



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

Baltimore revolutionaries say learn from Palestinian resistance

written by Colby Byrd
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Jan. 18, Baltimore – activists launching Peoples Fightback Network march in honor of Dr. King, standing with sanitation workers and unions while opposing war and genocide. SLL photo

Following is a talk from the Jan.18 Honor Dr. King Jr. Rally and March, organized by the Peoples Power Assembly in Baltimore, launching the new Peoples Fightback Network. Those gathered stand in solidarity with Baltimore’s sanitation workers, for union rights and worker safety, and against war and genocide. The rally took place at McKeldin Plaza with the march ending at City Hall. Colby Boyd is an organizer with the Peoples Power Assembly.

Good afternoon sisters, brothers, and siblings in the struggle.

The fourth most dangerous job in the United States is sanitation work. And how does the leadership of the city of Baltimore treat the brave workers of sanitation and the overall Department of Public Works? They force them to work in unsafe trucks, force them to work without proper uniform items and protective equipment. They force them to work and drive through cramped spaces and unsafe alleys. They even force them to go out there in the blistering heat or freezing cold to handle all forms of waste and hazardous materials. All without a livable or comparable wage.

And focus on that word FORCE, in all of its hideous meanings. The workers of DPW work to keep the city safe with a whip to their back.

I could spend the entirety of my time up here recounting horror stories I have been told. How they have been mugged, maimed, or murdered on the job. Abandoned by their superiors during times of crisis or denied basic necessities or life-saving care.

But instead I want to talk to you all, my family, about how we can help our brothers and sisters at DPW. We all know it starts at being kind. Ensuring you properly dispose of your trash, slow down in work zones and be friendly to the DPW workers you may cross paths with. After that, we know to call our respective city officials to voice our complaints into the void of the countless other ones. We even know to make our individual feelings on the issue be known and voice it to any who listen, to spread the word. And after all that we all know that we must do more.

Many of us here have organized and mobilized for other crises befalling oppressed communities all around the world. From Palestine to the Philippines, we have collectively analyzed the systems that keep the people down and have committed to ending them. I would like to specifically raise the Palestinian struggle here today. The harmony between the people driven to action around the world and the Resistance battling the enemy within the heart of the Entity is the specific layer of

the struggle I am raising. Through to this day, as the Resistance has called on us, we have answered however we can. When the people of Palestine were forced and bombed into tents, students turned campuses into encampments. As the Resistance attacked the occupiers' bases, students occupied campus buildings. As the Houthis attacked Maersk in the Red Sea, we unmasked them in our ports. When they escalated overseas, we never failed at escalating here.

Let us remind the world that it was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who said, "I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land!" Let us remind the world that he also told us "the price that America must pay for the continued oppression of the Negro and other minority groups is the price of its own destruction." He knew that America in its current form was in no way accepting of the oppressed peoples of the world, and died fighting to change it.

After the assassination of Dr. King, the government made sure to bomb that mountain and the promised land. COINTELPRO, the war on drugs, mass incarceration, and police brutality forced us to find a new way to these ideals. Here in Baltimore, following the deaths of Ronald Silver II and Timothy Cartwell, it has been made crystal clear that the City Council and the mayor, Brandon Scott, would rather follow in the footsteps of the Memphis City Council and Mayor Henry Loeb of 1968 than work to achieve the vision of Dr. Martin Luther King. The government, to no surprise, would rather try to cover up these problems than actually fix them.

In fact, I would go so far to say that the city government is actively using these deaths and all of the mistreatment of the workers to quietly strip more rights and protections from the workers. Do not forget that they brought in the anti-worker and reactionary law firm of Conn Maciel Carey LLP out of Washington D.C. to "conduct a thorough review of DPW's safety policies, practices, and procedures." The city is

doing everything it can to keep the workers divided and away from community-based solutions in order to continue this suffocating oppression.

The resistance in Palestine calls its ability to communicate through spatial differences and any barriers imposed by the occupier “the unity of the fields.” This constant communication through signals and actions allows the many different factions within the resistance to stay unified through the highs and lows of the campaign for liberation and never fall victim to cooperating with countering forces.

Bringing it back to Baltimore DPW, I hope you all understand what I am trying to get at. With the workers in a constant daily battle for their survival, they are forced into positions where they are taken advantage of by the city. This is not to say that they have not escalated the struggle; in fact, the DPW workers have been and continue to signal to the community, awaiting a signal in return to show that we see them and are ready to weather the storm with them – in other words, escalate.

It was Fredrick Douglass who said that “if there is no struggle, there is no progress.”

We must not let the city continue to choke the voices of our class siblings at the Department of Public Works any longer. We must adopt the unity of the fields strategy and free the workers of DPW by showing them that the community, their fellow workers, and fellow human beings will not stand idly by while they suffer at the hands of the city. Here in 2025 I say we learn from the Palestinian people and resistance. We dig into that mountain and make it ours; we tunnel our way to the Promised Land unapologetically, and we fight for those we have lost. We organize and fight together through any barriers imposed by the city, and together with the workers, we can smash the culture of oppression here in Baltimore.

Long live the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Long live the hard-working and brave workers of Baltimore DPW

Long live the Palestinian people and the resistance
Long live international solidarity

