

### In this issue:

What does the outcome of the 2024 elections tell us about the state of South Africa's democracy?  
by Dale T McKinley

South African women demonstrate for Pakshan Azizi and Sharifa Muhammadi by *The Firat News Agency*

Gauteng Platform by *Anastasya Eliseeva*

Why Politicians Are Not Needed by *Shawn Hattingh*

The Struggle for a Dignified Life in Chile by *MSDV*

Prince Sicalo and the bullet-proof vest: The case of the failed DRC coup by *Sandile Dlamini*

Ru Be Ru by *Gülkan Noir Siyâhe*

Song for Freedom by *Lara Reddy*

# WHAT DOES THE OUTCOME OF THE 2024 ELECTIONS TELL US ABOUT THE STATE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S DEMOCRACY?

by Dale T McKinley



"We Did That" mural depicts the organisers Rasheed Ajamu (Phreedom Jawn), Letisha Golafaie, Samantha Rise Roberson, Nikki Grant, and Nelini Stamp  
Collection: Mural Arts Philadelphia, Public Art. Location: Arch St & N 13th St. Date: 2021  
Collaborators: City of Philadelphia (funder), Conrad Benner (curator)

## A large majority has opted out.

A quick statistical summary of the 2024 elections reveals, in no uncertain terms, that participation in elections is no longer the choice of a large majority of people eligible to vote (i.e. all South African citizens over the age of 18)

Number Of Eligible Voters	Number Of Registered Voters	Number Of Actual Voters	Number Of Actual Voters As a % Of Eligible Voters
42,3 MILLION	27,8 MILLION	16,2 MILLION	38,3%

The mainstream media continues to tell us that the "turnout" for these elections was 58.6%, but that is a measurement of actual voters as a percentage of registered voters. The more accurate and truthful measurement of electoral participation is the measurement of actual voters as a percentage of eligible voters – 38,3%. In other words, just over one third of those able to vote chose to do so in these elections. A whopping majority of 61,7% opted out.

While there are no doubt different reasons for why so many chose not to vote, the bottom line is that in 2024 and going forward, our country's system of representative democracy only 'represents' the political choices of a minority of citizens. The standard definitions of the word 'democracy' is 'government by the people' and 'rule of the majority'. Since neither applies to the 'Government of National Unity' (GNU) that now 'rules' the country, the key question is: What kind of democracy do we have in South Africa and who does it benefit?

## The right is on the rise

While the signs have been there for a long time, the 2024 elections have confirmed that all main political parties and the electoral terrain on which they operate, have moved to the right. On the economic front, the three main GNU players – the African National Congress (ANC), Democratic Alliance (DA) and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) – are more or less on the same elite-led, capitalist neoliberal and austerity page, while the authoritarian, top-down, acquisitive and pseudo-radical

state centered approach of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) parties, has nothing in common with the interests of the working class and a progressive commitment to dealing with systemic poverty, economic inequality and exclusion of the poor.

On the socio-political front, the most visible and consistent confirmation of a further turn to the right, has been the mainstreaming of xenophobia. We need look no further than the hate-filled invective and threats of violence against 'foreigners' of the Patriotic Alliance (PA), the largely untruthful and misdirected economic arguments of ActionSA (ASA) and the IFP, the 'law and order'/border control chest-beating of the DA or the deep seated immigration system corruption, cynicism and mal-governance of the ANC. Tragically, the 2024 elections have gone a long way in legitimising the return and mainstreaming of a politics of hate and division grounded in a narrow identitarianism centered on nationality, ethnicity, race, sexuality and gender.

Most all political parties now champion socially conservative positions, paying lip service to climate change/environmental destruction, feeding an intolerance of dissent and difference, (re)embracing misogyny and patriarchal attitudes, as well as adopting a hyper marketized, competitive, mean-spirited and individualistic approach to societal development. Put simply, at the heart of this rise of right-wing politics and practice is a mythologizing of the past, a manipulation of 'culture', and a celebration of a dog-eat-dog world.

## The commodification of formal politics

Many have argued that the increase in the number of political parties that contested the elections represents a positive development, bringing increased democratic competition and thus also, electoral choice. While such arguments might have elements of subjective truth to them, the fact is that most of the main parties represent different shades of gray when it comes to ideology and key policies. In a phrase, 'it's all about money and power'. In objective terms, the 2024 elections showed us that more than ever, that the world of politics - whether organisationally, institutionally and/or relationally – is now fully commodified.

Such commodification, which simply describes a situation where everything political is bought and sold and up for sale, is not something that has just arisen recently. Similar to what we are witnessing on a more global scale, what is 'new' is the sheer scale and widening impact of it. The core reason for this is that in South Africa the vast majority of the party political world - and by extension the world of government both institutional and representative - is now almost wholly centered on material advancement at the personal, social group and class levels.

The 2024 elections have served as further confirmation that amongst the party participants the ethos of public service, of mutual benefit and collective consciousness and, of advancing a broader and inclusive societal interest, has become about as rare as a clean municipal audit. It is indeed a sign of our times that formal politics is now almost completely dominated by a desire to make a (generally very good) living, to service personal egos and, to sustain and expand group/class power.

Continues on page 2

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to issue 128 of Workers World News. The theme this quarter combines last issue's theme – Internationalism - with blossoming, creative and imaginative ways to strengthen, deepen, contextualise, decolonise and feminise, horizontal, inclusive, dynamic and evolving participatory democracy, as compared to the internationally failing representative democracy which has stolen the voices, and lives of the popular class.

On page 1, Dale McKinley continues with his series on the South African elections, and covers the so-called Government of National Unity (GNU), where there only seems to be a unity and strengthening of the rich and right wing while the divisions in the left persist effecting organising and mobilising on a grassroots level, 30 years after the fall of Apartheid. The mural is about showing up for the community, rallying together, combining efforts towards mutual aid, hope and community care. This image honors the community organisers at the forefront of movements throughout the history of the City of Philadelphia, US.

For our popular poster, artist Anastasya Eliseeva created an artwork that reads: "THE WORLD IS THIRSTY FOR THE FREEDOM YOU HOLD", where the image aligns showing hands united, rooted in the people's power to sustain an equitable, free and peaceful world. It is certainly the time to organise and mobilise the working class and women, and it is only together that we are stronger, planted with love and solidarity, as depicted with the hands together.

Gender news outlines the non-disclosed direct action that was organised by a group of activists in Johannesburg, outside the Iranian Embassy, in solidarity with the international call to stop the execution of 2 women comrades in Iran, noted for its death penalty enforced for even trivial crimes but mostly crimes against women and a chokingly high execution rate. This was part of the NO TO EXECUTION, YES TO FREE LIFE International Campaign.

In our essential Educational Series, Shawn Hattingh explains why Politicians Are Not Needed and continues with the seeds that formed the roots of the successful organising and defense strategy of the autonomous community of Cheran, Mexico - free from corrupt politicians, gangs and police, to blossom into the successful practice of deep democracy, rooted in community participation and a feminist ethos organised around fires while elder women cooked.

An inspiring article follows in International News, by an autonomously run collective from Chile, *Movimiento Solidario Vida Digna* (Dignified Life Solidarity Movement) produced and agreed upon together, with translations and slight modifications by Jonathan Payn. The graphic depiction of their organising and struggle strategy and structures of their movement, was modified from their original image provided.

In the Southern African Investigation Section is an intriguing story linking two corrupt countries, Eswatini (Swaziland) and the DRC, with two shady characters, that reveals the sordid nature of money, power and corruption for self-serving ends, bullet-proofed from justice. This seems to be the narrative of nation-state democracy in present times - where rampant corruption has eroded every fabric of society, patriarchal capitalist, neo-liberal, individualistic mentalities prevailing as the mental illness of our times, and this is the hierarchical structure of modern day "democracies" from the state down to the family - where the personal is political and democratisation and feminisation must happen everywhere.

From the ILRIG Resource Centre, Anastasya Eliseeva reports on the 2nd Gauteng Platform, outlines and critiques the programme's activities, presentations and workshops, where a generally successful weekend was expressed and enjoyed by the varied group of activists.

We conclude this issue with our Creative Resistance section, where 2 poems, crossing borders, from Turkiye, Ru Be Ru by Gülkan Noir Siyâhe, about the hypocrisies of war and capitalist egos, then a much loved slam poem by Lara Reddy, finally settled into print from it's first performance in a classroom in Khayelitsha, Western Cape, South Africa, to it's 2 final performances in Europe in Sicilia and Istanbul, with the other featured poet.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Workers World News issue 128 but more-so grow from it and please share freely.

For comments to the Editor, letters, articles, or artwork, contact Lara Reddy - [lara@ilrig.org.za](mailto:lara@ilrig.org.za)

## POSTER

ON PAGE 7  
"HANDS TOGETHER STRONGER"  
Anastasya Eliseeva



**GENDER NEWS** From The First News Agency (ANF)

# SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN DEMONSTRATE FOR PAKSHAN AZIZI AND SHARIFA MUHAMMADI



Photograph: Abahlali Freedom Park

**From Gauteng to Gilan, women stand as one!"**

**Women from South Africa's Gauteng province demonstrated in Pretoria for women's rights activists Pakshnan Azizi and Sharifeh Mohammadi, who have been sentenced to death in Iran.**

The East Kurdistan Free Women's Community (KJAR), an umbrella of organisations fighting for women's rights in East Kurdistan, launched the campaign "No to Death, Yes to Free Life" on the 14th anniversary of the execution of Shirin Alamhouli and her comrades on 9 May 2010.

Many women's organisations from different parts of the world have expressed their support for the campaign, which also received support from South African activists.

The group protested against the death sentences against journalist and social worker Pakshnan Azizi and activist Sharifeh Mohammadi. Pakshnan Azizi was sentenced to death on 23 July and Sharifeh Mohammadi on 4 July. Both women were subjected to severe torture and inhuman treatment during weeks of detention.

A group of women staged a demonstration outside the Iranian Embassy in Pretoria on 10 August to join the united voice of the "No to Death, Yes to Free Life" campaign.

The press statement made on behalf of women in solidarity with Pakshnan Azizi and

Sharifeh Mohammadi reads as follows:

"We, the women of the city of Johannesburg in Gauteng, South Africa, join the world-wide voices condemning the misogynistic Iranian regime that has imposed death sentences on our comrades, journalist Pakshnan Azizi and women's rights activist Sharifeh Mohammadi. They are two of the countless political prisoners facing death for false charges made by a lawless, murderous state.

This month in South Africa we commemorate the South African women who organised against Apartheid.

Various organisations came together - Sehid Ivana Hoffman Group, Abahlali Base, Freedom Park Women's Group, Black Consciousness Movement, Sehid Aaron Bushnel Group, Food Not

Bombs Group, International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG).

We chose to use Women's day - 9th of August - to organise and prepare for action the following day. We shared information, created pamphlets and banners and discussed the issue as well as the way forward together.

On 10 August, we held a demonstration outside the Iranian Embassy in Pretoria, to join the united voice of the "No to Executions, Yes to Free Life" campaign.

We plan to continue organising and working together in the spirit of women united, against the unjust executions and other injustices we face. We will not stop till all are free.

**FROM THE ILRIG RESOURCE CENTRE** by Anastasya Eliseeva

## GAUTENG PLATFORM

**ILRIG held a successful platform for partners- CBOs and movements, on 22-23 June, titled "Art of Freedom".**

It focused on international resistance, feminisation of movements, alternative economy-based organising and creativity within the struggle.

In attendance were various community organisations - Orange Farm Human Rights, Thembelihle Crisis Committee, Women in Agricultural Rural Movement, Abahlali base Freedom Park, PayTheGrants and Soweto Simqome Movement.

**Day 1 - Art, Internationalism and Autonomy**

Saturday morning started the platform with an interactive solidarity exercise showing the importance of care and love for one's comrades, and that we can only be stronger, together. Next, participants divided into working communes and began with a discussion: what is Freedom?

First presentation was on Internationalism and Women Liberation with lessons from Jineology from the Kurdish Freedom Movement. This was followed by a presentation on "Resistance Art in a time of Capitalist Crisis". Next, participants were invited to create Resistance Art as an image or a message on a T-Shirt.

In the afternoon, the communes were given guiding questions for the Organisational Platform to discuss and prepare for the presentation the following day.

Possibly the liveliest part of the event was the Theatre of the Oppressed performances after dinner. Each commune was asked to select or create either song, dance, drama, or storytelling



Photograph: Anastasya

to perform with the theme - Art of Freedom. The results were enjoyed by all in the spirit of artistic resistance and dramatizations, showing the solidarity and the positive spirit of the activists.

**Day 2: Words from the Communes**

The day was in the hands of the communes, as a platform to present their answers to prior questions, and discuss their organisations, the challenges, the solutions and the hopes going forward.

Lastly, the activists assisted with a great closing

act of solidarity with International Resistance. We created and recorded a solidarity video for the Kurdish political prisoner and revolutionary - Abdullah Öcalan, and all political prisoners worldwide.

The platform facilitated valuable discussions on international resistance and the feminisation of movements, and nurtured creativity and solidarity among diverse activist groups committed to advancing grassroots working class power and feminism.

**WHAT DOES THE OUTCOME OF THE 2024 ELECTIONS TELL US ABOUT THE STATE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S DEMOCRACY?**  
continued from page 1:

**Beyond elections and formal electoral politics: deepening and expanding real democracy**

Despite their serious limitations and dangers, we must always remind ourselves that representative democratic elections do have their place in any meaningful democratic system and can positively act as basis and motivator for deepening and

expanding democracy. Put another way, while institutional democratic forms and practices are often necessary, unless they are linked and answerable to, direct democratic participation and control by the demos (the people), they always have and will gradually turn democracy into oligarchy. In the process, the majority of people are dis-empowered precisely because the foundations of political, economic and social power are (re)located to the tripartite alliance of party, state and capital. Is this

not the key message coming out of the 2024 elections?

The struggles to simultaneously engage the immediate and shorter-term realities of the 2024 electoral as well as to deepen and expand real democracy in South Africa, have to take place in a general domestic and global context that is clearly not on the side of the majority of humanity who are workers and the poor, and certainly not on the side of social and political progressives. Regardless, it is on the terrain

of participatory democracy that the battles for basic facts/truths as well as political and socio-economic equality, inclusivity and justice must be waged. The objective realities that constitute the multiple crises in South Africa and which have been put on full display as a result of the 2024 elections, are giving rise to a political, social and economic situation that is fluid and thus wide open to change.

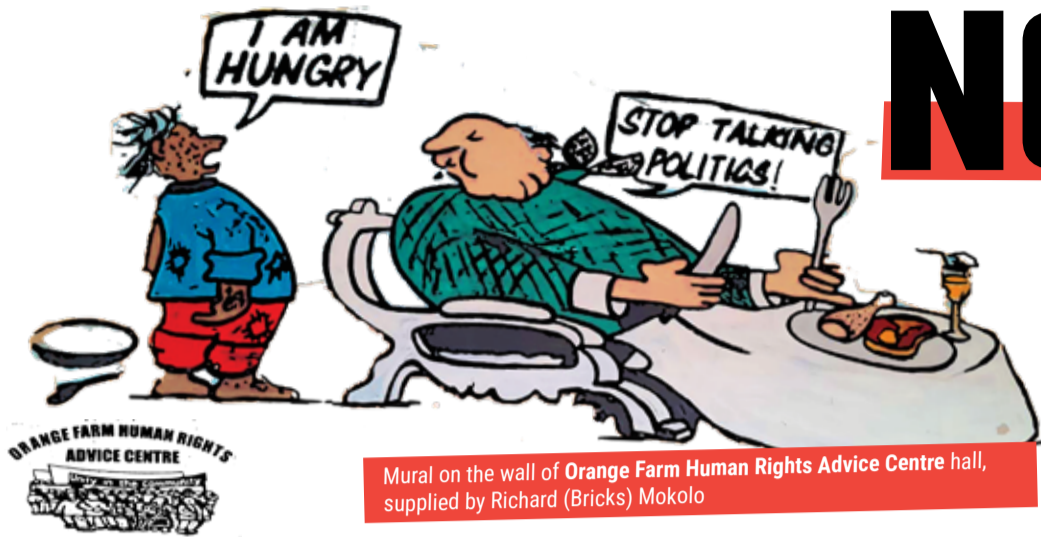




EDUCATIONAL SERIES:

PART 7 | by Shawn Hattingh

# WHY POLITICIANS ARE NOT NEEDED



Mural on the wall of Orange Farm Human Rights Advice Centre hall, supplied by Richard (Bricks) Mokolo

In this series, we are looking at examples of movements that have built structures that aimed to become alternatives to the state and capitalism; not just as part of a revolution but as part of building towards one. As such, these movements-built organisations of self-governance as part of daily resistance so that people involved could develop the skills to collectively run society during and after a revolution without the need for politicians and bosses. In this too, they demonstrated that there was and is an alternative to electoral politics.

Over the past few years there has been a growing mistrust about the parliamentary system and representative government. It seems at every level of the state, it has become increasingly difficult to hold politicians accountable. Part of the reason is that in a representative democracy, as opposed to direct democracy, power is given to politicians to make decisions and laws – while we vote for them, they decide what happens.

Indeed, many politicians have used their executive and legislative power, along with the wide-spread practices of outsourcing and tendering, to develop patronage networks and to accumulate personal wealth, flaunting it with the latest BMW or Breitling.

Yet, we deserve better and in some places in the world, although still small, we can see glimpses of a better system built by people themselves without handing power to politicians (and that also aims to build communal economies as opposed to capitalist ones). These places hold lessons for South Africa and perhaps show that some form of working-class self-governance, based on direct democracy, can surely be built. One place where a directly democratic system is being built today is in a town called Cheran in Mexico, with a population of 17 000. It is a story to inspire us all!

## Cheran

In the early 2000s, Cheran had been badly impacted by the neoliberal policies. During this period, the state had ended the subsidies it provided to small-scale farmers and consequently many of Cheran's residents had become unemployed. At the same time, gangs became entrenched. Gradually, as the power of the gangs grew, they started diversifying their operations and became involved in the illegal logging of the forests surrounding the town. As part of this, the gangs bribed local politicians and the police to turn a blind eye and even funded election campaigns.

On the lands that had been deforested, gangs along with corporations began planting avocados. Avocado farming is highly water intensive and caused massive ecological damage, including diminishing the town's water resources. By 2011, gangs were threatening to seize the town's last water resource.

Around 2005 the community, led by women, began organizing to try and resist. Meetings were held and at times members of the gangs were confronted, which often led to community members being assassinated. When the last communal water source was threatened, however, the entire town rose in

revolt. This culminated with the events of 15 April 2011.

On that day, women organised for the local church bells to ring as a signal to the community to come out and confront the gangs. Eventually the community overcame the gangs, subdued their members, and seized their weapons. The mayor and the local politicians, rather than supporting the community, ordered the police to intervene to ensure the captured gang members were released. The community prevented the police from doing this and, in fact, drove the police and politicians out of the town. Barricades were then erected at the entrances of the town and an armed community militia (using the weapons seized from the gangs) prevented the politicians, police and gangs from re-entering. The Mexican state hesitated to send in the military, partly because of the experience of the costs of oppressing an uprising in 2006 in another Mexican province (Oaxaca).

## Assembly system

Once the local politicians and police had been expelled, assemblies were held on every street to decide how the town should be run. In these, people themselves decided that street level assemblies should run the town permanently and the local government would be dissolved. It was, thus, decided that the community would start permanently self-governing through the assembly system.

In this assembly system, anyone over the age of 12 can speak and vote in the assemblies. It is in these assemblies that people decide how services should be provided. The local schools and healthcare facilities are linked to the assemblies. Each assembly member should contribute labour time and resources – if they have – to ensure services are maintained and that education and healthcare are improved.

The assemblies are arranged into 4 districts. Each district elects mandated delegates to a coordinating council to ensure education, health and public amenities are run properly and collectively across the town. The mandates to co-

ordinate come from the street assemblies and if they are not followed, delegates are recalled.

Along with building self-governance, there has also been an attempt to build a communal and ecological economy. A commune has been established to work on a reforestation programme and through this 50% of the forest around Cheran has been restored. Another commune supplies the saplings for reforestation. Likewise, there are communes involved in tapping and selling resin and a communal run sawmill and timbering project to cut down diseased trees. In this way, the people of Cheran are attempting to build a communal economy that is not in the hands of capitalists, politicians or gangs.

A critic would, however, point out that this is all good and well, but Cheran is only a small community, and such experiments could never move beyond the local. Nonetheless, Cheran does not seek to be an isolated enclave and has links to movements nationally and internationally, including the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). The AANES is similar in form, in terms of direct democracy based on street level structures called communes, to Cheran, but on a vastly bigger scale. The AANES involves 6 million people living together practicing a form of direct democracy where the base has power to make decisions. Under this system, called Democratic Confederalism, the assemblies in neighbourhoods, towns, cities and provinces are federated together through mandated delegates.

Consequently, there are experiments that demonstrate that a different politics, based on working class power and direct democracy, can be built and that states and politicians are not needed if there is an organised working-class power. Perhaps it is time for people living in South Africa to also start thinking about more democratic and accountable forms of governance to the one we have. Perhaps it is time to begin to imagine and build towards something better beyond the corrupt and/or self-aggrandising politicians and political parties we now have.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Based on an organisational document collectively adopted by MSVD.

# THE STRUGGLE FOR A DIGNIFIED LIFE IN CHILE

Movimiento Solidario Vida Digna (Dignified Life Solidarity Movement) is a social movement that brings together different grassroots organisations – such as Women's Assemblies, Community Schools, Supply Networks and Neighbourhood Committees – in different communities in Santiago Province and Valparaiso, Chile. The movement is united by the conviction that organisation and struggle are the tools necessary for working class and poor people to defend their communities and to conquer their basic rights (health, education, housing, work, pensions, migration, etc.); which have been taken away by a system of multiple

oppressions (class, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity) where power is concentrated in the hands of a minority.

For this reason, activists in MSVD have the objectives both of improving their living conditions to achieve a Dignified Life and of changing this unjust reality by promoting social transformation through the construction of organised communities.

However, this construction is based on certain principles, a strategy and tactics. For these activists, the definition of these aspects is fundamental, because it is very important to make policies with principles, but understanding that they alone are not enough to elaborate or develop interventions in realities that change all the time. For such a task, Vida Digna Solidarity Movement has a general strategy (under the principles) and tactical guidelines (under the strategy), taking into account, they insist, specific

contexts and relations of forces. The definition of the organisation's fundamental elements, with a brief explanation of their meaning, was detailed in a Popular Education Pamphlet in December 2018, and is reproduced here with slight modifications by the translator.

## MSVD's principles

The principles are guides or general orientations of social construction. They are the organisation's maximum values, which define the policy (different from others) from which it starts, but they are also the organisation's ultimate aspirations and therefore have a durability beyond any given time; they extend beyond the situations of the moment. They are like the compass that always shows the organisation the direction towards which it must advance. It is for this reason that the construction defines certain parameters that guide how the activists organise themselves and under what logics and perspectives they agree to carry out the construction of MSVD, and that cross the organisation throughout its development. They are:

## Active participation and grassroots democracy

Vida Digna Solidarity Movement does not work with bosses or leaders who concentrate power and orientations on the direction of the organisation. This implies that the definitions and decisions about what commits activists in MSVD are taken democratically in a direct way, from the organised comrades themselves, through the different

organisational bodies; from the grassroots assemblies in each territory, to the spaces of the Table of Responsibilities, (Mesa de responsables) and others of synthesis, promoting a policy of participation and collective construction. Everyone must be protagonists in the assemblies and in decision-making, and not only the leaders, who only play a coordinating and spokesperson role. Thus, MSVD promotes the protagonism of the grassroots, which implies participation in the planning and decision-making processes in the different instances of the neighbourhood groups.

## Class autonomy and independence

FOR MSVD, it is the rank and file who defend our rights and fight against those who oppress us, without depending on any structure alien to our condition and our class interests, independently of the state, the municipalities and/or the political parties, and therefore MSVD does not consider contesting these representative positions through elections. Nor does it want anyone to draw up its definitions and condition its struggles; since its criteria, agreements, rules of operation and plans of struggle are its own.

The principles of the organisation are defined by it as an organisation, autonomously, without letting anyone or any outside institution interfere in this.

Continues on next page



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Continued.

**Direct action**

MSVD believes that the recovery of our usurped rights as the working class and poor will only be achieved through struggle and militancy, which will allow us to resolve the problems that affect us directly, without intermediaries. As it is an organisation of struggle, it is through struggle and its own actions that MSVD will achieve its demands and political objectives. In deciding the course of the organisation, MSVD relies on the strength of its own members to achieve a dignified life.

**Class solidarity and mutual aid**

The unity of all and support in the different struggles are fundamental to achieve its objectives and build a dignified life. In this sense, MSVD believes that they must weave a dense network between the Movement and other like-minded organisations with which they can coordinate in different initiatives, in order to achieve their rights together. They also believe in solidarity and mutual support among neighbours in the face of any circumstance that afflicts families, such as health problems, death, unemployment, food supply, through actions such as ollas communes\*, bingos, single meals, mortuary fees, etc.

**Against the system of patriarchal domination**

MSVD understands that our society is constituted on the basis of patriarchal violence, an issue that is even more radicalised in popular territories and neighbourhoods. That is why they propose to depatriarchalise their actions and behaviour, both inside and outside the organisation, in order to dismantle machismo, sexism, homophobia and hatred towards women. From this point of view, they propose that we as activists must wage collective and individual struggles against all patriarchal mandates, where communities can disobey them in whatever culture, age, social class or place they belong to.

**Anti-racism and interculturalism**

Migratory flows have transformed our society, turning our neighbourhoods into diverse places with multiple cultures within them. This is why MSVD is committed to building diverse communities, where respect and solidarity between peoples prevail over racism, xenophobia and intolerance. They also understand that migration is a social right, which cannot be restricted to a few, but for all those who need it.

**Popular education**

Popular education and training are part of the backbone of the organisation, as it seeks to strengthen organisational processes such as assemblies, meetings and activities in general, through dialogue, putting body and soul into each of them. They also believe that popular education has the task of disseminating the new values that will build a more supportive and inclusive society, since popular education promotes active participation and allows for the development of culture and identity in the organisation.

**MSVD's strategy**

The MSVD's strategy attempts to develop and realise the policy projection set out in its principles. If the principles are the compass, then the strategy is the path they want to take to reach the objectives of the principles. Strategy, unlike principles, is time-bound. It determines deadlines to be followed and objectives that the organisation should meet in accordance with those deadlines. For example, if the strategic objective is to build organised

communities, it should stipulate long-term timeframes for doing so, and then break these time frames down into shorter time frames with objectives closer in time.

In this sense, the organisation decided to develop a strategy of self-management, which conceives that social transformation must be based on the protagonism of the organised people. With this, they want to differentiate themselves from other approaches that conceive transformation as the work of a political party, a leader or as the result of the action of a minority group isolated from the grassroots.

This strategy is materialised in the territories through the construction of organised communities, which can plan and decide in a participatory manner how to collectively manage the different problems that may arise in a given territory.

Thus, the perspective of building a Social Movement is related to the ability to recognise the different problems that afflict neighbourhoods and territories in order to improve them, and to try to find solutions together through struggle, mobilisation and organisation. Therefore, they believe that with

the strength of the territories, they can build organised communities that prefigure a dignified life autonomously in the present, here and now.

**MSVD's tactics**

Tactics are tied to shorter time frames and the current situation. For example, who to ally with depending on the needs of each committee, or what type of organisation to create depending on the pressing need (such as action groups, welfare commissions, ollas comunes, etc.).

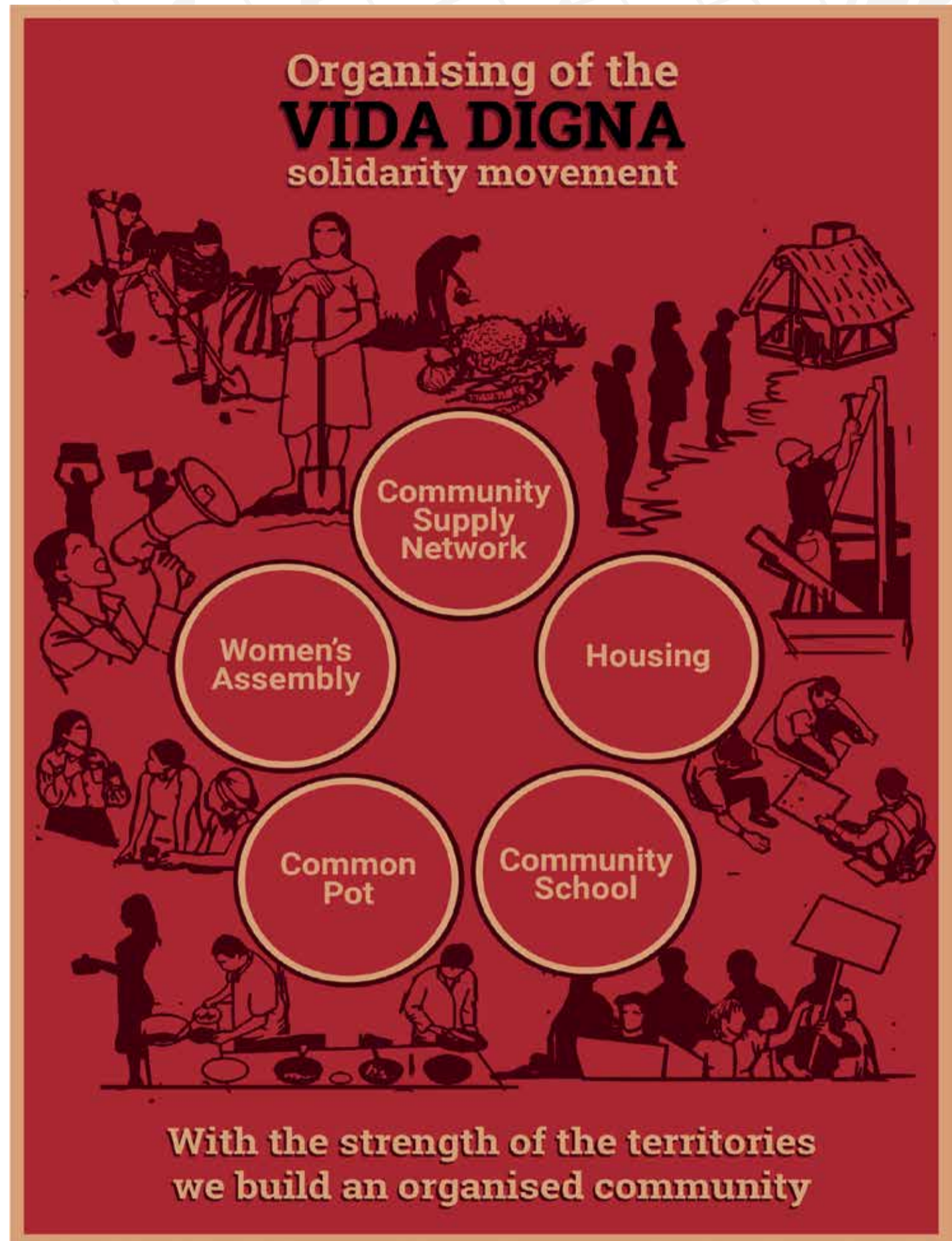
Tactics are flexible, awakening in every fighter the capacity to create. In the class struggle, creativity is the main weapon to defeat the enemies. Or the urgency of creating working commissions according to the struggle of each committee and how to do it according to the context, always related to the strategy (building organised communities) and with the compass of principles in hand (class independence = no political parties).

Therefore, tactics are the actions taken on a day-to-day basis, directed towards the achievement of the strategy. In the mass

movement, tactics are all the forms of struggles used and combined with each other, carried out consistently in a certain period. The realisation of political lines will be possible if the mass movement succeeds in developing a tactical plan, which is concretised in the various lines of action.

\* *Olla común (common pot)*, is an instance of community participation between neighbours and residents who seek to solve the basic need to eat. It is very similar to a soup kitchen, although with a more self-managed and independent character.

*Ollas comunes* are developed in different ways: collecting food among the neighbours or through collections of money in neighborhood associations to buy food. They are born within social contexts of poverty and unemployment, as subsistence organizations or "popular micro-associations that developed to satisfy a basic and functional need", hunger. (Adapted from Wikipedia).



Graphic artwork based on the original image provided by MSVD





# PRINCE SICALO AND THE BULLET-PROOF VEST

## THE CASE OF THE FAILED DRC COUP

The death of Christian Malanga, the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC's) failed coup leader, has come as a relief to the people of Swaziland, while delivering a blow to King Mswati III and his eldest son, Prince Sicalo. He died at a time when there were already deep investigations into the relationship he had with the prince and his Prince Sicalo Foundation.

### Who was Christian Malanga and what was his connection with the Swazi royal family?

Christian Malanga, a native of the DRC, then Zaire, first arrived in Swaziland as a refugee in 1993 with his family. He attended St. Paul's Primary School in Manzini before leaving the country for the United States in 1998. Despite his early departure, Malanga's ties to Swaziland remained, eventually evolving into a mutually beneficial relationship with Prince Sicalo.

Malanga's connection to Swaziland and his relationship with Prince Sicalo has not been widely talked about. The scant information that surfaced after Malanga's death in May 2024, has so far barely touched on the true nature of their association. Their relationship extended beyond a simple friendship, involving a complicated web of business, military, and political interests.

Prince Sicalo provided Malanga with state protection, including securing him a Swazi refugee passport (Passport Number: 80002095), despite him being a US citizen. He used the document to move in and out of the country. For example, in late 2023, he, along with Benjamin Reuben Zalman Polun (who has since been arrested in DRC for his role in the failed coup) exited Swaziland through the Mhlumeni Border Post bound for Maputo, Mozambique. They were traveling in a car driven by one Sanele Goodenough Dlamini, a Swazi national. Malanga used his Swazi refugee passport and Polun his United States passport (Passport number: 677477739). Malanga also used his Swazi document for his suspicious business activities jointly with Polun and American Cole Ducey who is currently still in Swaziland.

The prince also opened up access to the country's security services as evidenced by videos of meetings between Malanga and the country's security chiefs. He further integrated him into his inner circle, appointing him into the board of the Prince Sicalo Foundation.

In June 2019, Malanga founded Global Solutions LTD in Swaziland, a company ostensibly involved in consulting, mining, agriculture, intelligence, security, and training. Although the company's website has since been taken down, it named as its directors, Benjamin Reuben Zalman Polun (who has since been arrested in DRC for his role in the failed coup), Hannah Newmark Polun (Polun's wife) and Patricia Parker (Malanga's sister). Global Solutions served as a front for funding rebel military activities in the DRC, with Prince Sicalo securing its business through Swaziland government contracts.

This means that Swazi taxes were effectively funding Malanga's warlord activities in the DRC via his front company in Swaziland. The royal family's influence in Swaziland's economy ensured Global Solutions' unfettered access to lucrative contracts in both the public and private sectors. The prince also helped secure the company's gold mining venture in northern Swaziland, where profits were funneled into Malanga's military activities in the DRC and to the prince via the Prince Sicalo Foundation.

### Malanga's military expertise was important to Prince Sicalo.

In return for access to state resources and protection, Malanga provided his skills and troops to support the prince's activities. This mutually beneficial relationship reached a critical point during the June 2021 unrest in Swaziland. As the mass democratic movement gained momentum, threatening the royal family's hold on power, Prince Sicalo and his father King Mswati, could not fully trust the Swazi army which was divided with many officers not in favour of the killing of unarmed protesters. He turned to Malanga and his rebel army for assistance.

Malanga and his troops played a critical role in quelling the uprising which resulted in the deaths of over 100 Swazis. Witnesses recall black African mercenaries, identified by their French language rather than English, manning roadblocks and collaborating with the Swazi army and police, as well as the Afrikaner mercenaries led by Arno Pienaar. Malanga's involvement was direct and brutal. According to sources in the Swazi military, he was allegedly piloting the helicopter from which political activist Mlandvo Khumalo was shot by a sniper. They further informed us that during the unrest, the army air wing officers were removed from their base in Matsapha and replaced by French-speaking military operatives that had the full trust of Prince Sicalo.

Malanga trained as a pilot in the United States where he also worked as a used car salesman. In 2007, he left the US for DRC where he joined the army. He quickly rose through the ranks, attaining the position of Captain before leaving the DRC army.

The relationship between Malanga and Prince Sicalo was further evidenced in a video posted by Malanga, where he referred to Sicalo as his "military advisor and confidante" in an event in Swaziland on 11 September 2023. This connection was not just limited to military support, Malanga used Swazi refugee camps as recruitment centres for his rebel army. Under the guise of charity, he visited Malindza Refugee Centre in January 2021 to donate food on behalf of the Prince Sicalo Foundation, while actually recruiting for his military efforts in the DRC.

The DRC government would be negligent if it did not scrutinise the potential involvement of Prince Sicalo, a high-ranking government official as Principal Secretary and de facto Minister of Defence and senior prince in the attempted coup. Malanga himself stated that the prince served as his military advisor, making it doubtful that Malanga would undertake such a military operation without his advisor's full knowledge, support and assistance. Furthermore, the fact that Malanga was accompanied by Polun, an American Israeli whose wife Hannah Newmark Polun also sits on Prince Sicalo Foundation's board, only compounds the murky circumstances.

### Swaziland, and more specifically the Swazi royal family, would be a logical starting point for investigating the failed coup attempt.

Given Prince Sicalo's apparent involvement, it would not be unreasonable to presume that his father, King Mswati, was also aware of this plan. One must wonder what the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has to say about one member country's potential role in attempting to destabilise another member nation. A meeting of the SADC Heads of State and Government held the day after the attempted coup, on 20 May

**"Malanga used Swazi refugee camps as recruitment centres for his rebel army."**



Illustration based on supplied photograph.

2024, strongly condemned the coup. It remains to be seen what SADC's stance will be on the involvement of Swaziland in hosting, aiding and abetting the coup leaders.

### Plot thickens as Malanga says Prince Sicalo gave him a bulletproof vest

A key figure in the recently failed coup attempt in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has implicated a senior member of Swaziland's royal family of providing him with military equipment. The disclosure was made during a military court hearing, confirming the connection between the failed coup attempt and the Swazi royal family.

Marcel Malanga, one of more than 50 defendants accused of participating in the attempted coup, claimed under oath that he had received a bulletproof vest as a personal gift from Prince Sicalo, the firstborn son of King Mswati.

The revelation came to light when Malanga was questioned about a photograph in which he and his late father, Christian Malanga, were seen wearing identical military fatigues in Swaziland. According to Marcel Malanga's testimony, the vest was part of a collection of "gifts" presented to him by Prince Sicalo following a business meeting he had with the prince.

"The prince gave me a bag filled with gifts," Malanga stated during the hearing. "Among these was the bulletproof vest that I was later photographed wearing with my father." While the exact contents of the bag remain undisclosed, the nature of the known item has led to speculation about the possible military character of the other gifts.

The younger Malanga's testimony sheds light on the close relationship between his father, Christian Malanga and Prince Sicalo. Christian Malanga, who was living at Tubungu Estate near Manzini, had previously referred to the prince as his "military advisor", a claim that Prince Sicalo has neither confirmed nor denied. Malanga's involvement with the royal family extended to his role as a board member of the Prince Sicalo Foundation, further

emphasising the depth of their connection.

As the trial unfolds, more details about the events leading up to the failed coup attempt have come to light. Speaking through an interpreter due not speaking French, Marcel Malanga gave a detailed account of his journey from Swaziland to the DRC. He testified that in mid-April, he left Swaziland for Johannesburg, South Africa with his friend Tyler Thompson. In Johannesburg, they took a flight to Angola before making their way by road to the DRC. Upon arrival in the DRC they took refuge in a guesthouse where they stayed out of public view until the night of the attempted coup.

Malanga's friend, Tyler Thompson, was also arrested and now faces charges alongside Malanga and the other defendants in connection with the foiled coup. The involvement of Thompson, a US national with no familial relations to the DRC, adds another international dimension to the case. The Swazi government for its part, has denied any official involvement in the DRC's political affairs, claiming that it maintains a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other sovereign nations.

Despite this denial, Marcel Malanga's courtroom testimony confirms at least some level of personal connection between the prince and the Malanga family. The gift of a bulletproof vest, coupled with Christian Malanga's insistence that the prince was his military advisor, suggests a relationship that goes beyond mere friendship. As the trial continues, questions persist about the full extent of the Swazi royal family in the coup attempt and the nature of the relationships between the accused and Prince Sicalo in particular.

Question is, why did Prince Sicalo give Marcel Malanga a bulletproof vest?

\* pseudonym used for security reasons given repressive situation in Swaziland)



## Ru Be Ru

by Gülkan Noir Siyâhe



November the 11th,  
Premature 39 Babies'  
Oxygen was cut  
at  
Al - Shiffa Hospital  
Day by Day  
doctors, nurses tried to keep them Alive  
One week passed  
All of them died  
One by One

biggest rocket sent  
celebrated  
space invaded  
yesterday

Ru Be Ru

"Is there Life on Mars?"

A documentary poem dedicated to the Gazan Children by Poet Gülkan Noir from İstanbul, Türkiye. (Ru Be Ru, is a phrase in Persian and also was used in old Turkish. It means 'face to face'.)

## Song for Freedom

by Lara Reddy

Freedom's my salvation.  
Frees me from damnation.  
Take me to a free nation.  
There ... I'll find my station!

Turntable, turn the tables.  
Torn into the fables.  
Take a few hours!  
Of their tedious time  
Time, time, heals all wounds?  
Not the one's borne,  
Breaking the backs of  
women, workers and elders' bones,  
Gripped by rusting foul kings  
Getting us to lay their stones.  
Rewarded for their richly finds,  
Dug up by us, their drones.  
Their longing to move quickly.  
The hands of a false theory  
While we must revel in our own  
liberated class's, culture and creations

Music's is my salvation.  
Frees me from damnation.  
Take me to a free nation.  
There ... I'll find my station!

Rolling, rolling, into the bay  
Where the mountain turned a table  
And look down, view their glorious fable.  
Rolling, rolling down vast realities,  
The stagnant flat-the hypocrisies'  
In these apartheid special geographies  
Where 2 lands lay together  
Here and everywhere  
Fence between the rich and the poor  
Two worlds' unknown of each other  
Besides these barbed memories  
Breathing in and out the tragedies  
Beating, beating, inside of us  
All this hatred, all this pain  
Chains -make us go -so insane.  
Are all our efforts being in vain?  
Are we letting the "leaders" take our lives?

In all the shackles built by the ruling class  
We are forced to live in the city's farce.  
Terror spelt on our faces, wrapped in  
Chaos, coins, and confusion  
One hell of an oppressive delusion  
Colours- like blood on baby's faces  
In the rhythm of bodies breaking  
In the factories, fields and oceans rising.  
In the occupied war-torn territories  
In the patriarchal, barbaric monarchies.  
Beating, beating, hard into the night  
In the struggle and the same fight  
We find a hope in sobriety, for some,  
A hope in intoxicated delusionary  
magic realities  
While the chosen "leaders" fill trains  
with gravy  
While our pots remain empty and unsavory  
Clashing with conditions  
Set by treadmill traditions!  
And the narcissism of nations!  
Breaking, hard into the day  
We'll brave our own way.  
No matter what their system says.  
Turn the covers, the regime of truth in all.  
Turn of the trendy lies, creep and crawl!  
Cannot cross all of them deadly polls!

Resistance is my satisfaction,  
Frees me from stagnation.  
Take me to a free nation!  
There I'll find my station!  
Dark into the day  
So, come what may  
Workers burn as sun on hay.  
Are the wicked here to stay?  
Groping, growing, into the day.  
Searching for their salvation

To fund those abominable ways  
No rest, no peace, for us to lay  
Enjoy a smoke on the daylight hay  
Friends and hevaes sing for a better day  
Midnights children fly, then die to  
have a say.  
Palestine still burns into a bloody  
perturbed bay  
Children drop like fresh fruit flies in  
December hay.  
Rojava stands strong to sustain our  
free days  
While Swaziland stinks in toxic  
patriarchal ways  
War goes on regardless of what we  
people say

A Free world is our salvation.  
Frees us from damnation.  
Take us to this free nation.  
There we'll find our station!

Turntable, turn the tables.  
Sing me a song of days  
Long and gone and days  
Soon to be born  
Reach into the thirsty throng.  
The state tv and social media bong  
And twist its necktie for a salient song.

Shut up, shut up,  
All you dumb people.  
Not you  
Who cannot dare speak,  
Or you  
Who the truth does seek.  
Speak up, Speak up!  
Through you  
Who the justice leaks  
Stay still, stay still  
You who...  
Wait to be filled.  
What's the hurry?  
Money's fury?  
Cease, Cease-  
All the senseless - Slaughters!  
Of children, wives, and daughters  
Children- protect- we ought to!  
Murder them-is what they dam do!  
Shut up, speak up, stand up!  
Regain you may!  
Not only on the 1st of May!  
Not only on Madiba's Day!  
Human rights just one day's stay?  
Listen to the wanting working classes say.  
My wager is- the class war-here to stay.  
My vote is-the no vote-ny must obey.

Listen to my sweetened say!  
It won't be got the system's way.  
Even in destined democracies bay  
Where Freedom's something you pay

Freedom is my ambition,  
Frees me from damnation.  
Take me to a free nation.  
There I'll find my station!

Breathe, breathe, as if alive.  
Peep heads out the corporate hive  
Monsanto's not bearing fruit to strive  
Ronald McDonald's not bloody alive  
Our children's backs stabbed by knives  
Our countries wealth in exploited wives  
Who try to give our children their lives  
Too many working bees  
Too few upright knees  
Let's do something, please!  
And not just for a trifle tease!  
Life must have a longer lease!  
Suck the honey!  
Hog the money!  
You think that's funny?  
Is this our world so phony?  
Tell the robot soldier  
And the coward hunter  
And the president who signs the paper  
Put down your pens  
Put down your guns  
Leave the army-run-run-run  
There's real warmth in the daily sun.  
So, run...  
Away from the uppers' tricks  
Who will use you like bricks,  
To build their mansions slick  
Where our mothers raise their children, sick.  
While their own their lives just  
aimlessly, tick  
Tock, ticking, tucking, tacking for salvation.

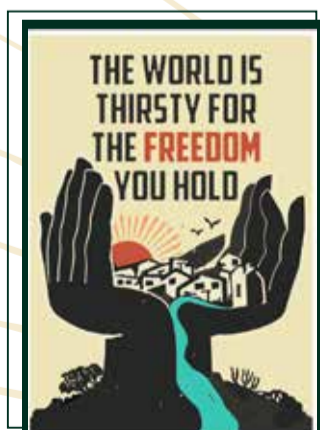
Struggle's my salvation.  
Frees me from damnation.  
Take me to a Zapatista nation.  
There I'll find my station  
Take me to Cheran or Ciaco  
I'll certainly hop that station.  
Take me to eKhenana.  
My hometown, how I love ya.  
At that famous Durban station,  
Underground it's all the same station  
Women will serve society its freedoms  
And say fight you to the fascist nations!

Remembering Maegan-Dhanishta.  
9/2/2000-15/4/2000

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Are you involved in progressive struggles or grassroots workplace/community organising that needs solidarity or that you think more activists should be made aware of? Do you have an analysis of or insights into a struggle or social/political/economic issue or development – whether local, regional or international – that is of interest or relevance to progressive/working class activists and struggles in South Africa that you would like to share? Do you have questions/comments about or disagreements with something published in Workers' World News?

Send us your article (max. 600 words) by email or Facebook private message and we will consider publishing it in a future issue.



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THE WORLD IS  
THIRSTY FOR  
THE **FREEDOM**  
YOU HOLD

