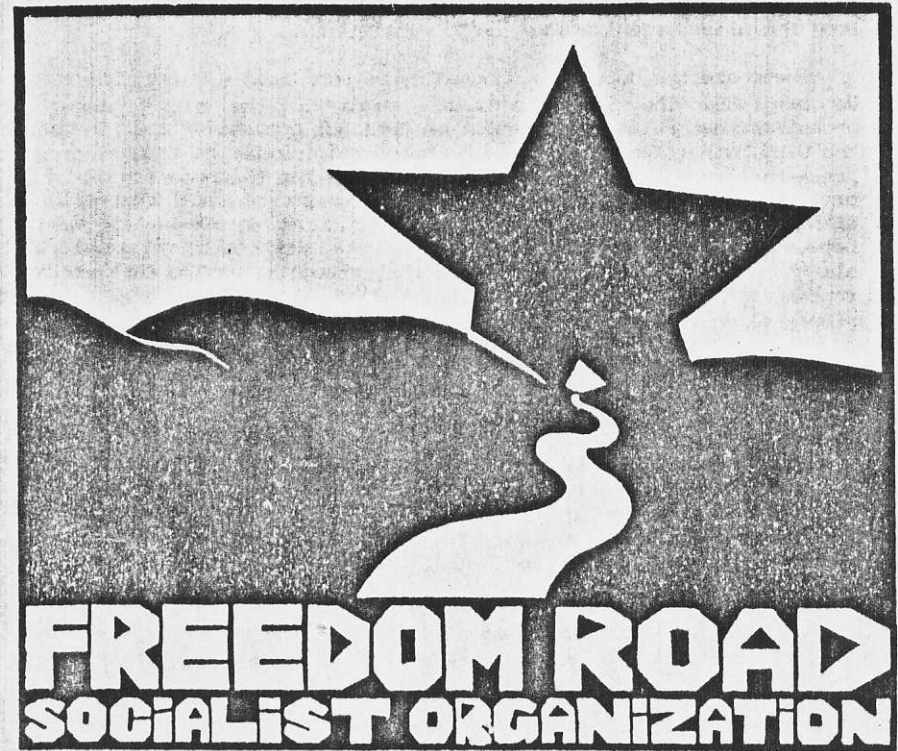
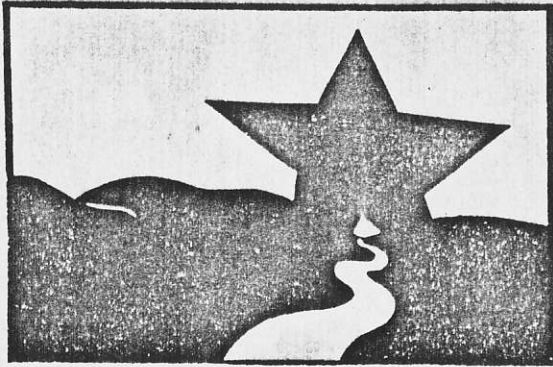


Unity Documents:



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INTRODUCTION

Revolutionary unity is always precious, often elusive, and over the years U.S. socialists have had a good deal of trouble building and preserving it. The Marxist-Leninist movement of the early '70s, which despite great promise had collapsed by the end of the decade, was not widely known for unifying the people or the Left. Yet two determined survivors of that movement--the Proletarian Unity League and the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters--have recently united in the Freedom Road Socialist Organization.

These are the documents adopted by Freedom Road's Unity Conference of October 1985. They include a lengthy summary of the unity process, organizational rules, a statement on national oppression and liberation in the U.S., other "bottom lines" for membership, excerpts from a presentation on Rainbow politics, guidelines for the practice of criticism--self-criticism, and a short paper on political repression. Although these documents are the result of sometimes exhausting debate between and among the memberships of the PUL and RWH, they do not sum up all the unity that was built during that struggle; nor do they attempt to represent the entire position of the FRSO on all major issues. They simply served as the minimum basis for principled unification of the two founding organizations, and as such they are incomplete, often too general, and sometimes a little rhetorical. In some parts they are written in a kind of "Marxist-Leninist" shorthand, for which we apologize. Despite these drawbacks, the unity documents should give you a good sense of where Freedom Road is coming from, and where we hope to go.

The name "Freedom Road" calls to mind one of the greatest, most inspiring episodes of revolutionary struggle the people of our country have ever seen--the mass democratic upsurge in the South during and after the Civil War. It bears the mark of the Black movement, which in its centuries-old fight for freedom has always carried forward the demands of all progressive movements. And it unites with the aspiration of millions of people in the U.S. for freedom based on economic equality, political justice, and full popular participation in the exercise of political power. The Freedom Road Socialist Organization has a lot to live up to in that name, and with vital work in the unions, Black, women's and student movements, in electoral politics, for gay liberation, and in solidarity with Central America and South Africa, we look forward to making a much greater contribution than either the RWH or PUL could on their own.

UNITY STATEMENT ON NATIONAL OPPRESSION, NATIONAL LIBERATION AND SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

1. We stand for the right to self-determination up to and including secession for the Afro-American nation in the Southeast. As a result of the annexation by the U.S. of Mexican land, we also uphold the right to self-determination of the Chicano people in the Southwest. We join in the economic, political and cultural struggles for democratic rights, full equality, and freedom for all oppressed nationalities in the U.S., and call for independence for colonized Puerto Rico.

The oppression of Afro-American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Native American, Asian-American and other minority nationalities gives rise to independent, multi-class movements which--because of their strategic interest in the complete elimination of white-supremacist national oppression--have a revolutionary character. The different historical situations of the oppressed nationalities of course give rise to very different movements, and there are many class and even national contradictions within and among them (contradictions which are exploited to the fullest by the dominant white bourgeoisie). In general, we aim to build each movement as a broad united front encompassing all progressive strata and classes within each nationality, with the working class exercising as much leadership as possible. We work for a revolutionary socialist trend within each national movement. We also work for unity among the national movements, and for anti-racist unity with the multinational workers' movement and all progressive social movements.

The Afro-American movement in particular has played a leading role throughout U.S. history, carrying forward the demands of other progressive social movements cloaked in the garb of Black rights.

2. We support and encourage the independent organization of oppressed nationality revolutionaries and progressives, where they have determined it to be necessary. At the same time, we believe that a revolutionary leadership for this country must be multinational. We are committed to building a multinational Marxist-Leninist organization with viable oppressed nationality leadership and internal mechanisms to ensure equality in its functioning. There is no principled justification for the existence of all-white revolutionary organizations which do not from their inception seek to become multinational.

3. The main internal obstacle to the success of multinational progressive and revolutionary movements has come and comes today from white chauvinism, not from the nationalism of the oppressed nationalities.

4. U.S. capitalism was founded and flourished on the slave trade, the genocidal wars against the Native American population, the annexation of Mexican lands, and the importation of Chinese labor. National oppression is at the heart of U.S. economic, political and ideological traditions, and the oppression of the Afro-American people in particular has been central to the U.S. class struggle.

In this country national oppression takes a specific form: more than simply the domination of several nations and nationalities by an oppressor

nation, in the U.S. it entails the subjugation of all people of color by the majority white (or Anglo-American) nation, headed by the white imperialist bourgeoisie. National oppression in the U.S. is white-supremacist national oppression. And the privileges usually extended by the ruling class of an oppressor nation to all classes of that nation also take a specific form: in the U.S., national privileges are white privileges.

5. White-supremacist national oppression has two sides, one of which is the subjugation and exploitation of the many minority nationalities in the U.S. From the Southern planters to the robber barons, from Wall Street to the Imperial Valley, in agriculture, industry, mining, transport, communications and service, the U.S. ruling class has reaped enormous profits from the toil of oppressed nationality labor. The forced reduction of living standards, the deprivation of public services, the extortion of high rents for substandard housing and so on all add to the direct economic benefits of national oppression for U.S. capitalism.

The other side of national oppression in the U.S. is an historically evolved system of social control over the entire working class and other oppressed sectors (such as women). The systematic bourgeois policy of preferences for white labor (and white people generally) is directed not just against the oppressed nationalities, but against all workers and the people's forces as a whole. Simply put, capitalist production is profitable, and the institution of white supremacy helps ensure the continuation of that profit.

Compromise (whether conscious or unconscious) with the institutions of white-supremacist national oppression is not simply one among a number of shortcomings for labor: it constitutes the key political and ideological weakness of the workers' movement in this country. The strength of white chauvinist ideology, its deep roots within labor's ranks, indicates that its influence does not stem merely from the inherent appeal of any set of ideas. The main significance of white supremacy for white people lies in a system of white-skin privileges, a system of preferences for white people in employment, land usage and ownership, housing, immigration and society generally. This system propagates ideas of European superiority and other racist ideologies, and forms the material basis for white-supremacist thinking and for actions carried out by some backward sections of the white masses in defense of national oppression. It is this material basis which largely accounts for white labor's receptiveness to the widespread propagation of racist ideology through the media, schools, religious institutions and other ideological apparatuses. This ideology in turn reinforces the system of oppression and privilege.

By imposing relative advantages on the white workers, the bourgeoisie binds them to capitalist policy and drives a wedge between the white and oppressed nationality sections of the working class. Historically this home-grown form of bourgeois rule has been quite successful; the political effects of the racist differential represent the main obstacle to the development of a working-class movement for socialism. We therefore stand for the complete abolition of white national privileges in every sphere of U.S. society.

6. The bourgeois policy of discrimination for whites does not in any way

alter the fundamental fact of exploitation suffered by white workers. Nor do the interests of the masses of white workers lie with white supremacy. Many, especially in past generations, have experienced discrimination first-hand as impoverished immigrants. They are exploited by capital, harassed and brutalized by the police, and miseducated in capitalist schools. They are kept healthy only insofar as they contribute to the expanded reproduction of capital. And they are weakened in their daily struggles against these conditions by compromise--whether conscious or unconscious--with an entrenched system of preferences directed at whites. To the extent they compromise with that system, they are prevented from making common cause with oppressed nationality labor, from changing their lives and changing the world.

7. Unfortunately, from the original "union label" of the San Francisco cigar makers in 1859 to the anti-affirmative action lawsuits and charges of "reverse discrimination" today, the history of the U.S. workers' movement is replete with examples of sections of white labor defending outright the racist differential, and still more of the masses of white workers' passive acquiescence in that system of preferences.

Despite the many examples of Black-white labor solidarity during and after Reconstruction or in the founding of the CIO, in neither case was this unity able to withstand ruling class efforts to restructure the institutions of white supremacy. From the '30s on, for example, the capitalists reacted to popular upsurge in part by shaping reforms which insured the special status of white labor and of whites generally. The so-called "Negro-labor alliance" as it then existed could not withstand this assault. Insofar as white labor had first joined the alliance to defend its own separately conceived economic interests, it spurned its "allies" when integration into the ruling Keynesian liberal coalition appeared to offer a greater promise of economic security. Not post-war prosperity itself, but prosperity in a certain mold undermined the "Negro-labor alliance" of that day: GI and FHA housing loan programs, highway construction monies and other funds which moved so much of the white middle class and many white workers into home ownership; employer and governmental acceptance of industrial unionization coupled with an intransigent opposition to unionization of the heavily oppressed nationality agricultural workforce; a relatively greater employment security for organized white labor simultaneous with an escalating oppressed nationality unemployment rate; company-sponsored restructuring of union rights through the institution of separate union elections for different skill categories, separate departmental seniority lists and other measures that redrew the "color line" within the unionized industries; and so on.

After the war, U.S. imperialism embarked on its "American century," labor's left-wing was decimated, and any hopes for a progressive political realignment in the country were destroyed. The debacle of the CIO's post-war organizing campaign in the South, "Operation Dixie," revealed the utter collapse of the "Negro-labor alliance". After 1945 the labor movement went into a long period of stagnation and failed to make further gains in racial equality. The failure to organize extensively in the South meant that North-South wage differentials would increase with union wage gains in the North, leading eventually to the relocation of Northern

plants in Southern locales. The influx of Blacks into Northern industry in the post-war period would take place under conditions that reproduced enmity between Black and white workers and weakened the union movement as a whole. The accommodation to the racist status quo hampered labor's political program for liberal welfare state reform and for governmental commitment to full employment policies. As a result, U.S. workers in the post-war period have generally experienced higher unemployment rates and lower social welfare benefits than workers in other advanced capitalist countries.

Among imperialist powers (with the possible exception of the USSR), the U.S. can lay claim to the weakest of labor movements and the most isolated group of revolutionaries. The trade unions have been unable to break away from the capitalist political parties and have remained dominated by an entrenched labor aristocracy whose main source of strength historically has come through its defense of relative advantages for white labor.

8. Because the mass of white workers (unlike the labor aristocracy) have no objective class interest in white-supremacist national oppression, and because the privileges imposed on them by the capitalists are ruinous not only to their long-term struggle for socialism but also to their daily fight for economic and political reforms, they can be persuaded to recognize, confront and attack this pillar of bourgeois rule. Like everything else in our socialist project, winning white labor to making solidarity with its sisters and brothers of color will be a tough row to hoe, demanding patience, courage, imagination, wide tactical experimentation, and respect for the views, traditions and revolutionary potential of the entire working class. White revolutionaries in particular cannot wait for history, the economic crisis, the "fascist tide", or exemplary struggles of Black people to do this painstaking work for them. They have a special responsibility to organize white workers against all forms of national oppression and to combat racist ideology among them.

That work is impossible without drawing distinctions among the white workers. A thorough class analysis is needed here, but in its absence it helps to recognize that white workers today can be broken down into three groups with respect to national oppression:

The first, which includes many people absolutely but is relatively very small, comprises workers who believe in and practice the idea that "an injury to one is an injury to all," and who recognize an unjust pattern in the past and present treatment of oppressed nationality peoples. These workers most often have either long experience in integrated workforces, or have grown up in integrated communities.

The second grouping includes the overwhelming majority of white workers. It is very heterogeneous, but with respect to this issue it consists of people who generally acquiesce (consciously or unconsciously) in the system of preferences for white labor. Many believe that "there's good and bad in every race," and this fairmindedness can be built on. Many also have a basic idea of class solidarity which can go a long way in certain struggle situations. But this class consciousness is fundamentally skewed, because the middle white workers usually believe that racist discrimination is something in the past, and they are

indifferent or hostile to oppressed nationality struggles for equal rights. This middle grouping can be influenced and led to act by more progressive workers or all nationalities, but today--like white society as a whole--it is more receptive to the ideas (if not the actions) of the Right.

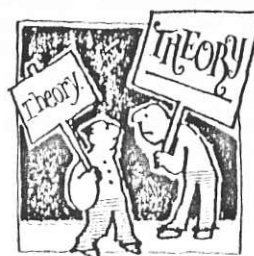
The third grouping among white workers, like the first, is relatively small--though unfortunately not small enough. Characterized by its active defense of privileges for white people, this grouping is of course largest in the South and Southwest. It is much broader, however, than its fringe elements such as the KKK or neo-Nazi sympathizers, including many people who often make use of legal channels and the traditional union apparatus to further their racist goals. This grouping is significant in the North, as recent busing and affirmative action battles have shown.

These distinctions may not get us far, but they at least get us beyond the common Left notions that white workers are irretrievably racist or, on the other hand, that their racism is a petty problem compared to their objective status as exploited producers of surplus value.

9. From the strategic point of view, the oppressed nationalities are more than "allies" of the multinational working class: their struggles must merge. The relation of these struggles goes beyond alliance against a common enemy, with each force focusing its attack according to its own political interests and priorities, and with each partner in the alliance supporting the "special demands" of the other. Instead, the direction of the main blow of the working-class movement's struggle for socialism must be the same as that of the autonomous national liberation movements: against white-supremacist bourgeois rule. The political programs of the national movements may vary widely, from the consolidation of full democratic rights to national independence; nor will they necessarily coincide with the workers' program of socialist revolution and working-class rule. But their demands, far from being separate "special demands", must become the class demands of the entire proletariat and be placed at the center of its own class strategy.

10. U.S. imperialism abroad has always been inextricably linked with white supremacy, and its rise at the turn of the century continued the colonial traditions of enslavement, genocidal wars against native populations, annexations and hemispheric domination. The right of the U.S. to rule over people of color throughout the world has been popularly conceived as an extension of the right of white people to subjugate people of color at home. The democratic aspirations of the majority peoples of the world are diametrically opposed to domination by the so-called white race.

Adopted October, 1985



BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MEMBERSHIP

(NOTE: For specific points on the national question and issues of organization, see the separate papers on those topics.)

1. Dedicated to the liberation of the working class from wage slavery, we oppose the capitalist system, in which a tiny class controls the means of production and thereby dominates society. We advocate the extension of the democratic rule of the working people of all nationalities to all aspects of society.

We are an organization committed to the working class in both its traditional and changing forms. Despite the current weaknesses of organized labor, we retain both our commitment to the trade unions as the most basic and comprehensive form of multinational working-class organization and our confidence in the labor movement as a leading force for fundamental social change. As revolutionary Marxists, the working class is our home.

2. We aim to build a revolutionary Marxist party of the working class. Such a party is necessary to safeguard the ideological, political and organizational independence of the working class and to fuse Marxism with its struggles. Such a party must be highly organized, both disciplined and democratic, in order to lead (whether alone or with other parties) the working class and all oppressed peoples to the overthrow of capitalism and through socialist construction. Such a party is necessary to develop Marxism and apply it to U.S. conditions.

It will be some time before the conditions necessary for the formation of such a party exist in the U.S. Nevertheless we must work now to fulfill this aim. As we promote the political organization of the oppressed masses, we seek to work with all others organizing similarly among the people.

3. Despite the relatively democratic form of government we enjoy, capitalist rule in the U.S. is based ultimately on a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Bourgeois rule is reinforced through a combination of ideology and repression, and rests in the final instance on violence. While we must take advantage of and work to gain influence within the capitalist state apparatus, the U.S. bourgeoisie will never allow that apparatus to be fundamentally transformed from within; nor will it abandon state power voluntarily. Ultimately, the capitalist state apparatus will have to be replaced with one corresponding to the democratic and socialist aims of working-class rule.

4. Various forms of repression--from mild to severe--are a constant of U.S. political life. Both the Left and the mass movements face repression today, mainly in the form of information-gathering. We will surely face greater repression tomorrow. We must protect both revolutionary and mass organizations today against current and future repression.

5. While bourgeois rule rests in the final instance on violence, its strength and durability lie in the dominance of bourgeois ideology

throughout society. With white and male chauvinism at its core, bourgeois ideology in the U.S. is laced with an anti-collective individualism and a hedonistic consumerism. Bourgeois hegemony has been strengthened (though not without struggle) through public schooling, television, film and other mass media.

We must build and support a wide variety of cultural resistance, recognizing that our political success will depend to a large extent on what Marx called a "reform of consciousness". The mechanisms of bourgeois ideological hegemony are complex and changing phenomena which need to be analyzed from a Marxist perspective.

6. Since we believe in the masses becoming masters of society, we practice the mass line--from the masses, to the masses--in all our work, both within and outside our organization.

7. We work to help build every struggle against every aspect of capitalist oppression, and to unite these struggles in a vast and vital movement, a united front encompassing all oppressed sectors in U.S. society and drawing on all progressive social movements.

8. A key task for Marxists in the trade unions today is to work for the unity and organization of the left wing. We need to unite both sections of this dispersed left wing around a politically left-wing program, with the struggle against national oppression at the core of its agenda. Attempts to unite the left wing must recognize the split within it, a split which can be overcome only by raising the demands of the Black, Latin and Asian left wing as those of the entire left wing and the entire working class.

Whether we explicitly call for a left-center alliance or some other form of united front orientation in the unions, we recognize that the left cannot change the unions, win a mass following for socialism, or even hold on to its victories by itself. We reject "left leadership only". In order for the left to expand its influence over wider circles of the working class, it is necessary to build an alliance between the left and the center. It is either the left and center against the right or the center and right against the left.

While the trade union left must maintain its independence and initiative, building united fronts and alliances with the center involves give-and-take, principled compromise, and so on. The united front in the unions will by necessity continue over a long period, and these compromises and agreements are not to be taken lightly: they are not temporary agreements with an enemy. There may be times when tactical alliances with sectors of the right will be necessary; these are temporary.

To a large degree the problem of left-center unity is the problem of unity of oppressed nationality and white workers, just as to a large degree uniting the left wing is also a problem of building unity of oppressed nationality and white workers. While it is critical that the left maintain its initiative to wage struggle against national oppression, the center will require patient work to deepen its understanding of these issues. Marxists should not write off the middle workers who are



indifferent or hostile to the fight against discrimination, nor should we fail to struggle against white chauvinism in the context of united fronts.

9. The complete emancipation of women is one of the two great democratic tasks of the U.S. socialist revolution (the liberation of the oppressed nationalities is the other). Correspondingly, the women's movement is--alongside the workers' and national movements--one of the key movements for fundamental social change in this country. The struggle for women's liberation must continue within the context of working-class rule and throughout the construction of socialism, since that liberation is not automatically achieved in the assumption of state power by the working class and its allies.

We challenge all existing social, political and economic structures which oppress women; we struggle for full equality and against male supremacy in every sphere of U.S. society. Touchstones of this struggle today include the fight for the ERA, for reproductive freedom, child care, comparable worth, affirmative action, and against violence against women.

We will fight for full equality for women within all revolutionary and progressive organizations in which we participate.

10. We stand for the complete liberation of lesbians and gay men: for full democratic rights under capitalism, and for the construction of a socialist society which will continue the fight for lesbian and gay liberation in all its institutions. The struggle against homophobia is part of the overall struggle against male supremacy; at the same time, it exists in its own right as a fight against systematic oppression and

repression. And today, opposing homophobia is a crucial part of countering the Right-wing offensive. The gay rights movement is progressive and revolutionaries should encourage and help lead it. Revolutionaries must also insist on full equality for homosexuals within our own organizations and all mass organizations within which we work.

11. The bourgeois-democratic electoral system has a strong hold on people's political imaginations in the U.S. For most people the electoral arena is the most accessible and acceptable arena for political action, and work there will be a crucial part of any revolutionary struggle. Revolutionary change in the U.S. will undoubtedly be preceded by a long period of legal electoral activity through which the Left and progressive movements will develop their independent political strength. A major goal of the Left's electoral work must be the creation of an independent political vehicle or third electoral party to represent the interests of the progressive popular movements.

Electoral activity takes on a special significance for the peoples' movements where it challenges the U.S. political system's racist denial of political power for oppressed peoples.

12. The Soviet Union is not socialist. A rival superpower of the U.S., it contends with the U.S. for world hegemony, holds many other nations in subjugation, and is one of the two main enemies of the world's peoples.

13. We recognize four fundamental contradictions at the world level: (a) the contradiction between the oppressed nations on the one hand and

imperialism and social-imperialism on the other; (b) the contradiction between the imperialist and social-imperialist countries and among the imperialist countries (especially between the two superpowers); (c) the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the capitalist countries; and (d) the contradiction between socialist countries on the one hand and imperialism and social-imperialism on the other.

The two superpowers, the U.S. and the USSR, are the main enemies of the world's peoples. As leaders of the two imperialist blocs (imperialist and social-imperialist), they are constantly maneuvering for relative advantage both against one another and within their respective blocs. In addition to the exploitation and superexploitation that these rival imperialists inflict on the overwhelming majority of the world's peoples, these inter-imperialist rivalries increase the chance of world war.

The countries, nations, and peoples of the Third World are the main force combating imperialism, colonialism and superpower hegemonism. Governments of these countries can also act as agents of imperialism and social-imperialism in oppressing the people as well as colluding with the international designs of the two superpowers; within the Third World, the national liberation movements are presently the most dynamic force for progress. Between the superpowers and the Third World stand the countries of the Second World. Some Second World countries have long imperialist histories and will not easily relinquish their exploitation of and control over many Third World countries. Likewise, the internal class contradictions within the Second World are often very sharp, and the proletariat in each capitalist country must carry on its class struggle against its ruling bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, the countries of the Second World are constantly subjected to interference, domination and threats of war by the two superpowers. They have legitimate national interests in relation to the U.S. and the USSR, and therefore can often be united with in the struggle against superpower hegemonism.

Internationally, we stand for peace, independence, and the right of all nations to self-determination. We are in solidarity with working-class revolutionary movements and organizations everywhere. Although international conditions change, requiring new strategies and broad united fronts, our international line is always anchored in the principle of proletarian internationalism. As revolutionaries living in one of the two superpowers, we bear a special responsibility to fight U.S. imperialism and to build solidarity with all struggles of the world's peoples against it. While Soviet aid (like U.S. aid) always aims to further imperialist interests, we do not condemn liberation movements or progressive governments simply for taking such aid. Each legitimate people's movement must determine its own main enemy--whether that be U.S. or Soviet imperialism, or some other oppressive regime of the Second or Third Worlds--and likewise must weigh on its own the risks and benefits of various tactical international alliances. If the struggle is just, we owe it our support.

14. We oppose all nuclear weapons. Since the main threat of world war, and nuclear war in particular, comes from the contention for world hegemony between the U.S. and the USSR, we must demand that the superpowers disarm first.

15. We exist to organize for socialism. The task of socialism is in essence one of making the masses of people into the conscious and active masters of society. Socialist construction must involve people learning how to control their own destinies through the development of social, political and economic institutions and structures which actually help them do it. This must be our foundation stone and starting point in looking at the present-day crisis of socialism.

Due to political events of at least the last forty years, most having to do with the experiences of communist parties in power, the perception is widespread today--not just in the U.S. but on a world scale--that socialism is an essentially coercive system. Every Marxist trend lives in the shadow of the failures of the Soviet experiment and of the Marxist parties in the advanced capitalist countries, and every Marxist trend is today in some form of crisis. Marxist theory has not yet responded adequately to the events creating this crisis, and its weaknesses have caused further difficulties for Marxist organizations attempting to present an alternative to advanced capitalism and Soviet-style "socialism".

Marxism and the revolutionary organizations based on it have gone through crises before. A crisis means a critical moment, a turning point. Today's crisis does not spell the collapse of Marxism, or the end of the struggle for socialism.

Our identity as communists must depend not on the fortunes of any socialist country, but rather on our ability to develop a revolutionary Marxist theory and practice that come to grips with the reality of the U.S. It depends on our ability to help create a socialism indigenous to our country: a movement, strategy and vision based on the actual conditions and particularities of the U.S. and informed by the hard-won experience of the world socialist movement. This will be a protracted task, given the low level of the revolutionary movement in the U.S. today.

A major goal of our practical and theoretical work must be the development of a vision of socialism including specific democratic elements which address the failures of the past.

16. As at other times in the history of Marxist movements, the crisis of Marxism today raises serious challenges to the work of Lenin and the traditions that claim his work. We believe that Lenin's name is rightly linked with that of Karl Marx to designate that body of theory which has helped guide the exploited and oppressed in our struggles to build a new world.

Marxism-Leninism exists in many contradictory versions. We do not regard Marx's theory or its developments by Lenin and Mao Ze Dong as something completed or inviolable. The contributions of both Lenin and Mao were associated with great historical changes, and the worldwide revolutionary experience of today and tomorrow will doubtless create new conditions for the further development of Marxist theory by new generations of Marxists. Lenin, Mao and other Marxists have only laid some of the foundation stones of the science which revolutionary Marxists must develop in all directions if they want to stay in touch with the real world. Our task is to develop that science or to rediscover its foundation stones if need be.

A communist tendency exists in a much weakened state on the U.S. Left today. While our group's ideological identity might be defined by a number of specific points (including our stands on national oppression, on working-class mobilization and leadership, on the international situation, and so on), our position within that tendency is also marked by the value we continue to place on the work of both Lenin and Mao.

Adopted October, 1985

(EXCERPTS)

Freedom Road needs theoretical and political objectives which flow from a common approach to our mass work, and we need a strategic approach to our work which recognizes the importance of Rainbow politics. A "theme for our work" is a developing strategic approach to the needs of the progressive social movements; it is important to emphasize that it is developing and not full-blown.

Rainbow politics is not the same thing as the existing Rainbow Coalitions, though the Rainbow Coalitions are attempting to practice Rainbow politics. While we don't want to get into playing with words, it is important to look at Rainbow politics as the expression of a Black (and increasingly oppressed nationality)-led response to the onslaught of the Right, and an effort to define mass, progressive politics on a pro-equality (rather than simply economic) basis. Uniting around the importance of Rainbow politics means, among other things, giving greater content to that expression. In the coming period various ideologues and other social forces will attempt to define Rainbow politics in a variety of ways. Using the same terms, some people will attempt to make it a catch-all coalition of all "humanists". Others will ignore its long-term significance (or possible significance) and look at it only in terms of the electoral upsurge we saw from 1982-84.

The struggle around the content of Rainbow politics means developing a "flavor" or public identity for the Left-Progressive camp. As many people have said, it is an effort to define "the people" in an alternative way to the "Moral Majority", the "Aryan Nation" or other such perversions. It is also an attempt to define the Left-Progressive camp in terms that differentiate it from warmed-over liberalism. Rainbow politics is developing in a period when liberalism as an ideology associated with the New Deal is collapsing, and the search is on for another vision of the future. That vision must be associated with the Rainbow: an oppressed nationality-led/initiated, pro-equality movement for social justice and a "new majority".

What Will This Mean For Us?

1) On the theoretical level, study and discussion will have to work on: (a) understanding the overall economic situation and the dialectical relationship between it and the political situation; (b) understanding the U.S. electoral system, the current state of the two-party system, and the role of the Left-Progressive camp in this context; (c) an up-to-date understanding of the state of the national movements and the role they have played and will continue to play in defining progressive politics; (d) a greater understanding of the new forces--both Left and Right--which are rising on the political scene. (As an example of this last point, prior to the 1984 election, many leftists anticipated a major break brought about by the "gender gap," but this did not occur. What if anything does this mean for the women's movement and mass progressive

politics? Is there anything to the gender gap? On the other hand, we also need a much deeper understanding of the Right, specifically the New Right and the developing "radical" or fascist Right such as The Order, the Christian Identity Church, etc.) What we need in sum is a much better grasp of both the forces which are affecting Rainbow politics as well as how Rainbow politics is affecting the political system.

2) In the electoral arena we must pay attention to electoral politics and not view the recent upsurge as a passing fad (some friends on the Left, for example, got involved in certain elections, such as the Mel King campaign in Boston, but avoided the Jackson campaign and completely missed its significance). We must be strategic in viewing the types of elections we get involved in and not run from campaign to campaign along with the liberals, but the period of limited-if-any attention to electoral work must be banished forever. Concretely we should develop a connection with the Rainbow Coalitions where they exist and have a few people who attempt to work in, help to build and influence the developments of the national Rainbow Coalition. In the struggle to further define Rainbow politics (that is, the content of Rainbow politics) we should involve ourselves in the development of a Rainbow agenda. In that work we should cut out a niche or area that we intend on developing (programmatically and practically).

3) In the national movements we must push forward the demands for political power and proportional representation as the chief expressions of the on-going battle for national self-determination. Continuing with our united front approach to work within the national movements, we must also work to strengthen the role and visibility of the Left. In future electoral campaigns, for example, we must push for a united Left approach which certainly helps to develop the oppressed nationality Left-wings. We need to look at the question of political power not as an abstraction, but concretely in terms of what political power means for the national movements under capitalism and for the Left-Progressive camp in general (e.g., control of cities? counties? states?).

4) In the labor movement, the Rainbow approach should mean pushing for a greater role for oppressed nationality workers in the unions; agitating for a class struggle approach to unionism which emphasizes organizing in the South and Southwest (including campaigns in alliance with the national movements against "Right-to-Work" statutes on the books in various states); promoting organizing in those sectors of the workforce largely populated by women, such as banks, insurance, hospitals, etc.; and developing an international approach to labor solidarity including active support for the union movements in places such as South Africa, El Salvador, the Philippines and Poland. A Rainbow approach to the labor movement must mean a class struggle unionism which really incorporates the entire class. The additional aspect of Rainbow politics in labor must be a program which goes beyond anti-concessions. This should be understood both in terms of what will save organized labor and also what it will take to keep and create jobs other than your local Burger King.

5) In the women's movement the issue is and remains one of fighting the battle of "no second place" and unity with the national movements. The content of Rainbow politics must include not a single concession to the onslaught of the Right on the "place" of women. Thus, comparable worth, reproductive rights, and affordable childcare are at least three of the issues which should remain at the forefront of our work. Additionally, a determined fight against homophobia and for gay rights is of continued importance especially in light of the the Right's views on the family, "womanhood" and other supposedly untouchable issues. In the electoral arena, the women's movement needs to recognize that its true allies lie in the the national movements; though Ferraro's selection as vice-presidential candidate was historic, her image of keeping the national movements at arm's length is something to be repudiated.

6) In the international arena, Rainbow politics should mean the determined fight for a democratic foreign policy based on peace, non-intervention and non-support for political tyrannies. Our active anti-intervention work should continue and remain a cornerstone of our internationalist work, yet we need to move to the setting of political power and play a role in the selection of candidates for office (hopefully soon more out-front "Rainbow" candidates) who take a public stand in line with the objectives of the Rainbow on the international situation. "Human Rights, Not Property Rights" or something like that should be a means of expressing an alternative vision of foreign relations.

7) In the student movement we must continue to work on bridging the gap between white and oppressed nationality students. This should not only be seen in terms of people in and outside specific organizations, but also in terms of political issues. In the student movement we must be seen as the champion of Rainbow politics, and specifically the banner of pro-equality, pro-national movements. Beating back the Right on issues such as South Africa will continue to hold critical importance for our work. The active organizing around the Jackson campaign which happened in many states among students should be a guide for a relationship we work to build between the immediate concerns of students and the wider social issues which face us as part of the Rainbow.

8) In cultural work we should operate within the context of something like "It's 'we', not 'me'" or something which expresses an alternative and progressive view of the way people should think of themselves. We need to promote the culture of the oppressed nationalities and the recognition of those and other contributions made by people of color to U.S. society, a non-sexist/anti-male supremacist culture, and positive role models for youth. Cultural workers should be encouraged to fight the growing clamor on the Right for various forms of reactionary censorship.

This is all meant to illustrate that Rainbow politics, in direct and not so direct ways, must pervade our entire work. But it is also trying to show that Rainbow politics should represent a progressive alternative for the future of the USA...just this side of socialism.

RULES

I. Membership

1. Anyone who accepts the aims, methods and program of the organization, who is willing to join and be active in a committee of the organization, carry out the organization's decisions, and observe its discipline, and who gives regular financial support to the organization can become a member.
2. Members of the organization must:
 - a. Grasp and uphold the interests of the people, strengthen our ties with them, help build the struggles of the people, and explain the policies and programs of the organization.
 - b. Study Marxism, propagate it among the people, and struggle against attitudes and actions which hurt the socialist cause.
 - c. Help to develop and defend the organization's line, carry out its policy and decisions, fulfill tasks assigned to them, and strengthen the organization's unity. Read, study, promote, support and distribute the literature of the organization in appropriate ways.
 - d. Be forthright in criticism and self-criticism and fight liberalism in themselves and others. Members should adhere to principle and have a spirit of speaking out against bad policies.
 - e. Safeguard the security of the organization, refrain from idle curiosity, and report security mistakes to local leadership as soon as possible. Protect the organization from opportunists or police agents in or out of the organization.
 - f. Work for unity, do not cause splits, and be able to unite with the vast majority, both inside the organization and among the people, including those who differ with them. Subordinate personal interests to those of socialism.
 - g. Struggle against white chauvinism and male chauvinism.
3. Persons who wish to join the organization must complete a letter of application and be recommended by two full members (except in areas where this is not possible), who will be responsible for the applicant through the completion of candidacy. Applicants for membership must go through the admission procedure individually, and admission must be approved by the section or district committee and, where appropriate, higher committees.
4. With the exceptions of mergers (which are special situations and must be handled case by case), persons accepted for membership are admitted as candidate members during which time they must receive training in a candidacy class and prepare to be integrated into the work of an organizational unit.

Candidates cannot vote or be elected in the organization. At the end of a specified time period, the unit or branch will make an evaluation and propose either to fully admit the new member or to extend candidacy for an additional time period not to exceed six months pending satisfaction of certain definite conditions, or not to accept the new member. Where and if appropriate, higher committees and not an organizational unit or branch can make this evaluation, or review it. Before a decision is made, the candidate can be required to respond to specific questions about his or her line or work.

5. A member has the right and duty to participate as fully as possible in discussion at organizational meetings or in the internal organizational press on all theoretical and practical questions relating to organizational policy.

A member has the full right to express their opinions in their units, on all committees in which they participate, and in the internal bulletin. The internal bulletin is a major forum for discussion and exchange of views among members between Congresses. All contributions to the bulletin will be published, with the exception of those which in the opinion of the National Executive Committee compromise the organization's security.

A member has the right to have any statement made by him or her transmitted to higher committees, including the National Executive Committee or Congress of the organization. The organization extends this right to any person having contact with it.

A member has the right to meet in person with representatives of a committee taking disciplinary action against him or her. In cases of emergency, the National Executive Committee or its standing body may take disciplinary action not subject to this appeal, but in such cases the committee must inform the members and explain why these emergency powers have been invoked.

A member has the right to withdraw from the organization, upon submission and acceptance of a letter of withdrawal and the return of all internal papers. Membership is a voluntary proposition. People who no longer wish to be members should withdraw. Leaving the organization should not imply hostility on either side. Sometimes people just don't want to do the work or have the responsibility anymore. If we gear our organization towards them, and not towards the activists, we will never accomplish our goals. Of course the organization retains the right to struggle with individuals to maintain their revolutionary commitment.

6. A member of the organization who violates organizational discipline must participate in criticism/self-criticism in his/her basic unit or other committee and may be subject to censure (formal criticism of a member's action); removal from a committee assignment or other responsibility with censure; probation; or expulsion. An act of expulsion does not become effective until it has been endorsed by the member's basic unit. Disciplinary action is taken by vote of a meeting of a committee on which the member serves or a leadership committee directly but in either case is

subject to the approval of higher committees. Expelled members may reapply for membership after one year following the expulsion. The National Executive Committee must approve all decisions to readmit expelled members.

A member may be disciplined for the following reasons:

- a) Violation of the policy of the organization, as set by the Congress or the National Executive Committee. Policy includes rules.
- b) Violations of decisions made by other higher committees or by majority vote of a basic organizational unit, when such decisions have been made known to the member or members concerned.
- c) Actions endangering the security of the organization, as determined by the unit or higher committees, or false statements made to the organization.
- d) In conflicts between the individual and the collective, the collective interest represented by the organization as a whole must receive the benefit of the doubt.

7. We must learn to be an organization in which different people can live their lives as part of the people--have ties with family, neighbors, people at work, etc. At the same time, we are communists who have made a personal and voluntary commitment to communist organization and responsibilities and this does make our lives different and put different time constraints on us and our families. Our general policy should be to work out these personal contradictions in the context of keeping in mind the overall needs of the organization. Members are encouraged to bring forward problems for discussion in their units and committees.

The organization (i.e., both its units and leading committees) must retain the right to intervene in the personal life of members when matters concern the security and work of the collective.

8. The organization may not intervene in the gender preference of its members: the organization stands for full equality for lesbians and gay men, both within the organization and in society as a whole.

9. Dues constitute the minimum financial obligation of a member. The amount of dues is determined by the National Executive Committee or National Congress. Local or district financial assessments are subject to the approval of the National Executive Committee or its bodies. In general, 25% of the dues collected locally shall be retained locally to be used for organizational activities.

In order to implement the struggle for equality among our membership, members who have inherited capital resources (which are available to them because of their class background), are expected to view these resources as a class privilege and to put a portion of them at the disposition of the organization. The appropriate percentage will be determined by the National Executive Committee in consultation with the individual concerned.

It is an absolute necessity for the life of a revolutionary organization to plan finances and be fiscally responsible. Every area of work should make finances a point of discussion. The National Executive Committee must make financial reports to National Congresses.