



New Unity Movement

The Worker is an official publication of the New Unity Movement

December 2020

We Fight Ideas with Ideas

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GLARING INCOME DISPARITIES AND RAMPANT CORRUPTION: ALL PART OF

Speaking at a financial summit in London in October last year, President Ramaphosa said that corruption has cost South Africa “as much as a R1 trillion” (that is, R1 000 000 000 000).

The current minimum wage in SA is R20.76 per hour, which works out to just under R40 000 a year. If the R1 trillion lost to corruption were available, and earning interest of 10 percent per annum, this would amount to R100 000 000 000 – which would be enough to fund jobs for

According to an article by Businessstech in February 2020, to be in the top 1 percent of income earners in SA, you would need to earn about R2 800 000 per year – the income of 70 workers on minimum wage.

But the really top earners – CEO’s of SA’s leading companies – took home an average of R5 400 000 in 2018. That would fund 135 jobs at the current minimum rate.

Here is a list of SA’s top ten earners, according to “The South African” in October 2020:

Rob Shuter, MTN: R58.23 million.

Shameel Joosub, Vodacom: R43.4 million.

Sipho Maseko, Telkom: R21.82 million.

Calvo Mawela, MultiChoice: R27.53 million.

Andre de Ruyter, Eskom: R8.62 million.

Sbu Shabalala, Adapt IT: R4.84 million.

Madoda Mwakwe, SABC: R3.92 million.

Mlamli Boo, Sentech: R3.44 million.

Daniel du Toit, Denel: R3.22 million.

Andrew Matseke, Broadband Infracore: R2.7 million

Some simple arithmetic would show that their combined annual income would be enough to fund the wages of 4 443 workers at minimum rates.

These figures should come as no surprise; this is what South Africa has been all about for the last 25+ years under a neoliberal regime. The scandalous depth of poverty suffered by so many millions of South Africans is preventable, but none of the parties committed to parliamentary democracy will bring about the necessary systemic changes. This is a task that must be undertaken by the masses themselves, organised under the banner of socialism.

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On the question of corruption, in August, the ANC's National Executive Council (NEC) which is the party's supreme leadership organ between national conventions, ruled that all ANC government and party officials accused of corruption must be *SUSPENDED FROM OFFICE* while the charges against them were being investigated. That was in August. A few months later, in December, the same ANC's Integrity Commission found that Secretary-General Ace Magashule has to "step aside with immediate effect" after being charged with corruption as demanded by the party's resolutions and its NEC anti-corruption August meeting. Addressing the media on 15 December, ANC spokesperson Pule Mabe announced that Magashule would be remaining in his position. What was the hurry, Mabe wanted to know.

"I don't know what is urgent before Christmas, it is on the 25th every year, so this report is not going to change the date of Christmas, so there's no crisis. Tomorrow is Reconciliation Day, the report doesn't change that, the 1st is New Year's Day, so the calendar is as we know it."

On the same day, news broke that former eThekweni mayor, Ms Zandile Gumede, had been reinstated by the ANC as a member of the KwaZulu-Natal legislature. Along with 17 others, Gumede is currently facing charges of fraud, corruption and racketeering linked to tenders amounting to R430 000 000. She had been asked to step aside in August, but was reinstated following a recommendation by the ANC's provincial *INTEGRITY* Committee(!)

There can be no doubt that corruption in South Africa is a systemic problem, and is a major part of the rot within the governing party itself. Expecting the ANC to solve our country's corruption problems is no



different than putting a wolf in charge of the sheep.

To strengthen the point: In September, the SA Revenue Service reported that 63 percent of companies awarded PPE tenders were NOT tax compliant, and that many of these tenders were awarded to people who were "politically connected."

A final point worth making: According to British newspaper, *The Guardian* in October, "The world's billionaires did extremely well during the coronavirus pandemic, growing their already-huge fortunes to a record high of \$10.2 trillion." (At an exchange rate of R15 to the dollar, this equates to R153 000 000 000 000.)

While we do not have comparative figures for SA's billionaires, we do know from a report in *Business-tech* in July 2019 that "diamond magnate Nicky Oppenheimer is the richest man in the country with a net worth of \$7.3 billion," and that "He is joined by familiar names – such as luxury goods boss Johann Rupert (\$5.5 billion), mining and minerals tycoon Patrice

Motsepe (\$2.4 billion), media mogul Koos Bekker (\$2.3 billion), and Capitec founder Michiel le Roux (\$1.2 billion)."

WE SHOULD BE DEMANDING A WEALTH TAX – NOW!!!

Inequality in SA is the highest in the world

Shacks that dot the cities & towns in SA.

Wealth tax is a tax levied on the value of held assets. A wealth tax is applicable to a variety of asset types including cash, bank deposits, shares, fixed assets, personal cars, assessed value of real property, pension plans, money funds, owner-occupied housing, and trusts.

ON BECOMING A “CLASS FOR ITSELF”

In a paper delivered in 2014, well-known socialist activist Marta Harnecker opened with the following bold statement:

These words are aimed at those who want to build a humanist and solidarity-based society. A society based on the complete participation of all people. A society focused on a model of sustainable development that satisfies people's genuine needs in a just manner, and not the artificial wants created by capitalism in its irrational drive to obtain more profits. A society that does all this while ensuring that humanity's

future is not put at risk. A society where the organized people are the ones who decide what and how to produce. A society we have referred to as *Twenty-First Century Socialism, Good Living or Life in Plenitude*. The question is how can we achieve this complete participation? How can we guarantee as much as possible that all citizens, and not just activists or leftists, take an interest in participation? How can we achieve the participation of middle class sectors alongside popular sectors? How can we ensure that solidaritarian interests prevail over selfish ones? How can we attend to the concerns of the poorest and most forgotten and repay the social debt inherited by previous governments?

When contemplating how we in South Africa can transition to a society *based on the complete participation of all people*, we are confronted with a multitude of key questions.

For starters, our form of parliamentary democracy does not advance government *of the people, by the people and for the people*. We have a multi-party system of proportional representation, not direct representation. Thus, all that the current system asks of us as society is every five years to go to the polls and elect which party will be our oppressor.

This will not change unless we change it.

Our immediate demands should include that communities be enabled to elect their own representatives/delegates/deputies/spokespersons, and that these representatives be recallable by us. As Harnecker puts it, our spokespersons are “the voice of the community, and when they cease to be so, because the community no longer feels that they are adequately transmitting the ideas and decisions of the community, these people can and should be recalled.”

Also, the remuneration levels of the persons representing us should be such that opportunists are not incentivized to see parliamentary service as a career opportunity.



Marta Harnecker 1937–2019

Fidel Castro 1926–2016

Harnecker sees a positive space for a people-centric government, and in her writings invokes the examples of Cuba, Venezuela and Kerala State in India; but importantly, these are not governments of elites who, as a class, stand apart from the masses. On the contrary, as she describes in Venezuela, an interlocking network of democratic peoples' organizations leads logically through a system of growing complexity from the local level, through to the national. In every case, the predominating feature is: **MASS GRASSROOTS DIRECT PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING.**

A feature of SA's current version of democracy is that there is a clear separation of the political and the economic. In our constitution, private property and the market are sacrosanct. So, parliament is reduced to being a toothless talk-shop, while real power lies in the hands of the owners of the wealth – the capitalists. Government cannot (will not?) take decisions that threaten or harm the interests of Big Capital. When the ANC says, as they do in the Freedom Charter, that: “The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole,” they are not serious. After more than a quarter-century of ANC rule, we are nowhere near such a scenario.

Real power is in the hands of the capitalists; the country is actually run by comparatively tiny groups of people – those coteries who sit on the boards of the leading companies in the country.

A people's democracy will abolish the split between politics and the economy, and prioritise the welfare of society as a whole. A peoples' democracy will not hesitate to redistribute the wealth of the country – through a transfer of land and other resources to the people, and through the implementation of a substantive wealth tax and other similar measures.

As an oppressed people, we cannot wait for "leadership from above." We have to take the initiative and ourselves put in place the united democratic grassroots structures necessary to overthrow the prevailing order, and install our own leadership. In this regard, the idea of a "class **for** itself" becomes important. When the working class in South Africa begins to see its struggle as an anti-capitalist struggle, we will be on the path to a qualitative change in the balance of class power.

It is well-known that South Africa is the "protest capital of the world." Some of the high points of struggle in recent times include the mineworkers' strike of Marikana in 2012, the #RhodesMustFall and the

#FeesMustFall protests of 2015 to 2017, and the numerous, ongoing service delivery protests. It would be true to say that these were struggles for specific demands *within* the existing system – none were aimed at the overthrow of the capitalist system.

When the working class becomes a class **for** itself, it means we have arrived at a level of class consciousness (on a mass scale) which transforms all our struggles into anti-capitalist struggles.

Clearly, the task of left-wing activists is to hasten the arrival of this day.



TEACHERS ARE OUR HEROES

By 9 December 821 889 people were infected with the coronavirus in South Africa. Added to that, there were 22 432 fatalities. No one could predict that it would have this detrimental effect on our families – and now the second wave appears more devastating than the first.

We all tend to forget the Spanish Flu of 1918/19 that affected 500 million people and killed more than 50 million people worldwide. The flu struck in four waves and lasted from February 1918 to about April 1920. More than a third of the world's population was infected. However, scientists now know more about viruses than they did 100 years ago. Currently, across the world, more than 65 million reported cases of the Coronavirus have been recorded, with approximately 1.4 million fatalities.

Social media is abuzz with complimentary remarks about the Health Professionals that soldiered on during the pandemic – accolades are flowing from government, from prominent South Africans and institutions about the work done by the health professionals, and **rightly so**. Nurses and doctors have done a tremendous job caring for their patients and trying to stave off the effects of the pandemic.

Today I would like to add my voice to those who have been lauding the work done during this period by the **teachers** of our country. First of all my sincere condolences to the families, friends and colleagues at schools, who lost loved ones during this period. These deaths have caused tremendous pain and suffering.

The Education Department wasn't really helpful in their on-off announcements during June/July. Mixed messages about deep cleaning schools in time for the reopening of the schools weren't really helpful. Teacher and learner absenteeism added to the problems of those that were at the schools. The uncertainty of whether examinations were going to be written was a cause for much concern. We even had the president posting vague messages, to be later contradicted by the Minister of Education.

In Cape Town, Wesley Neumann, principal of Heathfield High School wrote a letter to the president imploring the president to intervene in the closing of the schools, nationally. The SGB at Heathfield High decided that in the interest of their children and the teachers – in fact, the school community, that the school should not be reopened. Lo and behold, Wesley Neumann is charged with 13 counts of insubordination. He is now facing dismissal.

I seriously doubt if this would've happened in any other province.

Now, what about the teachers at schools in the townships? Many had to get up early, to do the duty of taking temperatures (where resources were available) of learners and colleagues and to ensure social distancing not only in their classrooms but also on the playing fields. Can you imagine how difficult this would be at a primary school in the townships when these very kids ignore such protocols at their respective homes? At many of these schools, teachers had to buy hand-sanitiser out of their own pockets to attempt to maintain Covid-19 health protocols.

With the death of colleagues and friends, teachers were subjected to anxiety attacks as well as the normal illnesses that during this period, smacked of Covid-19. Schools had lost between 30 and 59 days of schooling. How were they expected to complete the curriculum in that timespan?

Plans by the education department were vague. Teachers in disadvantaged areas and schools are victims of poor resources, inadequate facilities, overcrowded classrooms, which are in the main responsible for the low morale amongst teachers. All this is exacerbated by the inequality in society that impacts negatively on the schools of the poor. I have to ask the question, "*Why do*

the ANC and the other parliamentary political parties allow this to happen to our children?"

Our teachers are aware that the kids are heading towards a major educational disaster. However, they continue teaching.

They are our real heroes.

The teachers are lauded for the work they did during this period. Certainly, not only the content they imparted but also the work they put into ensuring social distances at school, ensuring that every child has a mask, ensuring that Covid-19 protocols are maintained. And, over and above that, trying to fit in as much academic work as possible.

According to Henry Adams, an American historian,

"A teacher affects eternity; No one can tell where his influence stops."

Education is a basic human right. We must fight to have a good education, and our actions must not fail. However, education is part of society and cannot develop independently. Surely, we have to eradicate poverty, joblessness and inequality if we are to improve our education system. Children cannot learn on an empty stomach. The Nutrition Programme is an attempt to counterbalance the hunger of children at schools. This has been introduced not because we have a caring government, but because the government has failed the citizenry of this country. Approximately half the adult population live below the upper-bound poverty line. Can these adults provide for their children? In the vast squatter camps that dot the South African landscape there are no libraries, very few, if any well-resourced schools, no safe places for children to relax or to play. There is no access to electricity, sanitation or refuse removal?

We come from a history of colonialism, segregation, culturalism, apartheid and now neoliberalism. No amount of skin-deep reforms will make a dent in the system of inequality, poverty, poor housing, non-existent sanitation and joblessness – the present system is geared to empowering the elite and divorcing the oppressed workers (and the unemployed) from the middle-class – only the complete overhaul of the whole profit-driven system can liberate us from oppression, injustice and inequality.

ADDENDUM

TIMSS RESULTS – 2019: A DAMNING INDICTMENT OF OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM!!

The “Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study” (TIMSS) of SA report for 2019 is an assessment of mathematics and science knowledge of the fourth (fifth) and eight (ninth) grade learners around the world. The Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa (HSRC SA) conducts the study in SA.

In the Grade 4/5 group, 64 countries participated in the 2019 TIMSS study. Again, SA is at the bottom of the barrel, (the bottom 5) along with Morocco, Kuwait, Pakistan and the Philippines. The report states that the South African achievement “*continues to be unequal and socially graded. Achievement gaps continue to be linked to socio-economic backgrounds, spatial location, attending fee-paying or no-fee schools, and the province of residence.*”

In the Grade 8/9 group, 46 countries participated in the 2019 TIMSS study. Results show that SA again performs below par – coming in with the five lowest-performing countries with Oman, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Morocco.

Learners in both groups performed poorly when required to write (constructed manner) a response. Better responses were elicited in sections of multiple-choice questions. The HSRC has recommended that a “Reading and Writing strategy” be adopted, especially in the Gr. 4/5 group.

The TIMSS report has confirmed the following:

1. South African education is lagging far behind the rest of the world.
2. The crisis in education in SA is of epidemic proportions.
3. That only incremental improvement in education can be expected.
4. That Early Childhood Development (ECD) schooling is important for learners. In the disadvantaged areas, many learners do not attend these classes or attend informal classes – playschool classes at private homes. This has become a “new” industry.
5. That the home environment affects the learning of children. That the children of the better-off parents tend to perform better – learning facilities at homes with digital equipment, books, newspapers, an educational envi-

ronment in contrast to children from homes in disadvantaged areas. The adage holds true “*Advantage begets advantage*”.

6. The majority of the learners tested did not have computers/laptops at their homes. This severely impacts on the learning ability of the learner.
7. The school climate plays a significant role in the education of the child. Improving the school climate depends as much as on what happens within the school, the feeder area of the learners and the community surrounding the school.
8. Those different socio-economic conditions bring about different outcomes – that socio-economic conditions impact the learning and thus the future of the learners.
9. Those abject socio-economic conditions of poverty, joblessness and inequality have to be addressed concomitantly with educational issues.
10. Learners at fee-paying schools tend to fare better than those at no-fee-paying schools. The fee-paying schools are better resourced; parents are in most cases well-off and have better facilities at home. The no-fee paying schools, situated mostly in the townships, are under-resourced and classes are overcrowded.

And so the rot continues. No doubt, when the 2020 matric results are published, the powers-that-be who are responsible for these outcomes at both national and provincial levels will blame it all on the coronavirus pandemic, but will hail whatever results show any kind of incremental improvement.

Our educational system is stunting if not outright destroying the lives of millions of our children, and therefore, the future of our country. The present rulers are concerned only with their own narrow self-interest, and in conducting a “holding operation.” Thus, they cannot be relied upon to take the revolutionary action needed to turn these results around.

DEMYSTIFYING NONRACIALISM

16 December initially known as the “Day of the Vow” or “Dingaans Day” has political, historical and social significance for South Africans. This day symbolises the divide caused by the Afrikaner victory over the Zulus led by Dingaan at the Battle of Blood River in 1838. 16 December has been re-named “Reconciliation Day”, ostensibly to foster what is termed “social cohesion”.

Minister of Sport, Arts & Culture, Nathi Mthethwa recently tweeted, *“Today we celebrate Reconciliation day 2020 which implores us to embrace the common ties that bind us, rather than to focus on that which seeks to divide us. Let’s join hands in building a future grounded on a better life for all, where we can all live together in harmony, under the heading, “Unite in Action against Racism, Gender-based and other intolerances”.*

Why is this necessary after more than twenty-six years of “democracy”? Let’s briefly look at the current situation.

- Toxic race relations exist all over the country as exhibited on the Cape Flats, Eldorado Park, Senekal and Brackenfell – also by the actions of the Sparrows, the Mombergs and the like.

Racism is systemic and racist attitude remains unchanged – domestic workers, as well as farmworkers, face racism daily.

Do we have radical nonracialism in SA as described by Professor Crain Soudien (Soudien is CEO of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in his book, *The Cape Radicals?*

Amongst those that propagated the idea of scientific nonracialism was Benjamin Magson Kies.

Ben Kies was born on 2 December 1917 in Woodstock, Cape Town. He graduated from UCT in 1941 with an MA and B.Ed degrees before starting his teaching career at Trafalgar High School. The intellectual school that Kies belonged to is credited with determining and advancing perhaps the most important idea in the area of sociology in the 20th century.

They were the progenitors in developing the principle of radical nonracialism.

Kies was a member of the radicalised *Teachers’ League of South Africa* (TLSA) and the Non European Unity

Movement (NEUM). His wife, Helen (nee Abrahams) was equally an intellectual giant and together they made a formidable duo. Helen following up as editor to Ben of the now celebrated *Educational Journal*.

Kies was summarily dismissed from teaching in 1956 for his political views and in 1959, banned under the *Suppression of the Communism Act* of 1950. After being dismissed from teaching, he became an advocate and was admitted to the Cape Bar in 1961.

Contemporary thought, embraced by liberals and nationalists alike posited the view of multi-racialism. Multi-racialism is a belief that humanity is divided into different races; these races are biologically and physiologically alike, and therefore equal.

In contradistinction, Kies and colleagues found absolutely no justification for validating the idea of race.

Let us present some facts about radical nonracialism.

The now celebrated dictum of *“A people desiring to emancipate itself must understand the process of its enslavement”*, is as profound today as it was when first cited by WP van Schoor in 1951.

The principal aim of the 1994 ‘political overturn’ in South Africa was “dismantling apartheid”. Despite many apartheid laws having been repealed, racial issues continue to blight the social and political landscape in SA and far from abating, such conflicts are escalating.

Why is the racial question so long-lasting and utterly damaging in the socio-cultural relations of people in this country even when racialism would appear to have lost its *“raison d’être”*? In the booklet *“The Colour Bar in Education”* (1956), Edgar Maurice notes that the historical dividing line between people in society tended to run along the line of religion right up to the Middle Ages.

Up to that time, European languages did not even have a word for “race”. The arrival of the word in human language came together with the arrival of the capitalist system, firstly, in the Italian city-states of Venice, Florence and others.

Out of the Ancient world, political systems broadly evolved from the Kingdoms, slavery and bartering, to feudalism, thereafter mercantilism (early capitalism) and later to capitalism. To sustain this system, the destructive, divisive and discriminatory system of racism was propagated.

This is why race was created: the propagation of the capitalist system and the splitting of the working class.

According to the World Bank, South Africa is the most unequal country in the world. The difference between the wealthy and the poor has seen a steady increase since 1994. This in South Africa is closely linked to divisions of colour discrimination. South Africans come from a history of slavery, colonialism, culturalism, tribalism, apartheid and racial capitalism. After 1994, economic disparities have continued to grow despite the government’s policies of *Black Economic Empowerment*, whose sole purpose is the cultivation of a broad elite Middle Class.

Spatial apartheid has been maintained. In Johannesburg, the vast townships (more than 25 townships) have been locked up into South Western Townships (Soweto). Coughing, asthma, sinusitis and tuberculosis are some of the health issues found to be prevalent by a survey conducted by the Bench Marks Foundation in Soweto. The research found that the residents blame mine dumps for these problems. All the communities live near tailings on the mine dumps.

In Cape Town, forced removals by the Group Areas Act of 1950, dumped thousands of residents into the dormitory townships on the Cape Flats. Socio-economic conditions made this an area of high prevalence for diseases, such as tuberculosis and meningitis and violence in every form. In every city, town and dorp these shantytowns are on the outskirts of the city limits.

Should the removal of these townships not have been prioritised as a primary task of the anti-apartheid movement?

Racialism that is driven by the needs of a rapacious capitalist system soon became the political twin of that system. These evil twins have lived together in society for centuries. The ANC government officials and apologists have never considered demolishing the socio-economic fabric in SA.

Racialism in SA has become an aspect of both globalisation and neo-liberalism. The ‘democratic overturn’ in South Africa finds itself caught in the clutches of a racist phenomenon, thanks to the unconditional surrender to capitalism at Kempton Park. Only the eradication of capitalism can bring about a nonracial society.

A critical task of the left is thus the building of class-consciousness among the mass of working people so that collectively we can transcend the narrow perspectives of race, and decisively shift the balance of power in favour of the working class. This is the struggle to which Ben and Helen Kies dedicated their lives.

The Worker was produced by the Publications Collective of the New Unity Movement.

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