



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

Why we should commemorate Nov. 11

written by Stephen Millies

November 10, 2020

Even though Veterans Day is a federal holiday, [only 19 percent of workers](#) employed by private business get the day off. Originally called Armistice Day, it marks the end of World War I “at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month” of 1918.

Twenty million people were killed during this imperialist war, half of whom were civilians. It was waged between colonial powers who had enslaved hundreds of millions in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

[Lenin, the leader of the socialist Bolshevik Revolution](#), called it a “war between the biggest slaveowners for preserving and fortifying slavery.”

The Belgian King Leopold II had killed as many as [15 million Africans in Congo](#) for rubber profits. British capitalists made fortunes from famines in India and occupied a quarter of the planet. Fresh from genocidal wars against Indigenous nations, the U.S. army had killed a million Filipina/os fighting for independence.

Another 50 million people died in the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic that may have [started at U.S. Army bases](#) in Kansas.

Around 117,000 U.S. GIs died in the war. Three months after the U.S. entered the conflict, at least 100 Black people were murdered in East St. Louis, Ill., by white racist mobs.

Black soldiers returning from combat were among those killed in the race riots that swept U.S. cities in 1919. But World War I was swell for U.S. big business.

According to Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Smedley Butler in his book ["War is a Racket,"](#) "at least 21,000 new millionaires and billionaires were made in the United States during the World War. That many admitted their huge blood gains in their income tax returns. How many other war millionaires falsified their tax returns no one knows."

This was back in 1918, when the dollar was [worth 16 times as much](#) as it is now.

The du Ponts weren't even mentioned in "The History of Great American Fortunes" by Gustavus Myers, which was published in 1909. The family's vast profits from selling explosives during World War I catapulted them into the superrich.

Besides their chemical empire, the du Ponts controlled General Motors, which had been the world's largest corporation, for decades.

Never forget Nat Turner

So why should poor and working people commemorate Nov. 11? Because on Nov. 11, 1831, the liberator Nat Turner was executed.

Turner led a revolt of enslaved Africans in Virginia that terrified all the slave owners. Beginning on Aug. 21, 1831, Black people marched from plantation to plantation in Southampton County fighting for liberation. Black Panther Field Marshal George Jackson was murdered 140 years later on Aug. 21, 1971, in California's San Quentin prison.

The reaction of slave masters was merciless. They thought they were facing another Haitian Revolution.

Soldiers and sailors were mobilized to crush the rebellion. Militia members were sent from both Virginia and North Carolina.

The Rev. G.W. Powell said there were “thousands of troops searching in every direction,” with many Black people killed. The editor of the Richmond Whig newspaper admitted that “men were tortured to death, burned, maimed and subjected to nameless atrocities.” (“Before the Mayflower, A History of Black America” by Lerone Bennett Jr.)

Nat Turner was captured but never flinched. He was executed in Jerusalem, Va. It’s named after the eternal capital of Palestine, also known as Al-Quds.

The slave masters called Nat Turner a “terrorist.” That’s the same term used today to smear Palestinian freedom fighters.

Hanged for the eight-hour day

Labor leaders George Engel, Adolph Fischer, Albert Parsons and August Spies were hanged in Chicago’s Cook County Jail on Nov. 11, 1887. Twenty-three-year-old Louis Lingg was also slated to be executed, but he was either murdered or committed suicide the day before.

These martyrs died for the eight-hour work day. Most workers in those days worked 10 or 12 hours a day, sometimes even longer.

On May 1, 1886, hundreds of thousands of workers across the U.S. went on strike to demand an eight-hour work day. Capitalists were terrified. Workers marched from factory to factory urging employees to strike.

Chicago was the center of this movement. Chicago police fired on striking workers at the McCormick reaper works — which later became part of International Harvester — on May 3, killing at least two.

The next day, a protest meeting was called at Chicago's Haymarket Square. Police attacked the crowd, and someone threw a bomb at the cops. Eight policemen died as well as possibly some protesters.

The ruling class went berserk. [Police arrested hundreds](#), but the bomber, who may have been a provocateur, was never found.

Instead, well-known labor leaders were put on trial for their lives because they supposedly incited the bombing. Years later, Illinois Gov. John Peter Altgeld courageously pardoned those who had been jailed.

Four of the five Haymarket Martyrs were immigrants. All were labeled anarchists. Trump wants us to hate immigrants while he calls anti-racist protesters "anarchists."

As he was about to be hanged, Albert Parsons declared, "The day will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today."

Lucy Parsons, a Black woman who was Albert Parsons' partner, continued fighting for the working class until she died in a house fire in 1942. Chicago police said that she was "more dangerous than a thousand rioters." Lucy Parsons' books and papers were [confiscated by the FBI](#).

May 1 became the international holiday of the working class. In Mexico, it's known as the [Day of the Chicago Martyrs](#).



Angolans celebrate their independence from Portuguese colonialism, Nov. 11, 1975.

Long live the People's Republic of Angola!

The People's Republic of Angola was born on Nov. 11, 1975. Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, along with his employees Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and White House occupant Gerald Ford, sought to kill it. They had the Nazi armies of then-apartheid South Africa invade the African country.

Angola's independence was historical justice that resonated around the world. Four million Angolans had been kidnapped in a slave trade that lasted four centuries. Brazil's sugar plantations were fed by Angolan slave pens.

Millions of Brazilians have Angola in their blood. So do some African Americans.

The largest prison in the U.S. is in Angola, La. The sugar plantation which became the core of the prison was named Angola because that's where the enslaved Africans working there came from.

Today, thousands of slaves work on the Angola prison's 18,000 acres. The "Angola 3" — Herman Wallace, Robert King Wilkerson and Albert Woodfox — spent decades in solitary confinement on frame-up charges of killing a prison guard before being freed.

Their real crime was forming a chapter of the Black Panther Party. Herman Wallace died of liver cancer a few days after being released.

Five hundred years of Portuguese colonialism in Angola were 500 years of resistance. The founding of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in 1956 was a decisive step. Forced labor was halted only after 50,000 Angolans were killed during the 1961 revolts.

When South Africa invaded Angola, Cuba came to Africa's assistance. As the Pan African educator and organizer Elombe Brath said, "When Africa called, Cuba answered." Two thousand Cuban soldiers died fighting alongside their African comrades.

The initial defeat of South Africa helped inspire the Soweto Uprising on June 16, 1976. The total defeat of the apartheid army at Cuito Cuanavale in 1988 led to Nelson Mandela walking out of prison two years later.

So let us remember Nat Turner and the Haymarket Martyrs while celebrating Angola's independence. And be prepared to stop any new wars for the rich.



<https://www.struggle-la-lucha.org/2020/11/10/why-we-should-commemorate-nov-11/>