

BLACK WORKERS FOR JUSTICE

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Greetings Sisters and Brothers

Hope all is well considering hard times.

The Black Radical Congress to be held on June 19-21, 1998 in Chicago, Ill. is an important development to move African American people in the direction of resolving the fragmented state of our national movement against oppression and for liberation. The forging of a national program is essential to the process of rebuilding our national movement. This need cannot be over stated.

Black worker activists must be at the Black Radical Congress. The economic and social crisis ravishing the working-class, is taking its heaviest toll on African Americans, women and workers and communities of color. In addition, Black workers, employed and unemployed, and particularly Black women and youth, are being made the scapegoats. This means that the struggle for basic needs, must include a struggle against repression.

The Million Man and Women Marches, made clear the national sentiment of African American People. They want to fight back in a mass and powerful way. This sentiment must be forged into a radical national and class consciousness of struggle. This is necessary to push forward the struggles waged by the trade unions, community organizations and in the electoral arena against the particular attacks on Black people.

The Congress must help to arrive at a program and focus that places emphasis on fighting around issues and conditions impacting the majority, while building unity with struggles around issues affecting a minority of our people. This means bringing a class and national perspective to the deliberations at the Congress.

There is a need for a national Black worker's trend to constitute a conscious pole within the African American liberation movement and the worker's movement. The struggle against patriarchy must be a central feature of this trend. The Congress must be a place where Black workers take steps to unite into a national framework. We need to connect the various local organizations and struggles into national organizations and campaigns.

Over the past 12 years, the Black Workers For Justice (BWFJ) has tried to build a Black workers unity movement (BWUM) as an attempt to unite the struggles of Black workers and to give expression to the working-class character of the African American people's movement. Our outreach has been rather narrow; and our limited resources have prevented us from maintaining a level of communications and regular meetings, necessary to develop the breath and depth of a network of rank-and-file activists and struggles.

The BRC might offer a broader forum for outreach and establishing an organizing framework for a BWUM. There are some immediate questions and focuses that could be taken up by a BWUM that are crucial to the repositioning of the African American liberation movement--the building of Black caucuses within the trade unions and the Labor Party, developing a national press, organizing a national Black workers congress and forming a labor-community-women's-student alliance (labor-community alliance).

These areas of concentration will give definition to a Black worker's movement and allow them to impact both the worker's and African American People's movements. They will provide frameworks for organized discussion and the development of programs and strategies around those special questions of challenging national and women's oppression.

There are some key demands, slogans and struggles--a living wage, jobs--income--

and--housing, organize the unorganized, organize the South, rank-and-file union democracy, defend affirmative action, no to sexism, opposition to privatization and downsizing, a shorter work week, national health care, repeal Taft Hartley and right-to-work laws, defend Black majority districts, community control of vital services-utilities and international worker solidarity.

The BWFJ will be holding a meeting on Saturday evening June 20, to discuss the building of a BWUM as a concrete organizational form to unite Black workers in carrying out the program of the Congress.

We would like to come out of the meeting with a BWUM interim organizing committee. The interim organizing committee would draft a BWUM organizing program that reflects decisions coming out of the Congress and other points; coordinate a series of regional meetings to discuss the draft program; and develop working focus groups to involve people in summing up particular areas of work and to coordinate activities and struggles where possible. This could set the basis for the organizing of a national Black workers congress.

Please let me hear from you by June 15. I can be reached at the Rocky Mount phone number and address at the top of the letter. Another phone (919)977-2818, fax (919)446-1274.

For the BWFJ,


Saladin Muhammad