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2013 A WATERSHED YEAR IN SOUTH AFRICA

As 2013 draws to an end there is a need to summarise what have been the key lessons for the year. For many activists 2013 may well be a watershed in the history of our struggles for social justice. The year has been framed by what was exposed by the 2012 Marikana massacre and what is emerging as a process of political re-groupment as we look forward to the 2014 General Elections - which also happens to be the 20th year since the official end of apartheid.



Picture Source: blogs24.com

While Marikana revealed the true nature of the ANC government's commitment to the interests of Big Business, even at the price of workers' lives; 2013 has been all about the development of that clarity in the minds of thousands of activists across the country. Flowing from this has emerged the clear need to forge a new mass movement. The key debates are about how? with whom? and with what strategic weapons can we prepare for 2014 and beyond?

A crisis of legitimacy

In South Africa for more than 20 years the ruling class's neo-liberal policies - privatisation, commercialisation and relaxing of controls over the movement of Big Business's profits - could be stabilised because it was done by the party which had led the liberation movement. The ANC's liberation credentials made it possible for people to accept the widening gap between the rich and the majority, and the betrayal of all the hopes of the people in the struggle against apartheid.

Now the ANC is associated with corruption and the looting of the state. All the organs of the state - from the police, to the National Prosecutions Authority, to all the political parties in Parliament are riddled with in-fighting over resources and patronage. The

disgrace of the Mandela family fighting over his burial place and wealth, the spectre of a shady relationship between Zuma and the Guptas - all of these spoke volumes about the nature of this elite and its state to the thousands of activists struggling for jobs and basic services.

But the ANC's waning legitimacy is also a problem for the neo-liberal project of the ruling class and so there is evidence of sections of Big Business hedging its bets, feeling out the possibilities of the DA and Agang as alternatives to the ANC.

New political alignments

Out of the squabbles over state tenders within the ANC, and the embers of Marikana, Julius Malema's Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) has emerged bearing the slogans of nationalisation of the mines and land redistribution. Despite consisting of tenderpreneurs seeking new opportunities for business ventures within the state, and with the backing of wealthy BEE capitalists, Malema's EFF has capitalised on the anti-ANC anger amongst the unemployed youth and students.

Many activists are attracted by the EFF's radical rhetoric and the fact that it appears to be the only option of expressing radical opposition to the

ANC by the time of the 2014 elections. This attraction has also seen left wing groups seek to either merge with EFF or suggest electoral pacts. This despite the fact that Malema and his cohorts have had little to do with the nearly 10 years' revolts of the poor and, apart from providing money and resources to the victims of the Marikana massacre, very little to do with the 2012 strike wave.

NUMSA's battles with COSATU

Inside the COSATU leadership the scandal around Zwelenzima Vavi's sexual relationship with a COSATU employee provided the opportunity for a faction of leaders to drive him out of COSATU and consolidate the SACP and the ANC's hold over it.

This has seen NUMSA rally in Vavi's defence, arguing that his suspension is part of an attempt to turn COSATU into a "labour desk" of the ANC. The NUMSA leadership has been mounting a campaign against the NDP and has threatened to withhold support for the ANC in the 2014 elections. It has called for a COSATU Special Congress and is pressuring the COSATU President to hold it. NUMSA hopes at such a Congress not only to overturn Vavi's suspension, but to schedule new COSATU elections.

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CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE AND JOIN CURRENT DEBATES...
ILRIG's website is being re-designed to make it more exciting and accessible. The site will allow viewers to find out more about ILRIG, its history, staff and board. It provides an interactive space for interested people to engage with ILRIG's work on globalisation - read articles, contribute to discussion, and order publications. Website members will receive regular updates on issues of interest.
ILRIG website - www.ilrig.org

US DESTABILISATION IN SOMALIA: BEHIND NAIROBI'S WESTGATE MALL ATTACKS

The scenes of Nairobi's Westgate Mall siege that aired across television in late September raise important questions about how we respond to accusations of terrorism coming to Africa. We saw 72 people dead, 200 more wounded and the attack being linked to group called Al-Shabab.

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coming to Africa. We saw 72 people dead, 200 more wounded and the attack being linked to group called Al-Shabab.

The Somali militant youth group, Al-Shabab, has been battling Somalia's USA-backed transitional government for the past four years.

They are called a terrorist organisation and a wing of Al-Qaeda by the USA. Al-Shabab said it staged the Nairobi attack in response to Kenya's army carrying out operations in Somalia. There are 4,000 Kenyan troops in Somalia supporting the USA-backed UN force fighting rebels since 2011.

The framing of the Westgate siege as Al-Qaeda terrorism allows for an erasure of a history of the destruction of Somalia by waves of USA-backed troops, which has killed many more people than the tragic Mall violence of September, and continues to destabilise the lives of millions.

Looking at what led to the creation of youth-driven armed conflict gives insights into the root causes of the Westgate siege. Without it our attention is directed away from the larger political battles of the powerful elite, and leaves us paralyzed in dismay at the deaths of innocent civilians and at seemingly endemic violence.

Who Messed Up Somalia and Why?

Until the late 1970s Somalia was self-sufficient despite drought conditions.

British and Italian colonisation claimed Somalia for its strategic location and cash crop potential in the 19th century. Italian Ethiopia annexed the ethnically Somali province of Ogaden. Britain invaded Italian Somalia during World War II and granted Somalia independence in 1960.

Regaining Ogaden from Ethiopia was a goal of independent Somalia during the military regime of Siad Barre (1969-1991). Fueled by Cold War politics Ethiopia was armed by the West and Somalia by the East, until 1974 when the anti-monarchy revolution shifted Ethiopia to the Soviet bloc. This motivated the USA to prop up the Barre regime, and encourage Somalia to invade Ethiopia. A three-year war ensued with high casualties and economic devastation.

With the end of the Cold War, the USA dropped Barre, who was overthrown by a military rebellion in 1991. The victorious generals fell out over dividing up power. Access to arms became the most effective way to access dwindling food stocks. Sub-clans became armed entities competing for scarce and privatised resources.

Since the end of the Cold War, "humanitarian intervention" has been the new pretext for neo-colonial invasions. With 3.2 million people under threat of starvation, the USA used famine to justify military intervention. Using helicopter gunships in urban areas they killed more than 1000 Somalis in one afternoon in 1993; while UN humanitarian aid forces killed many more. European "peace keeping" soldiers were accused of torture and sexual abuse.

Yet Somalia was blamed for these atrocities. "Failed state" status is used as justification for Western militarism. Between 1995 and 2006

fourteen governments came and went. In the north, Somaliland, declared independence after Barre's fall in 1991 and Puntland followed suit in 1998. For decades Somalia has been the target of direct and indirect imperial interventions that increase suffering and prolong dysfunction.

Al-Shabab's Response

Al-Shabab (Arabic for "the youth") became popular by suppressing armed gangs engaged in highway robbery and kidnapping in 2005. Their aim: a rigidly interpreted Islamic state. They started as young militia members challenging the clan loyalties in the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). The ICU responded by allying with Al-Shabab, who brought unity across clan divides. ICU leadership generally restrained Al-Shabab's more fundamentalist tendencies. The ICU was relatively popular and provided some sense of peace and security. And then the Ethiopians invaded.

Ethiopia resented the ICU because a reunited Somalia would raise the question of Ogaden, and because they were profiting through arrangements with various clan-based armed factions and with Somaliland and Puntland.

The USA, Ethiopia's ally, opposed the ICU as part of the Islamophobic "war on terror." They funneled money to anti-ICU warlords. When this failed, they sponsored an Ethiopian invasion and directly killed civilians in the name of targeting Al-Qaeda militants.

The ICU went into exile and the burden of resisting the Ethiopians fell to Al-Shabab. Without the restraining influence of the ICU leadership, Al-Shabab developed a more violent and fundamentalist interpretation of sharia law. By 2009 when Ethiopia withdrew,



Source: cbsi.com

10,000 were dead, and 1.1 million Somalis were refugees, many fleeing to Kenya.

The CIA continues to interfere with Somali intelligence agents. Their Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) conducts attacks and arms “counterterrorism operations” in Africa. The JSOC has a base in Kenya and runs terrorism awareness campaigns against Al-Shabab recruitment of Somali Americans.

Terrorism as an Excuse to Terrorise

In 2009 Oxfam announced that 3.5 million Somalis were starving. Global food prices, fuelled by speculation, soared in 2010. Cereal prices in Somalia rose by 240%. USA intervention was directly tied to the famine - arming militia groups made farming impossible and hunger inevitable. The USA blamed Al-Shabab for intervening in food distribution. But aid officials argued no, a lack of resources is what is failing food aid programs.

Yet in Obama’s humanitarian aid package for famine in Somalia, \$75 million will be spent on “counterterrorism.” The use of images of “heavily armed, half-starved teenagers raiding food convoys” are used to justify distributing arms before food. Aid that could counter disintegration is used to fuel ongoing division and displacement. The Al-Shabab attacks suit the USA’s agenda, giving justification for increasing intervention.

Similarly justified by “terrorism,” UN funding will be channeled into displacing half a million Somali’s living in Kenya. In November Kenya announced that refugees have become a shield for those who pose a “security threat” to Kenya. They have launched a new programme of sending Somali’s back to Somalia, despite decades of living in Kenya, establishing homes and supplying remittances that make up a key part of Somalia’s survival economy.

Rebuilding a shattered Somalia requires: Kenyan ruling elites end their alliance with American operatives based there; an exposure of USA-backed interference; and reparations for decades of damage. Causing division and war is a USA specialty. A war on what the “war on terrorism” covers up is needed to counter the seemingly irrational eruptions of “terrorist” violence like the Westgate mall attack. Resisting the ways in which the USA and its African allies in power paint themselves as saviours of catastrophes of the poor, which they deny either causing or profiting from, is a crucial element for strategizing a liberating way forward.

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In the meantime NUMSA has itself called a Special Congress in December 2013 where it will amongst other things discuss the Alliance, the 2014 elections and even whether NUMSA should begin recruiting workers currently falling under NUM, SATAWU and CEPWAWU.

Some people are speculating that NUMSA could be the anchor of new movement or even a new Party.

What do we mean by a new movement?

For many people the anger felt at the ANC’s betrayal and the immanence of the 2014 elections means that what we immediately need is a new political party. The IEC reports that since Marikana dozens of new parties have been registered. On the right of the political spectrum the DA tries to project itself as a more efficient representative of neo-liberalism than the ANC. Because it lacks the liberation credentials however the DA has to try and claim a liberation struggle history – falsely. Meanwhile Agang trades on Ramphela’s association with Steve Biko whilst appealing to Big Business and the upper middle classes by promoting even more privatisation.

This period is significant in that it marks a political break with the ANC. The talk of a need for a new movement expresses such a political break. But a movement is not the same as political party. Whereas a new movement might give rise to a party – which can express the programmatic vision of that movement - a party without movement is merely another election project.

The mass movement of the 1970s and 1980s explicitly rejected apartheid and all its attempts at reforms, expressed the political will of millions of activists and incorporated trade unions, civics, women’s and youth organisations and even enjoyed the support of sections of the middle classes who wanted to oppose apartheid – and yet was politically heterogeneous. By definition under apartheid it was excluded from contesting elections. Yet it shaped electoral choices and it was in direct contestation with the political power in the state even when it boycotted the tri-cameral election reforms of 1983/4.

The political break that activists have made with the ANC and its Alliance partners needs a new movement which is beyond what any political party can offer at this stage. Any future political party will have to struggle for hegemony within such a movement.

Currently the seeds of this new movement lie in the community-based struggles, the strike committees and the new self-organised workers struggles post Marikana – including the mineworkers and the farmworkers. Preparing for the political debates in 2014 can help to speed up this development of a movement but provided we strengthen and deepen our struggles and not trade them off against short-term electoral politics.



THE CRISIS, US GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN AND THE DEBT CEILING

Source: todayonline.com

The partial US government 'shutdown'

- In the US, the state is headed by the President but legislation must be passed by the two houses of parliament – the Senate and the House of Representatives. Current president, Barack Obama, is from the Democratic Party but the House Of Representatives has a majority from the Republican Party.
- During the current crisis both Democrats and Republicans have wanted to reduce corporate taxes whilst cutting spending on housing, education and welfare for the working class
- In the USA healthcare is largely privatised and only available for the wealthy. For many years successive Democratic Party candidates have campaigned that they would reform healthcare and make public healthcare available, only to break this promise when in power. Under Barack Obama , the Democratic Part came up with a much watered-down form of healthcare – a state-administered health insurance linked to the private sector.

- But even this was unacceptable to the Republicans. They tried to block the health insurance law – which they called “Obamacare” - in the constitutional court, but lost.
- On the 1st of October, this came to a head when the House of Representatives needed to vote in order to release funding for the state for the 2013/14 financial year
- The Republican Party, along with some Democrats, refused to allow the funds to be approved unless there were immediate cuts in spending on housing, education, healthcare, social security and nutrition programmes for the working class
- The “Tea Party” - an extreme right wing faction of the Republicans - insisted on the complete abandonment of Obamacare
- As result of the vote going against approving funding for the state’s 2013/14 budget, parts of the US government had to shut down
- While this was going on the Democratic and Republican Parties entered into negotiations around a new round of spending cuts and

how rapidly they would be put in place so that the funding for the state for 2013/14 could be approved

- The partial shutdown lasted two weeks, and only ended on the 17th of October when the US state had to raise its debt or risk the possibility of defaulting on its debt repayments
- A US state default would have negatively impacted on the financial corporations that hold most of its debt, along with the Chinese state, and would have dramatically deepened the crisis

What was shutdown?

- From the start the class nature of the partial US government shutdown was clear
- State functions like the military, police and courts continued to receive funding and remained fully operational
- Likewise, top state officials including Senators, Congresspeople, the President etc. continued to be fully paid
- Quantitative easing and the handing of money by the state over to

Overview

- For more than five years now capitalism globally and in the United States (US) has been in a crisis
- In the US this has seen almost zero growth in the economy over this period, growing unemployment and high corporate and individual debt levels
- During this period the US state has spent trillions of dollars bailing out banks and other corporations
- It has also printed money and given banks and corporations 85 billion US dollars a month through quantitative easing (QE) to keep them afloat and ensure some type of profitability for them
- The bailouts for corporations and QE has added massively to the US states debt, which is now over 16 trillion US dollars
- While it has been doling out trillions to corporations and the rich, however, it has been attacking the working class to get it to pay for the crisis
- This has seen state spending on welfare, housing, education and pensions for the working class slashed
- Two linked events – the partial US government ‘shutdown’ and the actions of the ruling class around raising the debt ceiling - once again highlighted how this attack on the working class by the US ruling class and its state is intensifying

financial corporations continued uninterrupted

- Essential programmes for the working class, however, were shutdown
- This included nutritional programmes for children from working class communities and health facilities in working class areas
- Along with this millions of low paid workers for the state were not paid for the two weeks of the partial shutdown

The partial shutdown, the debt ceiling and another attack on the working class

- After almost two weeks of the partial government shutdown, on the 17th October, the US state needed to raise its debt ceiling, of 16.6 trillion, in order to borrow to finance its operations and pay interest on its debt
- If the debt ceiling was not raised the US state would have defaulted on some of its debt repayments by the end of October or early November – this was concerning for financial

corporations and other states that hold most of the US's debt

- The partial US government shutdown was seen by politicians and capitalists as being a hindrance to raising the debt ceiling
- As a result, the Democratic and Republican Parties reached a deal
- This saw them pass an Act to raise the US states debt ceiling through to the 7th of February 2014 and approve the funding of the US state until the 15th of January 2014
- As part of this, the Democratic and Republican Parties set up a joint committee to once again cut spending on social security, health, housing, nutrition programmes, and infrastructure maintenance by trillions of dollars going forward
- This is part of the ruling class in the US ensuring the working class pays for the crisis
- The fact that the world's richest country was on the verge of defaulting on its debt shows how deep the current crisis of capitalism is and gives lie to those who claim that that the crisis is over.



Source: Latuff



Source: csudh.edu

WATER IS LIFE

BUT NOT FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S WORKING CLASS WOMEN



Women's access to water and their role in household management does not exist in a vacuum, but it is shaped by what society has viewed as women's and men's work. And it is for this reason that the patriarchal government's cutbacks operate on the basis of a gender assumption that women will be there to CARE.

In this new democratic South Africa there is always plenty of water and electricity for business – for multinational corporations, the white rich and the small black elite - and not enough for the working class. Township residents around Cape Town are caught in limbo with the installation of "Water Management Devices" (WMDs) that will see them having to depend on their neighbours for water. A Water Management Device is a valve which immediately cuts off your water when you have reached the maximum allowed of 350 litres per day. It forces poor people to police their own use of water and then punishes them if they do not immediately pay for more water.

Mandisa's story

Mandisa, a 34 year old woman, is one of thousands of Guguletu residents running her mother's household on just

350 litres of water each day as a result of the City of Cape Town's installation of Water Management Devices.

"The reason I consented to the installation of the device is merely because the City officials promised me that my mother's municipal bill - which runs in huge arrears - would be scrapped. And, knowing that there are only 3 people working in our home, I agreed."

According to Mandisa the loss of employment has led to the decline in their household income and they are unable to pay for basic services like water and electricity. She claims that the family is forced to use the old ways of doing things:

"The use of candles and fire to prepare meals is becoming a norm because my mother can only afford to buy R200.00 electricity. Three weeks after the installation of the water devices, our family realized that we are no longer able to do basic household chores as we used to before".

Mandisa comes from a female-headed family of twelve that has to juggle using water to prepare for meals, flush toilets and wash clothes.

This is not a unique story of Mandisa and her family but many township families are being targeted by the City and in most cases families have not been consulted.

The City forces these devices onto residents by deceit

The City of Cape Town's installation of these water devices has had dire consequences for working families and women. Firstly, the City's approach threatens family unity because most households are run by the family as a collective – and no individual decisions get taken. Secondly, community meetings are not called. Instead the City targets individual households. And thirdly, women's economic and domestic activities are adversely affected as a result of a limited water supply. The access to water – for cooking, to quench thirst, when taking tablets, to clean our bodies, to clean clothes, and to water plants - is one of the most fundamental human needs to sustain healthy and decent lives.

The City of Cape Town's officials approach households' individually and at a time when many people are out working, or seeking work. These officials speak to pensioners, unemployed people, and teenagers who do not have the authority to make decisions about the running of their households. What they get told by these City officials is: *"The City will cut your water supply off if no payment is done with immediate effect."* Then an offer of water management device system is made, with a promise that arrears will be scrapped. The City does not provide communities with an option of affordable payment arrangement



THE STORY OF SIKHALA SONKE - THE WONDERKOP WOMAN'S ORGANISATION

Source: ILRIG Archive

plans that residents are legally entitled to enter into. The installation of the WMDs is discriminatory in that the 350 litre allowance of water per household applies only to black working class communities, and not in the suburbs where Helen Zille and Jacob Zuma reside.

WMDs and neo-liberalism

The Water Management Devices are consistent with the neo-liberal agenda of making public services conducive for private investors to make profits. Hence, the installation of WMDs is seen by service delivery activists as the same thing as pre-paid water meters. This is definitely another form of privatisation which has proven to have negative effects on the working class and on women. Privatisation and other neo-liberal policies add to the current social and economic crisis, and the ensuring misery falls even more on the women. The installation of water management devices in black working class townships is not a water supply upgrade project - as claimed by the City - but rather a patriarchal capitalist attack on the working class and women. Privatisation and the commodification of services is nothing else but a reintroduction of the imbalances created by the apartheid system.

With the end of apartheid in 1994, came the recognition of past injustices, and the need to establish a society based on equitable and democratic principles. Instead the new South Africa is reinventing injustice by adopting neoliberal policies that have entrenched the inequalities of the apartheid era. Both the ruling ANC government and the DA are well aware that the privatization of services damages the lives of working class women. The decision to exclude the working class when neo-liberal policies were crafted was a conscious decision. The working class is meant to foot the bill for these policies.

Setting up Sikhala Sonke woman's organisation was not an easy task when we were forming it. We were all in tears as women of Wonderkop in Marikana. It was just after the 16 August 2012 Marikana massacre.

Firstly we were so very disappointed and angry, and in sympathy with those mineworkers who were killed, injured or arrested. We were always with them - starting from the funeral, at the hospital, and even at the Court to support and mourn with their families.

Our aim and vision in Sikhala Sonke was to collect all the women to form a unity. It was not easy because most of the women were afraid, thinking about the killings. But we felt forced to form something. We were hoping that if we can combine as women with one voice then we can do more in our community. Another vision and aim was to create some jobs because we are not working. So we would like to start some projects and to change the situation of the Wonderkop Community. We know that we came from different tribes so we want unity and not racism at all. I know that in our organisation we are mixed - Xhosas, Tswanas, Sotho's and Mazulus. We only want development and unity and not division.

Up to so far we have started our project. But the problem is we don't have funds at all but only have a site for a garden and for the crèche. Also we would like to farm the pigs.

We have also decided to do a special drama called the Marikana Massacre. We don't want to sit and keep quiet. We want to do something. Through this drama we will express our pain and speak with one voice to the world. We want to show that 1) It is true that the most mineworkers are coming from the rural areas such as Eastern Cape,

KwaZulu Natal and in Lesotho, and 2) The month of August was abused by the Government and the mine management.

As far as I'm concerned it was not the first mine to strike like this. We thought that there might be dismissals of workers, but not killings. We were only expecting that as women of the world.

Our drama was so successful that we started to perform it on the 16th August 2013 at the commemoration of the massacre.

But now we would like to get some contributions so that we can travel all over the world to perform so that the world can see and hear our concerns and our sadness. And we want to show our children the false democracy which was established by the government. We would like to make a living history of Marikana 2012.

Our purpose is to see our organisation to be on high level - registered, developed and successfully functioning in the community. Here in Wonderkop there are no services like roads, electricity, water, houses and toilets or even a police station. We do have one clinic, but is not enough for our big population.

I will never forget that we have many challenges in this organisation. Like our councillor, which was elected in 2011. He doesn't like people who try to work with the communities. He even doesn't like our organisation. He does not want to recognise it. He is just criticising us. But he did nothing for the community from the beginning.

PHAMBILI SIKHALA SONKE PHAMBILI

WATHINTA ABAFAZI WATHINTA
IMBOKODO

From Primrose Sonti

On behalf of the members of Sikhala Sonke

MY ORGANISATION

Special Edition of Workers' World News for 2014

Next year will be a very important year in which the country will be having a General Election in the same year as the 20th anniversary of our victory over apartheid.

As we come to the end of 2013 all the parliamentary parties are gearing for 2014, while dozens of new parties are being formed and new political alignments shaped. In 2014 we will see the current struggles within COSATU coming to a head and it is also the earliest a Special Congress – called for by 9 affiliates – can be convened. 2014 is likely to be a year where the current ruling elite tries to trumpet its neoliberal project and claim it was all for our own good, while millions of people will debate the political choices open to us in the next year.

To clarify all these debates ILRIG will produce a special bumper edition of Workers' World News which will look at the debates within the ranks of activists as to how to build new movement in opposition to the current neo-liberal order.

**Wishing all activists and readers
a happy festive season and a new year
dedicated to strengthening our struggles
and building our organisations**

ILRIG Public Forums 2013

Every month ILRIG hosts a public forum to create the space for activist from the labour and social movements as well as other interested individuals to debate current issues.

All public forums are held every last Thursday night of the month at Community House, 41 Salt River Rd, Woodstock from 6-8:30. Transport home and refreshments are provided.

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