

New Unity Movement



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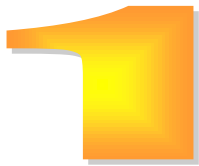
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Address all Correspondence to the Secretariat: New Unity Movement PO Box 27561 Greenacres 6057

E-Mail: michaeltitus@vodamail.com / mikesteenveld2020@gmail.com

083 225 6329 / 071 645 1590



THOUGHTS ON THE SOWETO UPRISING OF 1976

An Opportunity Stolen



The current median age of the South African population is estimated at 27.6 years, which means that at least half the people of this country were born some fifteen-to-sixteen years after June 1976 – that is, almost 30 million South Africans did not experience the Soweto uprising first-hand.

Forty-four years later, does June 16th 1976 still hold any relevance? Few would disagree that it was the beginning of the end of apartheid rule in South Africa, and that 1994 could be

regarded as the culmination of events springing directly from it. But how many would see 1976 as the start of a revolutionary process that was actually arrested by 1994—that 1994 was actually a betrayal of 1976?

The version of reality promoted by those in power is that “South Africa is a much better place than it was when the students stood up and said enough is enough” (to quote from then-president Jacob Zuma’s address in 2016).

But, just as the ruling class pays lip-service to June ’76, so it pays lip-service to other key dates, such as Africa Day. As Abahlali baseMjondolo so eloquently observes:

In South Africa the same politicians that encourage and enforce xenophobia from above are saying how much they love Africa. But what does it mean to say that you love Africa when you are sending the police to round up people from Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique, beat them, steal from them, and then take them to rot in Lindela before they are deported? What does it mean to say that you love Africa when you always put the profit of multi-national companies before people?¹

Here, in a nutshell is the real meaning of 1994. To quote from Abahlali again:

¹ Press statement on 25 May 2020 entitled, “Celebrating Being African Means Opposing Xenophobia.”

Our government represents the interests of an elite. Since 1994 they have consistently sold out the interests of impoverished and working-class people to advance their own interests by making their own deals with capital and looting the state. In this crisis the situation of impoverished and working-class people is getting worse by the day. Many middle-class people will soon taste the bitterness of poverty too. Things will get much more difficult in the next few weeks and months.²

Thus, there is a need to decouple 1976 from 1994 in the popular mind. As a nation, we need to understand that things could have been much better. In addition to the liberal freedoms (such as freedom of speech) ushered in in 1994, we could also have had social freedoms, such as the right not to be exploited and underpaid. Over the quarter-century since 1994, we could have built a socialist society – a people's democracy. In such case, freedom of speech would be accompanied by a full belly.

1994 was an opportunity stolen from us by the collaborators who got into bed with their capitalist masters to craft a future to serve, above all, the capitalist elite. It is an opportunity that we must regain. Only then will the sacrifices of the "class of '76" be vindicated.

Background to the Soweto Uprising

While the actual moment of the uprising on June 16, 1976 might have had the appearance of being spontaneous, there are a number of important conjunctures which triggered that moment. These are neatly summarised in an article by the International Communist Union:³

While the events in Soweto in 1976 may have taken everyone by surprise, they did not take place in a vacuum. By 1973 the black working class had emerged to the forefront of the struggle when it staged huge strikes in the Durban area. By the mid-1970s, many students in the black high schools and black universities in the homelands were being radicalised as a result of the wars of independence in Angola and Mozambique. And while South Africa may have been isolated from world events, nevertheless the Black Power movement in the USA helped to feed a growing black nationalism amongst the youth. They joined organisations such as the Black Peoples' Congress, and Black Consciousness Movement, which like the American Black Civil Rights Movement, operated very much within the religious framework of Christianity. And it was under the influence of these ideas, that they set up their student organisations like SASM and SASO.

² **Press statement on 26 May 2020 entitled, "Organise or starve."**

³ International Communist Union #68: *South Africa - 30 years after the Soweto uprising*, dated July/August 2006. Source: website <https://www.union-communiste.org/en/print/node/2043> [accessed on 30 May 2020].

In the short period from 1961 to 1974, the number of black workers in SA's manufacturing industry doubled. But living standards for oppressed South Africans remained as depressed as ever under the harshness of apartheid rule, and places like Soweto were "virtual concentration camps"

"The inmates are let out in the early mornings to work in factories, services and as servants for white employers. They get up at 5.30am to leave by 6am... They return at 7pm or 8pm. 80% have no electric lights, running water or water-borne lavatories.

"There is no street lighting, unpaved roads become mud tracks. Row upon row of virtual boxes, without internal doors and with corrugated iron roofs, virtually no amenities, except beer halls to drown out their miseries...

"A million Africans are packed into Soweto. Half the population is unemployed and therefore without permits to stay, at the mercy of any police raid."⁴



in all schools under the control of the department of Bantu Education was the straw that broke the camel's back.

This gives some idea of the social reality of the day for residents not only of Soweto, but of all those oppressed under apartheid laws. Moreover, students were well aware that government's stated education policy amounted to gutter education for the oppressed youth. The decree by government that Afrikaans—"the language of the oppressor!"—would become the enforced medium of education

Turbulent Days Unleashed

On 16 June 1976, when some 15 000 students conducted a protest march to Orlando Stadium, they were intercepted by fully armed police who opened fire on them, the first victim being thirteen-year old martyr, Hector Petersen.⁵ The police action ignited the fury of the young marchers. By midday rioting had broken out across Soweto. Cars were stoned

⁴ The Socialist: *Soweto uprising 1976—The Powder Keg Ignites*, article dated 22 June 2006. Available at website <http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/issue/445/5293/22-06-2006/> [accessed on 31 May 2020]

⁵ From Archie Mafeje's article, *Soweto and Its Aftermath*, in *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 11 (Jan. - Apr., 1978), pp. 17-30, Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd. St URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3997962> [accessed 30 May 2020].

and barricades erected. Arson attacks took place on administration buildings, schools and beer halls. "Two Whites were attacked and killed: one was Dr Melville Edelstein, a liberal who had just published a report warning of impending unrest in Soweto."⁶ Workers returning home to Soweto that evening found the township in flames, and the police in belligerent mood.

In subsequent confrontations with the police not only in Soweto but also in the East Rand and the Cape Peninsula, it became common practice for the police to shoot student demonstrators at will. Indeed, in the inquiry by the Cillie Commission, the police admitted to having used 50 000 rounds of ammunition against student demonstrators in Soweto, East Rand and the Cape Peninsula, and to having killed a total of 284 and injured about 2 000. The press, including pro-government Afrikaans newspapers, thought that this was a gross underestimation, and that probably the actual figure was thrice as high. While casualties among the police were nil, it is obvious that the police suffered a tremendous shock at the hands of the students who would not be cowed by the usual show of force.⁷

In a 1979 article, Rwekaza Mukandala gives a detailed accounting:

The things destroyed in the country included more than 100 buildings belonging to the Boards of Bantu administration, 250 bottle-stores and beerhalls, 170 shops, 25 clinics, 8 banks, a dozen libraries, and a score of post offices, hotels, cinemas, clinics, churches, community halls, magistrate's courts, petrol filling stations; several hundred police vehicles, as well as about a third of the Public Utility Transport Corporation's fleet of 926 vehicles. More to this, millions of rand were lost through the workers' strikes and mass boycott of white shops.⁸

Clearly, what might have started off as a protest against Afrikaans as a medium of instruction had rapidly escalated to an attack on the whole system of oppression. And, as Mafeje observed in his 1978 article, the students sooner or later had to realise that their cause was in danger without the direct support of the working class.⁹

Workers Enter the Fray

While the Apartheid Establishment was taken by surprise, so were the exiled nationalist organisations (ANC, SACP and PAC)—what the Soweto students referred to as the "expatriate movements." Their role was minimal, and in fact, opportunistic. For example, at the same time that the Soweto Students' Representative Council (SSRC) called on workers

⁶ From article *Remembering and learning from the past: The 1976 uprising and the African working class* in "Zabalaza: a journal of Southern African Revolutionary Anarchism" #7 (December 2006).

⁷ From Archie Mafeje's article, *Soweto and Its Aftermath*, in *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 11 (Jan. - Apr., 1978), pp. 17-30, Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3997962> [accessed 30 May 2020]

⁸ Rwekaza S. Mukandala, *Students and Revolution in South Africa*, 1979, available at the website <http://repository.udsm.ac.tz:8080/xmlui/handle/20.500.11810/4136> [accessed 3 June 2020]

⁹ Mafeje, op cit.

to embark on strike action, pamphlets in the name of the ANC appeared in Soweto, calling for a three-day strike.¹⁰

Commenting on the Soweto general strike of 23-25 August 1976, Mafeje says it

. . . was an unqualified success, despite massive police patrols and intimidation of student picketers with gunfire and anti-strike leaflets. Johannesburg reported an average absentee-rate of about 80 per cent. In some cases, absentee-rates of 90-98 per cent were recorded. Bus services to the townships were suspended and trains were cancelled because nobody was using them. It was noted that the highest rate of absentees was among the manual workers. Employers panicked and called upon the government to do something about the situation. Apart from their individual losses, inflow of foreign capital had virtually ceased, the price of gold had plunged from the expected average of US\$200 per ounce to US\$106 per ounce, foreign reserves had fallen by more than 25 per cent in the four months ending in June and the balance of payments had worsened.¹¹

SA in the 1980s

The 1980s saw apartheid on the back foot. The economy entered a recession, inflation was as high as 10%, the citizenry (including the privileged “Whites”) were becoming poorer, “white” emigration was at record highs, and the cost of implementing the National party’s apartheid policies was proving prohibitive.¹²

The Soweto uprising had brought about what Thompson refers to as a “protest culture” in South Africa. He comments: “Students and workers, children and adults, men and women, the educated and the uneducated became involved in efforts to liberate the country from apartheid.” (page 278).

The emergence of COSATU in 1985 was decisive.

Perhaps the most significant event of 1985 was the launch of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which grew mainly out of FOSATU. COSATU was by far the largest and most powerful union movement in the history of the country. It immediately stamped its authority on the liberation struggle by simultaneously tackling key workplace issues and challenging the state. It called massive general strikes over the following few years, involving millions of workers. By the mid-1980s it had become apparent that the end of apartheid was in sight.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² For a detailed description see especially chapter 7 of Leonard Thompson’s “A History of South Africa, (3rd ed), 2001, Yale University Press, New Haven.

¹³ From Workers’ World Media Productions: *A History of Trade Unionism in South Africa*. 2018.

In what came to be known as “social movement unionism,” worker organizations like COSATU and NACTU were in the forefront of the anti-apartheid struggles, joining with students and communities in vigorously opposing the iniquitous system. The period from the mid-1980s onwards saw increasingly effective mass action, including a two-day worker stayaway to protest the whites-only elections in May, 1987, and numerous rent, consumer and classroom boycotts.

Foreshadowing the emergence of the Tripartite Alliance in the post-apartheid era, COSATU adopted the Freedom Charter in 1987. This was to change the trajectory of struggle in favour of the middle class. Within a few years, COSATU joined the ANC and the SACP to form the Tripartite Alliance, which by 1994 was firmly in control of the reins of power in South Africa. The wave of revolutionary change which had been given such a mighty thrust-forward by the students of Soweto in 1976 had effectively been arrested. Instead of permanent revolution, the struggle had been diverted along the path of collaboration, and ultimately, neoliberalism.

1994: The Big Sellout

Writing in April 1994, Phyllis Ntantala asked the question: “Did the ANC betray South Africa?” Her answer was a resounding, “NO!” But she explains:

There is a revolutionary dictum, which states: “No class ever betrays its own interests.” What we have is a classical deal: the Afrikaner bourgeoisie ditching the white working class, and the ANC dropping all pretense of ever having represented the Black working class and peasantry. That the ANC used the black working class and peasantry to achieve its aim is undeniable. But, that is not unusual. The French bourgeoisie used the peasantry to gain power in 1789. To quote a modern source, Lenin observed: “The bourgeoisie of the oppressed thinks it nothing to make deals with the oppressor behind the backs of the working class, while at the same time articulating the demands of the working class.”¹⁴

Life under ANC-rule

The twenty-six years of ANC rule have been disastrous for the poor and marginalised of South Africa. With a Gini coefficient of 0.63 in 2015, South Africa rates as one of the most unequal societies in the world. Income inequality in South Africa has deepened. According to the latest figures from the World Inequality Database, the top 1% of South African earners take home almost 20% of all income in the country, while the top 10% take home

¹⁴ See Phyllis Ntantala’s classic article written on the eve of the 1994 parliamentary elections in April 1994, available at the website <https://blackopinion.co.za/2019/03/02/1994-south-african-elections-perspective-phyllis-ntantala-jordan/> [accessed 8 June 2020]

65%. The remaining 90% of South African earners get only 35% of total income.¹⁵ In any economy where access to just about every need has to be via the market, income is ultra-essential. With unemployment at an all-time high even before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, it's little wonder that the vast majority of SA's citizens exist on the brink.

The education system is characterised by crumbling infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms and relatively poor educational outcomes, perpetuating inequality and as a result failing too many of its children, with the poor hardest hit.¹⁶

Clearly, another Soweto '76 is overdue.

Regaining the Initiative

In the last five years, there has been significant student mobilisation under the "Fallist" banner – Rhodes Must Fall and #FeesMustFall. Unrest continues to simmer at a number of universities, and could be reignited in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic and the "Black Lives Matter" movement currently sweeping many parts of the world. Part of this context includes the waves of unrest in France, Hong Kong and other places.

Do we have a revolutionary situation emerging? At this stage, "possibly" is perhaps the only realistic answer one can venture. What is more certain is that present-day struggles need to be underpinned by a drive towards socialism, otherwise we will end up with a reformed (neoliberal) capitalism. In other words, victory will result in short-term gains (such as the ousting from the presidency of Jacob Zuma) with little long-term benefits for the masses. As Adolph Reed succinctly reminds us, unless our politics are a class politics, they will be a politics of the left wing of neoliberalism.¹⁷

Now, more than ever, we need the youth to organise for revolution – that is, socialist revolution. And as the youth have done here and the world over throughout the course of history, they need to unite the workers and the community organisations in struggle. Is this too much to expect of the youth? Not if we draw our inspiration from the "class of '76."

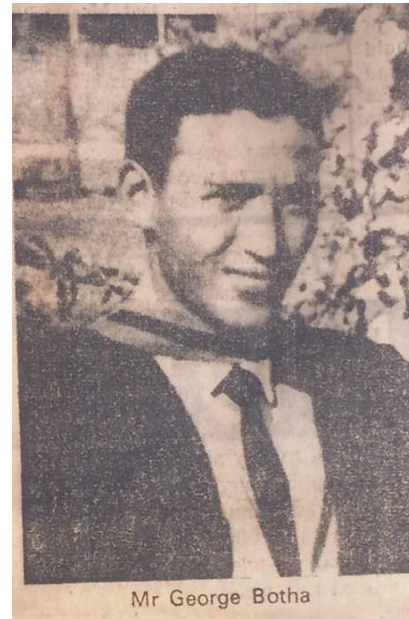
¹⁵ Article by Dennis Webster entitled, *Why South Africa is the world's most unequal society*, Mail & Guardian, 19 November 2019.

¹⁶ Amnesty International, *South Africa: Broken and unequal education perpetuating poverty and inequality*, 11 February 2020. See website <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/02/south-africa-broken-and-unequal-education-perpetuating-poverty-and-inequality/> [accessed 8 June 2020]

¹⁷ See Adolph Reed's article *Identity Politics is Neoliberalism*, June 2015, available at the website <https://bennorton.com/adolph-reed-identity-politics-is-neoliberalism/> [accessed 8 June 2020].

COMMEMORATING JUNE 16th, 1976 – In Memory of George Botha

George Botha was a teacher at Paterson High School who was the first person to die in detention after the events of June 1976. George Botha was a member of the Non European Unity Movement, having been trained by amongst others, Neville Alexander and Frank van der Horst whilst at the University of the Western Cape.



George Botha from a painting by Garth Erasmus one of his students at Paterson High School and George Botha on graduation day at UWC.

Forty-four years ago, thousands of schoolchildren in Soweto marched peacefully in protest against the forced use of Afrikaans as a compulsory medium of instruction in schools. The march was violently attacked by the apartheid police using teargas and live ammunition. This unleashed mass anger and a nationwide rebellion against the apartheid regime that ultimately played a huge role in its downfall.

Following almost two decades of sustained mass action, apartheid finally crumbled and gave way to the new parliamentary dispensation that was inaugurated in 1994.

Was 1976 the start of a revolution? Some would say "yes," and point to the fact that apartheid-based legislation has largely been expunged from our statute books. Others, like the late Dr Neville Alexander, would disagree on the basis that (to quote his words): "*If anything, the post-apartheid state is more capitalist than its apartheid parent.*" There has been no change in the economic relations which govern society (except perhaps that the rich have grown richer, and the poor, poorer) or in the way the state is managed. In short, if June 1976 triggered a revolution as government spokesperson oft say, then that

revolution was interrupted or way-laid by an element whose purpose was not fundamental social change, but simply regime-change.

For most South Africans, the country has been “liberated” from an apartheid nightmare to a neo-liberal hell-on-earth. Today, we are one of the most unequal societies in the world. Our reality is characterised by mass poverty and unemployment, lack of decent housing and service delivery, high levels of crime and corruption, failed healthcare and other social injustices. Racial discrimination has never disappeared, and in fact, is stronger than ever before. Moreover, we have a form of democracy that ensures that power remains securely in the hands of an elite band of business people and their surrogates.

June 16th is celebrated as Youth Day, but what do the youth have to celebrate? It is estimated that half the children who start out in school never make it to matric. Despite the heroic contributions to the struggle for liberation made by the youth, education standards remain debased and this is reflected in the permanent crisis in the township schools. Youth unemployment is estimated (using the expanded definition) at 67.4%. It is estimated that the HIV infection rate among teenagers has doubled, with young girls particularly at risk. Throughout the country, there is a lack of cultural and sporting amenities and opportunities, leading to further impoverishment of the lives of working-class youth.

What is to be done?



Is the answer to vote for this or that political party? Should we petition the government to spend more on poverty-relief programmes? What about taking to the streets in our masses? Alternatively, should we engage in a campaign of targeted boycotts?

There is no simple answer. The challenge facing young people who are seriously concerned about rescuing their future is to immediately and urgently engage with the issues that are dominating their lives and that is condemning the youth to a future of bleakness, poverty and want.

It has been observed, *"Practice without theory is blind. Theory without practice is sterile. Theory becomes a material force as soon as it is absorbed by the masses."* Perhaps herein lies a guideline to the youth. Let's not blindly race into action without a proper understanding of the conditions that face us. Similarly, let's not lose ourselves in theorising about our problems without acting to change society. Theory and practice, then, are two sides of the same coin.

Questions that should be engaging our youth today include:

- With a population in excess of 55 million, the country ranks as one of the most unequal in the world.
- The overall unemployment rate is 29.1%, with the unemployment rate for youth between the ages of 15 – 24 averaging at 52,4%
- Why do we have the 4th highest murder rate in the world?
- Why do we have one of the worst education systems in the world? Of the learners who have attended school for 4 years, 27% cannot read with any form of understanding.
- How do we contribute to the building of a united nation?
- If 1994 signalled the end of racial discrimination, why is society still so obsessed with “race?”
- Should our discourse not shift to one of class relations in society? Should we not be pondering on how to build working-class consciousness and power?
- What is “true” democracy? Is it *not* “government of the people, by the people, for the people?” If so, then it is as clear as daylight that we are not living in a democracy. How do we change this around?

On a day-to-day basis, young people could do many practical things.

For one, young people need to read, and read avidly – the classics such as *The Wretched of the Earth*, *Animal Farm*, the list is endless. In the apartheid era, young people read as a way of resisting the system, as a defence against the enslavement of their minds. It should be no different now. What is needed above all is independent critical thinking.

The youth is urged to continue to play their historic role as part of the cutting edge of change in our country. Young people should take and create opportunities to organise – at our schools, in our communities. SRCs, PTSAs, Civics, Sports Clubs, Religious Organisations. We need to instil a culture of democracy, one that respects and enlists the wishes of all. It is ultimately based on mass, nationwide peoples-democracy that we will succeed in taking back the bright future promised by the sacrifices of our forebears in 1976.

Are we on the cusp of a new, more egalitarian and democratic post-pandemic society. Can our youth transform society so that we attain substantive, fundamental change? The cry is that we cannot go back to the status quo, the old “normal”.

If we don’t study our past and learn from it, we will not understand the present nor will be able to plan for the future.

The brutal murders of Collins Khosa in South Africa and George Floyd in the USA have unleashed world-wide condemnation not only of racism, but also of police brutality and capitalism. The mainstream media and especially social media have been totally dominated by expressions of outrage from across the social spectrum.

Whether or not this will gather momentum and result in tangible reforms remains to be seen. All three scourges – racism, police brutality and capitalism – have deep historical roots, and it will take a lot more than public outrage to reverse let alone overturn any or all of them.

Something positive arising from the current furore, is that the spotlight is suddenly on the police – what they should stand for versus what they actually stand for, and in fact, whether we even need them.

Interestingly, from the very get-go, the whole notion of a full-time professionalized police force arose from the need for the owning class to control their workers. In the late eighteenth-century merchants in London banded together to fund a standing police force—authorized to use



banded together to fund a standing police force—authorized to use violence to achieve compliance. Its major purpose was to protect private property and secure the docility of the workforce.

The British model was imported by the American capitalists. Lizzie O'Shea writes: The elite of America faced similar problems as a settler-colonial state reliant on slavery. American capitalism needed organized civil institutions capable of clearing the land of its original inhabitants to then be tilled by slaves. Newly formed police forces proved crucial in the execution of the task. The scholar Alex Vitale summarizes it neatly: "The origins and functions of the police are intimately tied to the management of inequalities of race and class." (Kindle locations 723 – 735)¹⁸

Little has changed in the underlying philosophy of policing over the centuries. Today, if anything, the police have become even more desperate and brutal in the way they employ their training and weaponry.

In the introduction to their book *Who do you serve, who do you protect?* Maya Schenwar and her co-authors talk of "white supremacy based policing," which is located within a long

¹⁸ Lizzie O'Shea, (2019) *Future Histories*, Verso Books (London)

tradition of institutionalized torture, a practice embedded in the slavery, imperialism and colonialism on which the US was constructed.” (Kindle location 214)¹⁹

We in South Africa are all too familiar with this brand of law enforcement. It is plain for all to see that our police force is there to serve their capitalist masters, not to protect us. Marikana* and Collins Khosa are but two out of numberless atrocities.

A modern and more sinister weapon has been added to the armoury of the capitalist state’s policing capability: that of digital technology. “Surveillance capitalism” is all about governments and high tech firms like Amazon.com, Google and Facebook collaborating to assemble vast databases to serve their need for surveilling the (global) population in the interests of capitalism’s security. Thus, to quote O’Shea again:

The state obtains access to our personal spaces because technology capitalism has already beaten a path through our privacy defences. Every web platform we participate in, every detail shared on social media, every item we are sold online generates data that can be accessed by the state whether through legal processes or less formal ones.” (Kindle location 768)²⁰

Society needs to reconceptualise the role of policing. As Rachel Herzing remarks, the police are there for the armed protection of state interests.

If one sees policing for what it is—a set of practices sanctioned by the state to enforce law and maintain social control and cultural hegemony through the use of force—one may more easily recognize that perhaps the goal should not be to improve how policing functions but to reduce its role in our lives.²¹

Focusing on policing on its own would at best result in (progressive?) reforms. As was already observed, there are close linkages between racism, police brutality and capitalism, so a more holistic approach would be needed.



There is a growing awareness that we need a movement “from below” to initiate fundamental changes in society to root out all forms of injustice and inequality—including those related to policing. The discussion in South Africa on the role of policing in society has so far largely been restricted to the realm of their effectiveness or otherwise in preventing crime, based on the unquestioned assumption that we need a strong, effective police force.

¹⁹ From Maya Schenwar et al: (2016), *Who do you serve, who do you protect?* Haymarket Books, Chicago.

²⁰ Op cit.

²¹ Op cit.

We have to expand the discussion to include the question of whether we actually do need a police force at all, and if so, whose interests it should serve.

*** FOOTNOTE:**

The Marikana Massacre is still fresh in the minds of people. On 16 August 2012, 34 striking Lonmin miners were massacred. It all started as a strike by the Lonmin miners related to wage increase demands. When their demand was not heeded, these employees resorted to legitimate strike action. The police were deployed resulting in the slaughter of the striking workers. In the investigation into the matter, the findings were that the police actually acted in self-defence. However, there was clear evidence, through television footage, that the workers were shot execution style as they raised their hands to surrender as they fled.



Workers meeting to plan the way forward

4

WHY DO PEOPLE HATE?

With the rise of “Black Lives Matter” in the US and globally, we are in part, resurrecting the Civil Rights Movement of the sixties. It is not possible but to paint in very broad strokes herein the origins of segregation. Nonetheless, the recent deaths of George Floyd and Collins Khosa and the resultant widespread unrest have necessitated such attempt.

These egregious acts of inhumanity have propelled racism and police brutality to the foreground. Whilst protest over the Floyd murder elicited international and countrywide protests, it seems in South Africa people are ready to move on as they did after the murders of Andries Tatane, Mido Macia and the Marikana massacre.

Racism elicits hatred!

Why do people hate? They hate because most are ignorant. Many teachers attempt to lead people out of this ignorance, difficult though it may be. The arrogance and ignorance of thinking you are better or worse than someone else because of the pigmentation of your skin, having curly hair or a wide nose, have nothing to do with intelligence or the worth of a person. In principals’ meetings one would often just palpably sense the haughtiness of the former ex-Model C principals, and the seemingly acquiescent silence from the rest of the floor.

Many, especially in South Africa (all over the world?), believe that there is more than one race. Science has proved without any doubt that there is only one race, that is the human race – and we are all part of that race. No gene exists for classifying a person as a bigot, or of a particular race. Kids at the crèches all play together without ‘race’ coming into the equation. You learn to become a bigot or a racist; therefore, you can unlearn these fallacies.

It has been suggested that laws be promulgated to abolish racism in society. Will this be an antidote to the scourge of racism? Absolutely not! In fact, people all over the world have to be educated; moreover, they need to be educated on the concept of non-racialism, its origin and why it has not been eliminated.

In the US, a campaign has been launched, (much like the #Rhodes-Must-Fall in SA) in the aftermath of the Floyd murder, called “*Black Lives Matter*” to, amongst other things, bring down statues that celebrate the leadership of the former Confederate States in the US. In SA, the idea is to remove all symbols of South Africa’s colonial and apartheid past. All these types of symbols are offensive to both the Americans in the south, the oppressed in South Africa as much as it is in Antwerp and London. Let us be honest, the upkeep of such symbols is derived from the public purse to which we all contribute in one way or another. At times, it is very easy for the middle-class to say of the poor, “*they don’t contribute to*

the tax burden". However, secondary taxes such as VAT, fuel levies and other hidden taxes, such as school fees, transport etc., have to be paid by the poor.

In Germany, no statue of Hitler exists. Did the Germans ever forget (or will they ever) about Hitler? Is it then prudent to say that we will never forget our colonial or apartheid past if we remove these statues?

No discrimination, based on 'colour' can be found in history, even going back to the era before the birth of Christ. Discrimination was based on slavery and "free" persons or citizens. Any identification of slavery with 'colour' before the 16th century is deliberately misleading.

In 1991, after the break-up of the Yugoslav government, the notion of a Slav population led by Slobodan Milosevic was used to foment a racial cleavage between Bosnian Slavs, Croats and other minority groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This led to the persecution of minorities by the Slavic population under Slobodan Milosevic, which ended in the annihilation, by ethnic cleansing, of over a 100 000 people ".

In Rwanda, a policy of divide and rule was used by the Belgian rulers for installing Kigali. The system of proxy-rule followed with a deliberate policy of splitting the Rwandan population into Tutsi and Hutu tribal entities. The result was a civil war in Rwanda following upon the destruction of the monarchy. It was the failure of building peace out of the civil war that ultimately led to the 100 days of genocide in Rwanda in 1994. During this time between 500 000 - 1 million Tutsis together with a minority of Hutus were exterminated.

The seeds of racialism and the policy of divide and rule, especially on the African continent, resulted in Africa becoming the looting ground of the colonialists.

The events following the systematic extermination of political dissidents and the Rwandan genocide have been the seeds of racialism that have germinated and sprouted into the bedrock of looting, known as imperialism.

In South Africa, in more than 350 years, a political activity that has led to the starvation of thousands, if not millions, of deaths has been exacerbated by the upsurge of deaths in the mining industry. Apart from the brazen wars of conquests and dispossession, they engineered the Nonqhawuse cattle-killing of 1857, the massacres at Bulhoek, Sharpeville/Langa, Boipatong and Langa at Uitenhage.

When the police force employed by the ANC government massacred workers at Marikana, they seemed set to prove the validity of linking racialism to capitalism.

Racialism was also employed to stave off uniting the oppressed and workers in SA of building *ONE NATION*.

The common denominator amongst the Yugoslavian, Rwandan and South African examples mentioned is that they are all capitalist countries. In South Africa, nothing can disguise the fact that pre- and post-1994 the country is the handmaiden of capitalism-imperialism.

"Unlike us, our people are still hung up on this thing of believing that it's not the system, but that it's the white man who is oppressing them. It takes time and effort to teach people that it is not the white man but it's the system that oppresses them." — Rafael Viera, 1970.

Since 1994 the canvas on which we have been working has changed dramatically. The anti-apartheid struggle, the struggle based on colour discrimination is no longer applicable. However, somehow we realise that we are not "free". The real struggle based on class has taken off. We need new brushes, new paint, and more energy to paint on the changed canvas.



Will the youth take us to a Non-Racial, democratic and just South Africa?

5

FROM THE ARSENAL; EXTRACT FROM THE 1992 JONAS FRED BOSCH MEMORIAL LECTURE DELIVERED BY RO DUDLEY

The lecture gave a sobering account of the state of the Trade Union Movement at that time and provides great insight into understanding why matters stand as they do today, 28 years later.



Three of the NUM theorists, RO Dudley, author of the article, Livingstone Mqotsi and June Udemans

TRADE UNION INDEPENDENCE HAS BEEN FORFEITED

We need to remind our self that in the five years between 1981 and 1985 the different trade union groupings, led by the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) debated extensively the foundation for trade union unity in South Africa. The political independence of the new united body was accepted by all as a fundamental principle so that the interests of the workers might be defended against all-comers. When the founding Congress reached its high point at its founding in Durban in November 1985, the machinery of the Congress (now COSATU) was seized to accommodate the new federation into the schemes of those committed to conclude a deal with the ruling class. At that stage of secret manoeuvres between the exiled leadership and the South African ruling class were already in progress to secure a “negotiated settlement” in South Africa. But the workers who were being pulled that way in Durban 1985, were never allowed to know that fact. Thereafter, trade union officials who were determined to hold their positions became overnight members of the South African Communist Party, the ANC and even Umkhonto we Sizwe and active promoters of the manoeuvres’ that led to the creation of CODESA.

The growth of the trade union movement in members has been nothing short of miraculous despite the fact that probably no more than 20 out every 100 workers are organised in unions. Between 1929 and 1946, the year of the great miners' strike, the number of unions increased from 101 to 203. Membership rose from 69 882 to 346 509. Of the 115 unions affiliated to the South African Trades and Labour Council, only two, the Mineworkers' Union and the Garment Workers' Union, had more than 10 000 members. After the mineworkers' strike of 1946 the "white" Mineworkers' Union left the SATLC. It was during this period that two distinct schools of thought arose among organisers.

One, supported by the Communist Party of South Africa, was that the SATLC, with its non-racial membership, should be built up to minimise the influence of the conservative wing of the trade union movement. The other, supported by the more radical left-wing school of thought, held that after the 1922 Strike on the Witwatersrand, the "white" worker had effectively been co-opted into the system and could play no meaningful role in the liberation of unfranchised workers or promote their interests in the unions. They supported the idea of building the Non-European Trade Union Council, a body that had but a short life in this formative period when there was an energetic search for a political framework for the radical trade union movement. Edward Roux in *'Time Longer Than Rope'* recalls the bitter disputes that raged between factions on the Rand in the two decades before World War II. This is instructive as it reflects multi-faceted fractures in the ranks of the workers. These factions included the class of largely immigrant workers with a history (of no real merit) of trade union involvement overseas, local "white" workers desperate to hold their positions against increasing numbers of unfranchised workers, and unfranchised workers of varying degrees of political awareness trying to find their feet in the uneasy world of trade union activity. The notorious slogan of the 1922 Revolt calling for a 'white socialist republic' had not died. Preferential employment of certain workers enlarged the mix of 'race', class and gender issues in the social relations of workers.

The labours of union organisers who were followers of Lenin and Leon Trotsky were faced with uphill battles to create working class solidarity, to combat racism and the colour bar. When the Second World War broke out the followers of Stalin opposed the imperialist war. When the Nazi armies invaded the Soviet Union, the Stalinist trade union leadership joined Smuts and called upon workers to support the war effort, even to the extent of enlisting workers in the completely segregated army units that were formed. The Trotsky leadership became the target of both the local Stalinist leadership and the Smuts government. One of the results of this difference was that Max Gordon, a dedicated, efficient and selfless trade-union organiser of the Trotskyist school, was interned, allegedly at the instance of the Stalinist trade union leadership working together with Smuts' government's security arm. The tremendous increase in the number of organised workers since the legislation in 1979 of trade union formation, is on the one hand the result of an increase in the unfranchised population from 8 million to 30 million since the war years and, on the other, to the diversification of South African industry and the expansion of agriculture, commerce and

the service industries. Other factors have also been at work. Let us look briefly at some of these.

The growth of the economy and the barring of workers from outside South Africa, especially since 1953, have led to a consistent increase in the number of workers drawn from the homeland labour reserves into a diversifying industry and commerce. Recent economic stagnation has slowed this down to a negative rate of uptake.

After the political upheavals of the 1950s and 1960s the State itself, with the generous help of the industrialists, prepared to open the way for the Wiehahn option of dealing with organised workers within a legal framework rather than facing an increasing militant working class that might be impossible to control' if they were left unorganised.

In advance of this change of strategy both here and overseas, new teams of 'acceptable' trade union specialists were trained to organise the workers .

Large sums of money were made available by overseas Workers' Federations, including the reactionary American Federation of Labour and its partner, the Congress of Industrial Organisations (the AFL-CIO).

New layers of class-conscious workers from among the oppressed joined the various leadership layers in the burgeoning trade union movement. The new Unions were significantly non-racial for the most part. The centrality of the interests of workers as workers was placed high on the agenda.

The new bargaining structures set up under the Wiehahn option challenged workers to develop good working knowledge of labour law and bargaining procedures. Workers' rights of all kinds were defined and fought for. This, in turn, has led to the proliferation of Labour Law studies at universities and to an increase in professional and lay labour law-experts who service the needs of trade unions. This does not mean that the class affiliations of such legal persons can be taken for granted.

It is freely conceded that not nearly enough has been done to generate a far greater degree of worker participation at 'grassroots' level. This is the result both of the ravages of the Eiselen-de Vos-Malan schooling or the lack of even that kind of schooling, as well as the complex nature of labour law and negotiating procedures – matters which are left to the educated caste within the unions that is able to handle such matters.

COLLABORATION – A THREAT TO WORKING-CLASS INDEPENDENCE

These submissions touch only the surface of the central problems facing the workers in this country. The political role of the unions in the liberation struggle has been poison-darted by the tactic of drawing the workers into joint councils with the ruling classes. There has been a studied disregard of the fact that the South African struggle is part of the world struggle against colonialism- imperialism. There is, for example, the curious idea that those who are

at present bargaining with the State can supplant the present rulers, take over the reins of State and reorder the economy to eliminate the frightening fall-out that has left the majority of workers either without jobs or with living standards, which are among the lowest in the world.

After her exciting canter through Wonderland where even the impossible was made possible, Alice woke up to the real world around her. The globetrotting reformers who have got lost in a world of sheer make-believe have preferred to not open their eyes lest their dreams fade. They have preferred to stick to a road where "palace-hopping"* has become a commonplace route that these travellers have taken in seeking international support for the struggle here. The role of imperialism in our economic life and in our political affairs is for the would-be reformers a closed book. They, for example, are caught up in co-planning with the World Bank, Imperialism's Global Central Bank. This is the very Bank that imposed GST on the poor, and now has imposed VAT on the poor to make them yet poorer. A Bank that has ordered the government to cut out free medical services, to minimise free education, to retrench teachers, to end food subsidies and, at the same time, to grant bigger tax advantages to the business world so that the profits of the capitalist classes should not be threatened.

DO NOT HIDE THE TRUTH

The problems that face us are complex. Yet that very complexity must not be used as a shield to hide the truth from workers, landless peasants and the millions of rural poor who are caught up in a war of sheer survival. There is a very real cause for optimism amid all our setbacks. We see, among other events, the strong upward pressure in our society of a growing student movement. It, too, will have to acquire that consciousness upon which the direction of our liberation struggle so heavily depends. Organised Women in our society have become a courageous force that can only add to the prospect of revolutionary change. The fact that the ruling class had to recruit super-collaborators to solve its own crisis may sadden us. It may hurt us to see turncoats following the trail of thirty thousand pieces of silver, often in the latest imported limousines. Yet it is a sign more of their dilemma than any real defeat for us. For we have learned in our struggles to know our allies and to recognise our foe.

The liberatory movement needs an explicit programme that sets out the basic rights that all citizens are entitled to and cannot be bargained away. Such a programme must form the basis of the political unity that is central to the creation of a social force capable of challenging the ruling class for power. Programme and policy must centre upon combating the policies of the ruling class on all fronts where the battle for freedom is joined; upon raising the unifying principles of non-racialism, non-sexism, non-sectarianism; upon the universal solidarity of toilers everywhere; upon liberty, peace and justice between all nations and for all mankind; and upon raising them with our banners proclaiming the duty of the workers of all nations to unite to create a world worth winning.

I have raised matters selectively in my lecture. There are many that have not been dealt with. But I have tried to stake out those features to which the liberatory movement must give prior attention

* palace-hopping: a term used by Brazilian trade union leaders to describe the pattern of visits to that country by South African liberation movements. The latter ignored the workers' organisations and preferred to discuss with the presidents of South American Republics

if we are to win. In other words, if we are strong in principle, if we go to the trouble of learning the lessons that our predecessors in struggle taught, and that are being taught by dedicated democrats all the time, and if we conduct our struggle on all fronts with courage and single-minded dedication to the interests of worker, peasants and the poor, then the prospect of revolutionary change becomes a growing reality. But if, as is happening now, we are confronted with a defection of whole sections of the liberation movement into the camp of the ruling class – CODESA, junior membership of the National, Democratic and other parties, or agencies of world imperialism offering good pay and bad attentions – that prospect cannot but be diminished.

We have come a long way since 1652. Today WE set out the bases upon which a new South Africa must indeed be built. The civilisation that van Riebeeck was supposed to have brought here was a myth. The romantic idea that the society of Herrie the Strandloper was a Garden of Eden cannot live. We are on the eve of the twenty-first century. But the ideas that we have of what South Africa can become, can only be realised through a united front of struggle that consigns to the graveyard of history the cancerous "bourgeois democracy" that was a democracy for the few and a tyranny for the majority.

The Cape African Teachers' Association adopted as its motto a biblical warning: *"Where There Is No Vision The People Perish"*. We have to be realists and visionaries at one and the same time that we seek to put an end to the existing order, AND to usher in a non-exploitative workers' republic within a comity of nations. Freed nations co-operating to establish within the shortest historical time an international socialism that will have eliminated both the awful reality of war and the poverty and destitution that world capitalism has spread all over the face of the Earth. Realists to take account of what we are confronted with and what we want to achieve.

And we need to join that with a clear vision of our goals, the vision that kept Cde Bosch firmly upon the road of principled struggle. That is why we have met here to recall his life and work. His example must fortify our own resolve and help us to remain loyal to humankind's upward striving for peace and justice and fulfilment. For a world with no more pain.

Foot note: The lecture is available on our website www.newunitymovement.org

New Unity Movement



Address all Correspondence to the Secretariat

E-Mail: tpnum77@gmail.com

27 083 225 6329 / 27 071 645 1590

PO Box 27561, Greenacres 6057

Website: www.newunitymovement.org.za

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STATEMENT BY THE NEW UNITY MOVEMENT ON THE RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS FIASCO: CONFUSION WORSE CONFOUNDED!

Everyone is now familiar with the causes and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic that has created a global crisis on a scale that is even worse than that created by the Second World War. It has also exposed the reality of the gross disparities that exist between the haves and the have-nots of this world.

In many respects, our experience of the pandemic here in South Africa is mirrored by that of people living in virtually all countries in the world. Moreover, as in most countries in the world, the unemployed and the poor, the most vulnerable members of society, have had to withstand the worst of the negative effects of the lockdowns that have been imposed to stem the spread of infection by the virus.

As in most other countries where lockdowns have been imposed, the South African government has decided to relax the level of the lockdown restrictions despite a rise in the rate of infection amongst the population. One such relaxation of the level of restriction has been a decision to reopen schools that had remained closed for the past two months.

However, it is this decision that has served once again to demonstrate the stark differences that exist between the poor children and their middle-class counterparts. The crisis that has arisen around the re-opening of schools has emphasised these glaring disparities as they affect the most vulnerable section of the population quite starkly.

The re-opening of schools under the control of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) with Mrs Angie Motshekga at its head have been nothing short of a disaster.

Whilst the decision to re-open schools may have been informed by sound expert medical advice, it is the inept manner in which the DBE set about doing so that has been a total

fiasco. In the face of clear evidence that a huge number of schools, mainly in the depressed communities, urban and rural, are far from ready as safe environments to readmit our children, the DBE blunders ahead like a brainless colossus.

All the teacher unions, as well as school governing bodies, have opposed the reopening of schools in the manner as set out by the DBE. We fully support the statement issued by the National Union of Public Servants and Allied Workers, Educational Sector (NUPSAW-ES) on 24 May. In the statement, they propose three broad components of an "action plan to advance the interests of basic education in the current period".

We all value life. Are all schools ready and Covid-19 compliant? Have all schools been issued with enough Personal Protective Equipment? Most schools have differing views on the "return to school". However to return to school and not have a discussion with your pupils/students about the state of education in our country and the world, and particularly the call for a stay-away, would be an abdication of your duty as a teacher. To just return to school and not discuss the state of joblessness in SA would be a grave oversight.

What Covid-19 has pertinently demonstrated are the huge INEQUALITIES in our country. Society cannot be variously compartmentalised, or divorced from the situations in health, housing and sanitation, economics, labour or politics. We are no longer able to ignore these facts. These are the issues that we all will have to attend to both inside and outside of the classroom.

We specifically condemn the stand taken by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and in particular that of the MEC, Debbie Schäfer and the Head of Department, Brian Schreuder, who have shown themselves to be in the mould of the "kragdadige" functionaries of the old Apartheid system. Little has changed in respect of the ruling class (DA) predilection for maintaining obedience jackboot-style, and for thumbing their noses at community opposition, no matter how widespread and legitimate that opposition.

OUR DEMAND

No schools must re-open anywhere in the country until and unless *all* the recognized deficiencies in the schools of the poor have been corrected and that all measures that are required to guarantee the safety of all our children, teachers and the non-teaching staff employed in our schools are put in place. A sad reality that needs to be confronted is that the resource deficiencies of the Apartheid era school system persist in the current reality of having one school system for the rich and one for the poor.

We demand that the disparities that characterise these different "systems of education" be eliminated.

The lives, safety and well-being of our children are paramount.

Issued by the National Executive Committee of the New Unity Movement