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ILWU Local 10 pensioner and labor activist Howard Keylor passes

written by Jack Heyman, retired member of ILWU Local 10
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Howard Keylor, a longtime Local 10 member and longshore activist, died on October 5, 2024, shortly before his 99th birthday. In 1953, he started as a casual in the port of Stockton. He became a registered longshoreman in 1959 and transferred to Local 10 in 1970.

He strongly upheld ILWU's Ten Guiding Principles that state: "Labor solidarity means just that. Unions have to accept the fact that the solidarity of labor stands above all else, including even the so-called sanctity of the contract. We cannot adopt for ourselves the policies of union leaders who insist that because they have a contract, their members are compelled to perform work even behind a picket line. Every picket line must be respected as though it were our Own."

Howard was one of the last living ILWU members who fought in WW II. He was in the army in Okinawa when the U.S. dropped atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which killed a quarter of a million people, mainly civilians. It was those nuclear weapons of mass destruction that turned him against war and led him to become dedicated to fighting for the rights of oppressed people around the world. Born in rural Ohio, Howard attended a one-room country schoolhouse yet amazingly became a member of the scholarly National Honor Society. Living in Appalachia not far from the mines, Howard developed a strong sense of the need for solidarity and building working-class power.

In Stockton, with the support of his wife Evangelina, he committed himself to working with the legendary Filipino farm worker leader Larry Itliong in the 1948 asparagus strike. In ILWU Local 10, Howard was a member of the Militant Caucus, a class struggle group in longshore and warehouse, which organized solidarity actions protesting the shipment of military cargo to the junta in Chile in 1974 and in 1980 against the Salvadoran military dictatorship. The Militant Caucus organized a strike of undocumented ILWU Local 6 warehouse workers in Union City who had to defend against police attacks.

They also participated in protests against the Nazi rally at San Francisco City Hall in 1980 and supported the demonstration in 1984 to tear down the Confederate flag hanging in Civic Center Plaza, reported by the San Francisco Bay View National Black Newspaper. Howard was also a member of the Labor Action Committee to

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and the Transport Workers Solidarity Committee, whose members organized solidarity actions for Liverpool dockers in 1977 and the Charleston, South Carolina, longshore workers in 2000.

Brother Keylor was also active in the defense of Mumia Abu-Jamal. He suggested that Abu-Jamal's attorney use the famous labor case of Sacco and Vanzetti to defend Mumia. They were working-class activists who were convicted of murder in 1921 and eventually executed despite a massive campaign by labor activists across the country who proclaimed their innocence and noted their lack of fair trial.

In 1999, Howard participated in the Local 10 contingent, leading a march of 25,000 protesters through the streets of San Francisco chanting, "An Injury to One is an Injury to All," while all ILWU ports were shut down in support of Mumia.

The most significant action by Howard was the 1984 action against the Nedlloyd Kimberley, a ship from South Africa. While the apartheid regime was shooting down striking miners and arresting their leaders, Howard raised a motion at the Local 10 membership meeting to hit the

next ship that docked in San Francisco from South Africa. Leo Robinson, leader of the "Southern African Liberation Support Committee," amended it to strike the South African cargo only. It passed unanimously. The rest was history.

Nelson Mandela, on his world tour in 1990 at the Oakland Coliseum, commended Local 10 for being on the front lines in the Bay Area of the international struggle against apartheid. Last year, the dockworkers union in Durban, South Africa, represented by the Revolutionary Trade Union of South Africa (RETUSA), invited Local 10 to send a delegation to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their strike that led to a General Strike against apartheid. The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa and the Liverpool dockers have sent condolences to Howard's family, to Local 10, and to his comrades.

A memorial service will be held for Brother Keylor on January 25, 2025, from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. at Local 10, 400 North Point Street, San Francisco in the Henry Schmidt Room.

-Jack Heyman, #8780
Local 10 Pensioner

