



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

Baltimore rallies for sanitation workers and against genocide

written by Penny Pinotti

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The chill of winter and impending rain showers did not faze the Baltimore community as roughly 60 people gathered for a rally and march to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on Jan. 18, 2025. The demonstration focused on standing with sanitation workers, the struggle for union rights, and prioritizing workers' rights above government funding of war and genocide. The group marched from the McKeldin Plaza to Baltimore city hall, chanting slogans like "What's disgusting? Union Busting!" and "Money for workers and education, not for war and occupation!"

Once at City Hall, the program began with remarks from Andre with the Peoples Power Assembly, speaking about how the community can take inspiration from Dr. King's fighting spirit. The first speaker was Colby Byrd, an activist with the Peoples Power Assembly deeply involved in the struggle to win rights for Baltimore's sanitation workers ever since two Baltimore sanitation workers died on the job due to unsafe working conditions. [Colby's speech](#) connected the struggle of the sanitation workers to the words of Dr. King Jr. as well as the struggle in Palestine, highlighting that unity between people and workers across the world will allow the chains of oppression to be broken:

"We must not let the city continue to choke the voices of our class siblings at the Department of Public Works (DPW) 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 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."

The next speaker read a statement written by an Amazon worker in solidarity with sanitation workers and all oppressed people. The statement spoke of the hypocrisy at Amazon and how on the same day this worker heard that Amazon cut its diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, they first saw a shrine and banner celebrating Dr. King Jr. in the lobby of the warehouse. The statement also highlighted how Amazon has worked to crush unions as well as allowed their facial recognition technology to be used against migrant workers and in the genocide of the Palestinian people.

The program continued with talks from representatives of the Peoples Power Assembly and the Prisoners Solidarity Committee, speaking about Palestine, the fight for prisoners' rights in Baltimore, and workers' rights. Gregory Williams, co-editor of Struggle La Lucha, [spoke at the rally](#) and demonstrated how the struggles in Baltimore connect to struggles across the country as well as the work of Dr. King Jr., as he spoke about a similar sanitation worker struggle in his home city of New Orleans. The workers in New Orleans formed the City Waste Union and went on strike to demand better safety conditions and fair pay:

"They carried picket signs saying, 'I am a man,' just like they did in the Memphis sanitation worker strike in 1968. They didn't get everything they were demanding. Of course, the bosses pulled out all the stops, hiring scabs and all the rest of it. But by the end of 2021, the city approved \$15 an hour for city contract workers."

Despite the efforts of the ruling class to crush the strike, the undying spirit of the workers brought about change, inspiring those in attendance that the fight today would ensure a better tomorrow. The demonstration concluded with attendees gathering in a Black-owned restaurant to build connections and discuss plans for the future. Overall, the event stoked the fire of resistance and showed the community that the struggle would continue with strength from solidarity.

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