important for hammering out a strategic program of struggle for African American self-determination, for the short and long term. Self-determination builds bases of power to challenge national oppression, and to fight for democracy throughout the process of radical transformation of society.

The question of fascism, which many fear only as a future development of U.S. and international capitalism, is unfolding in the form of government policies, recurring police violence and white supremacist attacks which target African Americans and other oppressed nationalities. By appealing to white supremacy, sexism and homophobia, the U.S. is disguising aspects of the unfolding U.S. fascism.

Issues of democracy, like affirmative action, voting rights, legal abortion and gay rights, are being characterized as "reversed" discrimination and socially "immoral" by the forces of white supremacy, sexism and the political right. These issues are the breeding grounds for the paramilitary shock troops of an evolving fascism. The modern day lynchings as highlighted by the vicious murder of a Black man in Jasper, Texas; the Black church burnings; the police assault on Leumme in New York; and the bombing of abortion clinics and murders of doctors performing legal abortions, are some examples.

Most of these issues are both political and emotionally charged in terms of their impact on the consciousness of Black People. The spontaneous response of the

Black masses does not always take into account tactics of organizing various mass aspects of Black power and influence, as well as tactical demands. The question of program and strategy must be developed as a conscious factor through processes that help to unite and politicize the African American People as a national liberation movement with many flanks expressing class, gender, workers, consumers, students, political prisoners, the electorate, etc.

The local struggles by African American workers and communities often lack connection to a common national focus, set of demands and national framework for deciding the political direction and coordination of the general mass struggles. As a result, they often become coopted and defused by elements seeking to cut selfish deals with corporate, government and bureaucratic labor officials, or who see African Americans as a market for their own accumulation of wealth and prestige. This contributes to the pessimism and apathy that is present within the African American national sentiment, as we search for answers on how to struggle as a united and powerful force.

Struggles against the attacks on African Americans and other struggles for democracy are not being sufficiently taken up by the trade unions and many other national organizations claiming to be in favor of human rights and democracy. This reflects both the low level of political and social consciousness of workers within the U.S., as well as the influence of conservative and racist perspectives within the working-class consciousness, especially among white workers.

The rebuilding of the national and revolutionary character of the African American People's movement, is crucial to fighting and linking the many local struggles, and to developing them into national struggles, both independently, and in their relationship to other struggles by workers, women and oppressed nationalities.

Impacting the larger struggle against the system of U.S. oppression must be a major aim of the strategy of the African American liberation movement. Pushing the trade unions forward around a broader agenda for democracy and political power for African Americans, women and other oppressed nationalities is crucial to challenging the corporate strategy to divide and conquer.

The African American liberation movement must position itself strategically to help lead the challenge against corporate globalization. This means, that in addition to fighting around the immediate survival struggles, it must concentrate on building bases of power and strategic alliances which directly impact capital's ability to move as it pleases throughout the world, and that discourages and stops U.S. military aggression.

Unity and independence must be the basic principle of the African American liberation movement's strategic perspective. Self-determination in deciding the direction of the African American liberation struggle and strategic unity with the many struggles and movements challenging the system of U.S. and international oppression.

A national congress is needed to give national and international expression to an

African American liberation movement. Arriving at a popular national consensus about the political direction of the African American masses is a fundamental aspect of the meaning of self-determination.

Various organizations and parties will have their views about what is best for the African American People around questions of reforms and revolution regarding the type of society needed to address our needs. These views will be promoted among the masses. However, the masses must have a national and democratic means to arrive at a consensus and mandate about our future as a people. It will not be small self-declared vanguards that will determine the political future of the African American masses absent a national framework--a national congress that broadly encompasses the major spheres of African American struggle.

The fragmented state of the African American liberation movement dictates the need for the Black Radical Congress (BRC). No particular ideological tendency has developed a mass base. There is not only fragmentation of the mass movement, there is ideological fragmentation within the various political perspectives that promote revolutionary alternatives to the existing system. The isolation of the revolutionary elements from the mass struggles is also one of the critical weaknesses of the African American liberation movement.

The unity that must be built through the BRC, must not be centered mainly around winning agreement among a few ideological groupings. Unity between various groupings must be forged through carrying out a program which unites, politicizes, radicalizes and mobilizes the masses in struggle.

The BRC as a process of building African American national unity, is at the beginning of a longer process of institutionalizing the African American liberation struggle. Developing a national program, prioritizing areas to build regional and national networks and organizations to unify particular struggles, developing a national focus and campaigns, and forming structures that continue and deepen the unity process at the regional and local levels, must be the main work of the BRC.

The new struggles and activists that participate in the BRC, must be able to integrate their local demands and experiences into national demands and a longer history of struggle as represented by the many forces that they will interact with throughout the BRC process.

The BRC statement of principles provides a framework for building unity. It is not perfect. However, it begins the process. The need for a common practice at the national level that unites aspects of the African American liberation struggle is a must. Let's do everything that we possibly can in a principled and forthright manner to begin this process of building mass African American national unity.

Black Workers For Justice 6/16/98