

Where do we go from here

Justice for George Floyd requires taking the ruling class out of power

by Nijmie Zakkiiyyah Dzurinko

“Yes I am a TRASHMAN so PLEASE don’t complain about your TRASH isn’t picked up when 50% of the Sanitation workers is OUT because they have gotten COVID 19 they all have to sit in the truck and contaminate each other and then take it HOME to their KIDS. They won’t talk about that on the NEWS They are ESSENTIAL Workers who NO ONE truly Appreciate. News and ppl be quick to put us down without knowing the truth behind all this.”

- Kelvin Bain, Philadelphia

It’s not enough to say “Black Lives Matter.”

We must ask ourselves, “What will actually MAKE Black lives matter?”

First I want to say the names of Echol Cole and Robert Walker, two Black sanitation workers crushed by a malfunctioning garbage truck in Memphis, 1968.

MLK addressed these workers on March 18, 1968, shortly before the launch of the Poor People’s Campaign - saying “Now, you’re doing something else here. You are highlighting the economic issue. You are going beyond purely civil rights to questions of human rights. That is distinct. . . . For we know, that it isn’t enough to integrate lunch counters. What does it profit a man to be able to eat at an integrated lunch counter if he doesn’t have enough money to buy a hamburger?”

As I write these words in 2020 from my house in West Philadelphia there is a slow down of sanitation workers across the city, most of whom are Black, because so many are being affected by COVID19, lacking hazard pay and adequate safety precautions from the city. The echoes of the two situations give me chills.

Fifty years after King made this speech it is objectively true that Black lives, particularly poor and dispossessed working class Black lives, don't matter. I don't care what anyone *says*.

Which brings us to two related questions: *For whom* do Black lives not matter? And why is it important to know the answer to this question if we want to make Black Lives Matter?

For this I turn to Stokely Carmichael, civil rights leader with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee who said: "Racism is not a question of attitude; it's a question of power. Racism gets its power from capitalism. Thus, if you're anti-racist, whether you know it or not, you must be anti-capitalist. The power for racism, the power for sexism, comes from capitalism, not an attitude."

So if we take Stokely seriously then the true beneficiaries of systemic racism, those most invested in ensuring that Black lives *don't* matter in order to maintain their profits and ensure social control by dividing and conquering the working class are located on Wall Street. They're not the raging, sloppy, deranged people in viral videos we all love to hate. For the stars of Tik Tok, racism is a question of attitude, for Wall Street, racism is a question of power.

The ruling class at this stage is invested in the perpetuation of systemic racism not because they hate us (without a doubt most have a positive *attitude* toward Black people), but because it is the most effective tool of keeping their power by ensuring the disunity of the working class.

So while they are not the only people for whom Black lives don't matter, they are the class that has the POWER to ensure that Black lives don't matter (and the class that controls the state and the police). Which should make them the focus of our attention, for all who are committed to MAKING Black lives matter.

That's precisely why the ruling class is trying to get out ahead of the coming mega-crisis (global economic depression combined with the COVID-19 pandemic), to proclaim that Black Lives Matter.

- They've worked overtime through their mouthpieces in the corporate media

to frame the rebellions as exclusively about the murder of George Floyd, while minimizing and obscuring the reality of the purposefully negligent murder of over 138,000 people and counting in this country due to COVID-19 who are disproportionately (drum roll please...) poor, Black, Latinx and Indigenous.

- They've pledged \$1.6 billion to fund Black Lives Matter related efforts - because it's a steal compared to what they will lose if a conscious working class united across color lines rises up against them. Black lives will never matter to Bank of America, to Wal-Mart, Google, Amazon, Goldman Sachs or United Health Group.
- They're using the crisis to further discipline the working class through the imposition of austerity budgets, privatization and even greater automation which will cause the permanent elimination of even more jobs - disproportionately harming Black and brown lives.
- They are going to fight to the death to continue the poverty-producing system (we are disproportionately poor), ecological devastation (we are disproportionately impacted) and the war economy (hurts us most around the world); all the while proclaiming "Black Lives Matter!"

All of these developments will make Black lives infinitely worse. And not only Black lives, but the lives of **everyone** in the working class.

Which brings us back to the question of what will it take to *make* Black lives matter, not just *say* Black Lives Matter?

Will it be through charity? Job training? Corporate donations? Business ownership? Reparations?

Once again, I would assert that any "solution" that leaves the interconnected evils of poverty, systemic racism, militarism and environmental devastation intact will not make Black Lives Matter. Any solution that leaves the ruling class in place and the system without fundamental transformation means that Black lives will continue NOT to matter.

So then how can we make Black Lives Matter?

By taking the ruling class out of power.

And who can take the ruling class out of power?

The poor and dispossessed working class, led by those who are the least invested in Wall Street, united across color lines and all other lines of division. It will require a mass social movement of clear, competent, committed and connected leaders who have a rigorous understanding of exactly WHY Black lives don't matter and TO WHOM, and what it will take to ACTUALLY make Black Lives Matter.

It will require organizing the 140 million poor or near-poor in this country (including 66 million poor white people) that have a common interest in taking the ruling class out of power - to become conscious of ourselves as a class, to build on the basis of what we have in common without minimizing our differences, to subvert the forces of divide-and-conquer while centering those who have been marginalized in our class, and to join together as a conscious force of the poor and dispossessed of all colors. It will take organizing statewide in every county of every state. This is what it will actually take to make Black lives - and all lives - matter. This is a big task. We must get to work.

Justice for Breonna Taylor requires nothing less than taking the ruling class out of power.



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