

Struggling Against Racism and for Peace

Herbert Aptheker

I wish to first call attention to the splendid article by Mark Solomon that appears in the most recent *Dialogue and Initiative*. Mark writes, "Under the guise of forsaking "political correctness" , words of hate are coming back into vogue while violent acts of hate, stoked by economic decline and the starving of progressive social programs, are growing across the country." I join in his urging that in this gathering we "should explore and renew for left/socialist forces the centrality of race and the fight against racism as the essential requirement for progress and for transforming change." Exactly correct.

I deeply appreciate the opportunity of offering a few thoughts at this gathering which has the potential, if all goes well, of helping to preserve and even advance the Republic of Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Eugene Victor Debs, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.

At this moment when the Republic is dominated by a Chief Resident -- not a President -- and his evil billionaire assistant, the urgent need is a strengthened and united left. Whatever differences we may have and whatever bitterness remains must be put aside in the urgent necessity of a united left to help guide our nation toward the vital role of avoiding global catastrophe. Global catastrophe!

Slavery brought unutterable suffering to millions of men, children, and especially women. Those whose wealth and power derived from this crucifixion ultimately threatened the Republic.

Unity of those despising the monstrosity and who valued the Republic helped to preserve it and to destroy slavery.

Today, imperialism brings ghastly suffering to millions and its existence threatens global catastrophe. Its defeat requires a powerful left and such a force requires unity. The form of this unity is not decisive - the existence of that unity is decisive.

Differences will persist and may be argued, but argued in a comradely fashion, with the prime objective of unity in action as the decisive goal.

Knowing that the fate of humanity is now at stake, let us act jointly . Thus we may help preserve a purified globe for our children and their children for generations to come.

---- **Herbert Aptheker** is an historian and author of numerous books and articles on the history of the struggles for freedom of African-Americans.

Q & A Session with Beal, Dent, and Galedo

Q This is for Ms. Galedo and Ms. Dent.

My understanding is that the American working class may have a relatively low class consciousness, but workers who emigrate from other countries tend to have a higher class consciousness. And I believe it is the case, at least in Southern California, that immigrants have helped spark the labor

movement in Southern California, and that the AFL-CIO has finally recognized that undocumented workers are a major strategic force in this country. So I'd like you, perhaps, to talk a little bit more about the labor component, about the struggle of immigrants and racism.

And, to Miss Dent, it is my understanding that, frequently, when I make a telephone transaction, with the credit card, I am talking to a prisoner, who is working for much less than minimum wage or slave wages, and I'd like you to talk about the role of the PIC in terms of exploiting labor and how maybe the labor movement can get together with PIC activists.

GALEDO I think that over the past 15 or 20 years, organizing among immigrant workers has been more successful among Latino workers, particularly from Mexico. Some of that has to do with having been involved in the labor movement, or in unions, in Mexico before coming here. I know that in the Asian population, which also immigrates here as workers, that it's been more difficult, and that alternatives to union organizing have emerged in our communities in the form of worker associations. I think the good thing about that is that the worker associations are also loosely connected to organized labor. There are a couple of examples of that in Southern California and there's kind of an inkling of that here.

Since 9/11, one of the main allies that we've had in terms of fighting some of the worst forms of worker discrimination has come from organized labor, in particular SEIU and HERE, not only the Bay Area but nationally. And SEIU, for example, is the union that represents the screeners at the San Francisco Airport. They challenged the citizenship requirement that is part of the Aviation Transportation Security Act, and locally has helped to pull together a coalition of the labor councils--San Mateo, San Francisco, Alameda, SEIU 790--and Filipino community based organizations that are trying to save the jobs of airport screeners.

And this isn't something that...although I think we're seeing a resurgence of it, there have been examples in the past of immigrants who have organized. I know that in the Filipino community, farm workers organized their own unions in the 1960's.

DENT The prison labor question is so huge that I'm just going to be able to make a few points. You're absolutely right, of course, there are many different ways in which we on the telephone encounter prisoners who are working for the prison system. But also there are myriad other ways in which we're connected to the fruits of prison labor.

In fact, prison industries, and that's what they call the internal business structures that the state systems set up to interact with corporations, advertise, and the states actually put together videos that advertise how many different corporations are connected to them. And you can see them. They're advertising to encourage other corporations to affiliate. And it has a long list of every phone company you would ever use, everything you would almost ever use. So we're always interacting with that labor force.

About the questions of organizing it, there are actually, some differences of opinion that I think are worth pointing out and the arguments are strong on both sides. On the one hand,