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USA

The White World and Black Reality

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Resistance to white supremacists is on the rise. African Americans are the loudest voices, logically, given that it's common for Blacks to be stopped by cops or harassed by "citizen whites" for walking, eating, driving "merely existing."

African Americans historically have been willing to join and lead the battle for real equity and against white supremacy. It's a fight they can't win alone. Allies are needed.

Will white Americans, then, step up or accept the status quo? If not, it is a delusion to expect the far right to be defeated by an electoral strategy based on new compromises with the conservative movement.

Establishment Democrats, including many liberals, continue to see Blacks standing up for themselves, and upstart progressives winning elections, as the primary threat to their power.

Class solidarity must stand on a platform of anti-racism, anti-white supremacy to build working-class unity to defeat the right. It will not be a re-run of the 1930s "when segregation was the law in much of the land, and the practice in most of it" where the labor movement could grow even while refusing to confront segregation and laws against nonwhite immigrants.

The hard truth is that support for the Trump Republican Party remains strong (of course not unanimous) among whites in what's called the red states. His regime actively erodes and rolls back basic civil and human rights, and programs that help working people, especially people of color but big parts of his white voting base too!

Most white Americans will at least voice opposition to racism, and open white supremacists are a minority. But since they don't see racism directly affecting them, the majority of white people either actively or passively go along with policies that disproportionately hit Blacks and communities of color, immigrants in particular.

African-American Leadership

Blacks, on the other hand, have seen this picture before and are afraid of the white backlash. There is anxiety. There is also a greater awareness from the new generations, especially Black women, to fight back by any means necessary.

The gap between what the Democratic Party elite and mainstream liberal media are saying, and what the Black media report about resistance, is widening. As was the case during the civil rights era, there is the white world, and the Black reality.

White supremacist ideology "consciously and by default" has centuries of roots in the country. Even at the height of the great labor upsurges in the late 1880s and 1930s, issues of race and racism were subordinated to white-defined working class issues.

Organized white labor unions ignored or opposed fighting racism and supporting equality. The goal of ending Jim

Crow segregation (like ending racist immigration policies) was not considered a labor issue, except by the most conscious radicals.

Class solidarity is impossible until the race issue becomes central for white workers to win their own fight. Unless that occurs, every civil and human rights gain can and will be reversed by racist backlash. Donald Trump rode that racism to win the Electoral College.

The right is growing stronger as its white supremacist base grows and other whites do nothing. These forces so far have the stronger position because of government support.

Their main concern is that African Americans will rise and go to the streets around racism and link up with other social forces. So far this is not happening. Black rebellions historically strike the greatest fear among whites and the ruling class.

Vicious Attacks and Resistance

While white people who are uneasy or even dislike the racism of Trump “accept” the system of inequality, since it does not directly impact their daily lives, the right wing uses all its levers of political and extralegal power to advance its objectives.

Attacking African-Americans’ rights, and other minorities, is a key weapon in their strategy to win whites, including white workers, to support employers and racist policies.

Trump viciously attacks Black football players and Black Lives Matter protesters because of the potential power of African Americans and the delusions of white Americans. (He cannot deport Blacks, even if some of his base wish that were possible.)

White supremacists (neofascists in ideology) cannot be defeated by centrist compromise. They only respond to the proverbial “two by four.”

Protests and African American opposition to police brutality are important actions and key to eventual change. Leon Trotsky, the Russian revolutionary, told American socialists in the 1930s that Blacks because of their position as the most oppressed section of American society, “will in any case fight better than the white workers” for emancipation.

Black Lives Matters was formed in struggle against police violence and mass incarceration of African Americans. Its full program is aimed at ending racism and winning others to its program.

Black rights and lives are under fierce attack by the capitalist system “again. It might seem with the teachers’ strikes, the #MeToo movement for women’s rights and anti-police brutality protests that the tide is possibly turning against the right. It hasn’t, so far.

Most liberals and many progressives fall into the trap of believing that elections in November 2018 and beyond are the key to stopping racist and reactionary forces. Pointing to Trump’s victory, they attack those who reject this strategy. Supporters of democratic socialism within the Democratic Party are being blamed “in advance!” for future election defeats.

The central lesson of history here and abroad is the opposite. It is not elections that cause change. They can only reflect what has been won or lost. Mass popular resistance, legal and extralegal, is how change and victories are achieved.

Martin Luther King did not ask for permission from the Democratic Party to organize mass actions against segregation. The 1963 March on Washington was aimed at the Democratic President and Congress.

Politicians and institutions respond when they feel threatened. Blacks were never considered human beings, much less citizens, before the Civil War. While slavery was abolished, and formal citizenship was granted to former slaves, real citizenship rights lasted less than two decades.

In today's anti-immigrant climate some conservatives openly question whether the 14th Amendment clause, adopted in 1868, establishing citizenship by birth on U.S. soil should be reversed – even by presidential decree (see “Trump's New Target: Citizenship,” by John Ganz, *The New York Times*, July 23, 2018, A21).

It took 80 years of popular struggles to gain back legal citizenship, which had been in name only, in the former Confederacy. Blacks could rarely run for or win elections until the 1970s. It was mass protest actions that forced politicians and officials of both major parties to shift.

Labor's Dirty Compromise

The U.S. labor movement's Achilles heel has been racism. It failed to understand the centrality of race. Today, not surprisingly, 10% (7% in the private sector) of workers are in unions – the lowest point since the 1920s, and expected to fall further.

Organized labor has mostly circled its wagons. With no battle plan, it is easier to blame the right or the Supreme Court.

The lesson of the 1930s was to organize mass strikes and win public support to defeat employers and force the government to pass laws recognizing labor rights (except for Blacks in the segregated South).

That dirty compromise of throwing Black workers under the bus is why the labor movement would never grow beyond its high point in the 1950s. The established union leaderships' refusal to take on Jim Crow segregation and structural racism is a key reason for its decline.

Capital always knew it could eventually take union plants from the North to the “right to work” South. Japanese and European manufacturers saw it too, and built most of their “transplant” facilities in those states.

At a time when the number one issue of fighting the Trump regime and policies is defense of civil and human rights, much of today's organized labor instead is in lock step with Trump on tariffs.

So long as that's the case, it will be impossible to turn the tide. Under these conditions, is it any wonder that racism trumps class solidarity?

Against the Current

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