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Political Education as a Permanent Process:

Global Perspectives on Education and Struggle

Internationalist Collective
for Political Education



International Peoples'
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Internationalist Collective for Political Education

INTRODUCTION

The Importance of Political Education

Internationalist Collective for Political Education

The process of becoming politicised, developing a working-class consciousness, and becoming committed to a project that aims to radically transform our reality is unpredictable and non-linear; it is a process in which the only measure of success is our ability to play a successful role in our organisations. It happens in marches, meetings, and discussions, in collective spaces where others teach us as we teach them, but also in the quiet moments spent with a book, when reflecting deeply on the outcomes of recent actions, and during the careful planning of an upcoming meeting. It is a process that requires more listening than speaking, more asking than answering, more acting than theorising.

While it is true that the quality of a leader is not measured by the number of books they have read, the seriousness of an organisation's efforts at radically changing society can be predicted based on how much it invests in and prioritises political education. In history, no revolutionary organisation without a po-

litical education program and project has succeeded in creating enduring and transformative change. Indeed, it is those organisations with a conviction in the necessity of revolution who have gone beyond the political training of their own base to build processes that can stimulate political education and training in other organisations. The International Leninist School, founded in 1926 by the Executive Committee of the Communist International as a clandestine school to form international cadre and the Nico López School, founded by the Cuban Communist Party, are among the many examples of such commitment.

During a period in history when revolutions not only seemed possible but imminent, great efforts were made to prepare cadre to take leadership, make correct assessments of their reality, and seize revolutionary opportunities. Victorious revolutions in Russia, China, Cuba, and Vietnam, and successful struggles for national liberation sparked a flame that ignited half the world in a vision that called workers of the world to take power and become the architects of their own emancipation. It was widely understood that taking power required organisational skill, theoretical knowledge, and a revolutionary discipline in one's action and study. This conviction of revolutionary possibility and necessity animated the schools and study circles of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), the daily study sessions that Chris Hani instituted in the Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) training camps, and the nightly theoretical discussions that Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) workers of Detroit participated in. Revolu-

tions were on the horizon, and theoretically trained cadre would lead them; this was widely understood and practised by countless parties and revolutionary formations across the world.

The defeats and setbacks faced by the international communist movement demoralised organisations. They led to serious questions not only about the right path to revolution but about the sheer possibility of it materialising. As organisations conceded to capitalism and retreated to a vision of a more benign form of capitalism (or a much longer road towards real change), political education became both unimportant and inconvenient. The crisis of internationalist spaces and projects reduced the avenues of coordination amongst organisations and the possibility of stimulating political education through international schools. Finally, in the absence of resources to fund schools and amidst a severe crisis of the legitimacy of Marxist ideas, political education spaces were either abandoned or significantly reduced.

The weakening of the socialist camp and its forces coincided with an ideological assault against Marxist theory that was waged inside governments, academic spaces, policy institutes, and cultural spaces. Neoliberal doctrine and postmodernist critiques took over the spaces of knowledge creation and application, thus resulting in the absence of Marxist intellectuals capable of continuing the process of theoretical production and training that is required to sustain political education. Therefore, lacking resources, physical spaces, intellectuals to impart knowledge, cadre

to lead training, and a hopeful conviction in the possibility of revolution, political education moved to the sidelines within countless political organisations.

Still, capitalism continues to produce its own gravediggers, and as neoliberal policies succeeded in starving and impoverishing half the world, mass mobilisations and new as well as old forms of organisation have persisted, creating new windows of opportunity for revolution. Stubborn inequality, environmental disasters caused by capitalist exploitation, and the steady deterioration of the “democracy” capitalism claims to uphold have led to renewed calls and curiosity for radical and profound transformation and revolution. In this context, political education is experiencing a resurgence within countless and diverse types of organisations worldwide. While organisations that never abandoned political education are experimenting with new models and approaches, and those that have not organised a process are taking steps towards building one, we are witnessing a historical moment of creation, re-invention, and revival of political education for cadre formation.

Experiences in mass mobilisation, efforts at building organisation, the creation of new instruments of struggle capable of advancing a coherent strategy, and the challenge of taking a role in and defending progressive governments have demonstrated the prescient need for political education. As new forms of organisation and struggle have emerged, political education has also expanded beyond party formations, as popular movements and other forms of organisation

have sought to create political education that reflects their reality and struggles. This process of building and re-building political education spaces has led many organisations to conclude that advancing class struggle is simply not possible without a process of cadre formation. This process must develop theoretical knowledge while at the same time training cadre to adopt the skills, values, and behaviours that are necessary to build the organisation. This realisation has been supported by the growing awareness regarding the impossibility of changing reality without taking power and the inability to take power without building organisation. Essentially, developing a scientific understanding of the issues in society, crafting a strategy that aims to address them, and building an organisational structure that can advance said strategy requires cadre, and cadre formation can only be achieved with a permanent process of political education at all levels of the organisation.

This book presents a snapshot and historical record of the efforts undertaken by a diverse set of schools and organisations over the recent period to build, create, and invent the kind of political education their organisational strategy requires. Each school is unique in its own way, responding to the concrete challenges of its reality while capturing the many opportunities that its struggle, history, and creativity have produced. Despite their many differences, every school is theoretically grounded in the Marxist method and guided by the vision of building socialism in their coun-

tries while supporting the emancipation of all people through internationalism and solidarity.

Throughout the book, we explore key elements of political education, which include the political strategy that informs it, the networks of regional integration that oxygenate it, the Marxist method it relies on, the methodology that it uses to organise spaces of learning, and the pedagogy that is practised both inside and outside the classrooms.

The first chapter presents a synthesis of how political education has been conceived and understood by the anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, and anti-racist network of movements in Latin America that is Alba Movements. Alba has contributed to building unity based on a shared vision for socialism and against imperialism in the region, which has led it to construct spaces where the diverse political education experiences in the continent can advance together. Based on this experience, Alba demonstrates that political education is a key ingredient of human emancipation that reinforces the protagonism and leadership of people in struggle. In the second chapter, Brazil's Florestan Fernandes National School (ENFF) sets forth a comprehensive and holistic approach to political training. The ENFF raises that schools are not merely tasked with forming people to understand society but to adopt values and behaviours that reinforce their humanity and model the pillars of the society we seek to build. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Center of Cuba writes the third chapter, which reminds us of the qualities and characteristics that embody cadre. This understand-

ding clarifies the role of political education by outlining the role cadre must play in advancing strategy, emphasising how political training must contribute to that end. In its chapter, the José Carlos Mariategu School from Argentina emphasises the permanent nature of consciousness formation. Political education, it asserts, happens both inside and outside the classroom, and all spaces must complement each other and work towards training cadre to be theoretically trained and capable of praxis. Contributing further to this idea that political education must be present in various spaces, the Nkrumah School from South Africa shares its experience with decentralised, itinerant political education in chapter five. In instances where bringing cadre to a school is not possible, the school must come to the cadre, turning makeshift rooms and the shade under a tree into a classroom, thereby facilitating spaces of learning that are integrated into the life and activities of organisations.

In chapter six, the Tunis school discusses the direct connection between political education and the capacity to organize political initiatives. Touching on the strategic role of political education, the Amílcar Cabral School from Ghana, in chapter seven, explores the potential for schools as spaces for building unity across national borders. The school's experience in international courses has been instrumental in developing a shared political vision that can strengthen organisations across the region and remind cadre of the global dimensions of the struggles they undertake locally. Further exploring the integration of political education into strategy, the Paulo Freire

National School of Brazil elaborates on the dialectical relationship between grassroots education and popular education and the political intentionality of education spaces. The Charlemagne Peralté School of Political Formation in Haiti presents in chapter nine, a comprehensive summary of the theoretical contributions to revolutionary thinking and Marxism that have developed in the Caribbean, thus emphasising the crucial role of theory in shaping political education experiences.

The contributions from schools in the United States provide reflections on pedagogy and the importance of addressing the levels of consciousness, experience, and exposure to theory of diverse audiences. In chapter ten, the Union of Southern Service Workers shares critical insights on the specificity of political education experiences with activists and union members who have recently become politically active. Then, in chapter eleven, The People's Forum provides a synthesis and reflection on political education that seeks to reach large and incredibly diverse audiences that have become politicised through direct action and exposure to various forms of agitation and propaganda.

Together, the collection of texts that this book gathers is an effort to provide knowledge, inspiration, and confidence to new and existing political education processes. The diversity of content demonstrates the multi-dimensionality of the political education practice and the need for constant re-

-assessment and creation. We hope the texts contained here can stimulate educators, activists and cadre to multiply political education spaces, thus forming the theoretical and practical experience that we need in every corner of the world to transform our reality and make revolution.

What is Our Conception of Political Education?

Alba Movements

The idea that political formation and “educating cadre” is fundamental is almost a consensus in social and popular organisations, parties, and unions around the world¹. It is regarded as a magical tool that allows both new and old generations to understand the reasons for struggle and the significance of the organisations fighting against the capitalist system, by using the same language, ideological matrix, and reading of events.

However, the task of designing formation processes is much more complex than it appears to be. It represents a real challenge when it comes to designing formation processes which must consider the daily operations of each organisation and the national, regional, and global dimensions of our organisational processes.

In this regard, it is crucial to share some key ideas we have built from entwining our internationalist practice with our organisational practice. In particular, we will share the tools that we consider fundamental – or at least should be – as a starting point for designing strategies for political formation for the emancipation of our class at the global level.

The political formation of our organisations and cadre is a multidimensional, complex concept that requires an intentional process in which various ideological, historical, contextual, and relational elements are interconnected. These elements are linked to our idea of pedagogy and traditions built by our people and organisations throughout the development of these formative processes.

The diversity of countries, cultures, and organisations, means that synthesising an understanding of “formation” is a significant challenge. Of course, diversity distinguishes us, as does a vision of the world, a place in the class struggle, and a collectively built and agreed-upon approach to revolutionary experiences at a global level.

Thus, the question of the relevance of political formation in the people’s struggle – as a material and concrete need of our organisations – is urgent. There

is no action or commitment possible without having a shared world vision that emerges based on the reality that our people live within and that we ceaselessly work to radically transform.

This concrete, daily context is the basis for reflecting and building a shared conception of political formation. This process cannot be thought of from a desk or a library alone, far from the contradictions of capitalist society simmering in the countryside or from the peripheral neighbourhoods where hunger, inequality, and precariousness are the daily reality. These contradictions and permanent struggles give rise to the reflections, questions, and issues that political formation seeks to address, not just for the reflective process itself but for a broader framework for the political and organisational objectives of an emancipatory and anti-capitalist project.

With whom and for whom is the formation process and who are the Subjects of this formation process?

Political formation does not occur in the abstract, on blank sheets of paper to be filled in by an enlightened person who just aims to pour knowledge onto them. This dimension presents us with the critical challenge of reflecting on the people involved in these processes and how people learn, not only in organisational

formation but also in formal education spaces for those who can access it.

From our perspective, we understand that every pedagogical process implies a dialogical process of forming consciousness and its associated considerations. It shapes forms of learning and knowledge related to political interests, whether oppressive or emancipatory. Theoretically and practically, our class has accumulated numerous traditions of emancipatory pedagogies globally and has constructed original proposals for the collective production of knowledge and the formation of consciousness for emancipation. In addition, we have established approaches that counter oppressive unidirectional, banking, and regurgitative methodologies.

Socialist pedagogy, where the concept of work is a central pedagogical dimension, recognises the concrete reality as fundamental for the radical transformation of society. This is a fundamental tool in revolutionary processes, such as those of the early twentieth-century Soviet Union and other socialist countries. This was also the case on the Latin American continent and in the Caribbean, with original processes of critical pedagogies in the early formal education spaces at the beginning of the nineteenth century and with the Robinsonian pedagogy of Simón Rodríguez. Likewise, Paulo Freire developed the theory and practice of popular education in Brazil with the marginalised

and impoverished sectors immersed in illiteracy, who found knowledge as a tool for liberation.

Emancipatory pedagogies understand the learning process as an experience that allows everyone in society to fully develop their intellectual and human potential for the collective good.

What do we understand by political formation?

Political formation is a permanent, collective, and long-term process that relates the context of the time and space it occurs with its Subjects. It includes pedagogical dimensions that involve different human dimensions. It is a process that also responds to a political objective – a project – with a concrete vision of the world.

This process implies a concrete way of understanding the world and its reality. It is a method that joins concepts to facilitate an understanding of the material reality. In the case of our educational experiences, we use historical and dialectical materialism to organise educational processes based on the concrete reality of territories, Subjects, and contexts. We add historical context to our understanding of reality because our method accounts for how the past shapes the present and how the present shapes our future projections.

In this manner, we understand that there are deeply contradictory interests in class societies. Therefore, our natural situation is a permanent and dialectical confrontation with these class interests, which implies that the interests of our revolutionary political project are what drive our formational and educational processes.

Of course, the method is not automatically put into practice just by having the clarity of its necessity. The question of how to materialise it leads us to construct methodologies that allow us to make it concrete. The formative processes of revolutionary organisations involve the various dimensions that we mentioned above, which, in turn, permanently promote the transformation of collective consciousness.

This formative and transformative process of turning consciousness into an emancipatory one is a process of conscious reflection on our organisational practice, which involves theoretical reflection and practical reflection to transform our concrete reality with an emancipatory perspective.

What does our conception of political formation require?

Carrying out political formation – and not merely education - implies methodological and pedagogical coherence in developing our training practice. Our development requires us to interpret reality and

apply the pedagogical tools to our context, space, and time. We must approach the Subjects involved as the political force that gives meaning to the movement – the engine of the formation strategy and the class struggle.

That collective, historical, oppressed Subject and motor of history is, in the end, the formative process's start and purpose as it configures the materiality of an emancipatory political project, where knowledge is also erected as a common good.

As Paulo Freire said, “Nobody ignores everything, and nobody knows everything” (1996). This conception of political formation, in addition to a deep commitment to the emancipation of our class, starts from a profoundly humanist base. In the words of Ché Guevara, “The true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love” (1965). We understand, then, that no one defends what one does not love, and no one loves what one does not know of. This is a fundamental element of the organisational commitment of those who carry out the tasks of our class, and that endows us with the most extraordinary responsibilities: to train our own trainers and educate ourselves in what our political project of emancipation is at a global level, and to go beyond the contents of each course and the urgencies demanded by the situation. Remembering our integral concept of political formation to build with it and towards new men and women is essential.

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BRAZIL

Pedagogical Dimensions and Holistic Human Development

**Florestan Fernandes
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“The processes of formation are, therefore, inseparable from the mode of social production of human life. At the same time, they are distinct from it, demanding formative intentions in every dimension of social life produced by human labour.”

ROSELI CALDART (2023)

The Landless Rural Workers’ Movement (MST) emerged in Brazil in the early 1980s, at a time when the country was being re-democratised. At its founding, the movement sought to confront the colonial land structure still in place and carry out agrarian reform. The MST is comprised of a base of people excluded from fundamental social rights, including the right to

land and education. From the outset, we felt the need to devote efforts to training both this base and political leaders; it was necessary to equip political leaders to contribute to guiding the struggle for land and the broader social movement, adapting to the new climate of struggle through different organisational approaches.

Political education has always gone hand in hand with the process of struggle. As time passed, it became necessary to better organise the training processes. There was an excellent opportunity to experience and learn from other historical experiences through exchanges and international schools. We could experience the popular education projects that used Paulo Freire's method and the educational processes of the Cuban Revolution, for example. This allowed us to make a qualitative leap in constructing our own training concept and practices, adapted to the needs of the Landless Workers, who were increasingly organising themselves in the movement.

A social organisation that does not train its own cadre will never have a future. No one outside the organisation is going to train cadre for us. We need technical cadre, political cadre, organisers, and professionals in all areas. We were also told this with great insistence by those who preceded us in the struggle. We realised this in practice (Stédile, 2012).

João Pedro Stédile points out how, in this journey of consolidation, the MST not only incorporated training

but also made it part of the organisation's strategy, helping to shape it at the same time. The need arose to build spaces where this political training could occur on a permanent and daily basis, at all levels, up to the training of cadre. With this, the Florestan Fernandes National School (ENFF) project began.

The organisation of the different training processes – developed over almost forty years – has led us to build our own pedagogical method to deal with such enormous challenges. This method emphasises a set of pedagogical dimensions - study, work, organicidade (organisational structure), *mística*, revolutionary art and culture, and socialist and humanist values - which provide a philosophical and practical basis for these processes of political formation. These pedagogical dimensions aim to raise the level of consciousness and the holistic human development of the base in settlements and encampments, leaders and cadre of the MST, and the social and popular movements of Brazil and the world, with the goal of social transformation.

Holistic Human Development

Although the MST's concept of training was not born out of a previous analysis but out of our organisational practice, it carries with it important theoretical concepts from popular education, socialist pedagogy, and the MST's own pedagogy.

One of the main concepts is that human beings are born with countless physical and biological capacities, but they are not “made” as fully-formed human beings. Full human development, or humanisation, occurs through the historical process of learning and socialisation, intertwined with cultural, ideological, social, and political aspects. Through interaction with the social environment and learning historically constructed values, knowledge, and ways of thinking, one develops their capacities for abstract reasoning, imagination, and action in the world. Education is central to this “production of the human being.”

Not through just any education but through an educational process – a critical, revolutionary pedagogy that seeks to transform society – carried out by the workers themselves. According to Paulo Freire,

Problem-posing education affirms men as beings in the process of becoming – as unfinished beings, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality [...] The unfinished character of men and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity. Education is thus constantly remade in the praxis. In order to be, it must become (Freire, 1968).

From the same perspective, Amílcar Cabral, thinking about education in the processes of national liberation in African countries, writes that

Education aims at the full realisation of man, without distinguishing race or origin, as a conscious and intelligent, useful, and progressive being, integrated into the world and his (geographic, economic, and social) environment, without any sort of submission. (Cabral, 1951).

Holistic human development thus involves the balanced development of all dimensions of the human being, striving to achieve their full emancipation as a collective and historical being. It must stimulate creativity, autonomy, and the conscious transformation of reality. In Marx, we find the concept of *omnilateralism*², which refers precisely to the idea that the full development of human beings requires the formation of all their capacities and faculties in a balanced and holistic way.

Without being too simplistic, we can say that omnilateralism means the simultaneous development of the individual's physical, intellectual, emotional, and social skills without prioritising any one of these individually. An educational process must, therefore, ensure that all human faculties are exercised and complement each other in their practice, allowing each to develop according to their natural strengths without

² Marx develops this concept in several of his works, such as *The Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, *The German Ideology (1845-1846)* and *The Misery of Philosophy (1847)*, among others.

obstacles. Full human development is thus achieved through the balanced exercise of all faculties to benefit individuals, the community, and nature.

These theoretical and practical influences were fundamental to formulating the MST's pedagogy and its concept of political education, namely linking this knowledge to concrete reality. The pedagogy of the MST seeks to develop all the capacities of the landless and all those aligned with the popular political project of social transformation and the construction of a fairer society.

The Pedagogical Dimensions of Political Education

The need to develop human capacities led us to define the pedagogical dimensions: a set of human competencies that must be developed, nurtured, channeled, and experienced by activists, leaders, and cadre in the process of forming consciousness. These dimensions relate to each other and, in doing so, form the pedagogical method.

All the dimensions are present in everyday life - in the struggle and the organisational process of our movement - but when incorporated into the pedagogical method with political intentionality, they become possibilities; they can be exercised as opportunities for new human beings to be developed through

action and reflection. Simply put, we can say that pedagogical work with pedagogical dimensions is a rehearsal for struggle and social transformation. By practising them, in interaction with the social environment, human beings are developed, and by being developed, they have more capacity to interact with that same environment and more possibilities to transform it.

On the other hand, the experience of the pedagogical dimensions can also reveal contradictions that are often present in people's daily practices - such as the reinforcement of the social division of labour or the expression of conservative values such as sexism, racism, or individualism. They can even make us go backwards in political training, the development of strategies, and the struggle itself. This is why the dimensions are pedagogical beyond just the moment of the course.

These six dimensions we have listed are not separate in the training process; they always exist in relation to each other. In the organisation of a course curriculum, each one takes on a more prominent role at certain times. We will discuss each separately for instructional purposes, trying to identify their links and relationships.

Study

When we think of a school or a political training programme, study appears as one of the central elements, if not the central element. According to Caldart (2023), “The reason for this is that one of the very characteristics of the educational intent of the school is the pedagogical work with knowledge, aimed at an ever broader and deeper understanding of our reality.” She continues, “For our purpose of training fighters and builders, it is the school’s task to ensure that each student has the scientific basis for understanding reality.”

Revolutionary study not only seeks to transmit theories developed throughout history but also has collective action at its core, or “the development of the ability to analyse and take a reasoned position on the issues of concrete life” (Caldart, 2023). It is a living, dynamic, and dialectical process that requires constant evaluation and must be put into practice through actions that aim not only to understand reality but, above all, to transform it.

Lenin always emphasised that the theoretical struggle – just like the economic and political struggle – is another manifestation of the class struggle. Just as in the political struggle, the development of revolutionary theory does not happen spontaneously. To understand the interests of the exploited and their historical mission, it is necessary to unite the concrete struggle with a profound examination of histo-

rical, political, economic, and social phenomena. It is in this understanding of reality that revolutionary theory is forged. This can only be achieved through organised study. However, we are not interested in an abstract, content-based study that simply tries to “demonstrate knowledge.” We understand that theory cannot be taken as a blueprint, a finished formula, or a recipe for solving all the problems of workers and their organisations.

From this perspective, the dimension of study should take into account three main aspects:

- ☀ It must be a permanent construction: a dialectical process of dialogue with concrete reality fueled by praxis. It builds on the knowledge that has been systematised throughout history and applies it to current conditions;
- ☀ It must be a collective construction. In the context of the class struggle, it must contribute to the creation of actions and a collective political project by the working class as a whole.
- ☀ It must consider the diversity that makes up the class, seeking to identify the common structural elements of the workers’ reality with the specific issues they face, identifying how they contribute to the struggle for socialism.

In political training, these moments are intentionally developed in a process through different pedagogical moments: study in the classroom with educators, reading time, debate and interrogation in Base Groups³, production of conjunctural analyses, the preparation of training plans, practical workshops, and the analysis of texts. Although most of the time is spent in collective study, it is necessary to encourage reading and ongoing individual study, which requires commitment and dedication.

Work

Work plays a central role in our pedagogical proposal as a formative, organising, and liberating dimension of the human being. In our conception, work cannot be seen only in terms of its output but as a practice that contains social and political meaning. Through work, we can develop our human capacities by combining theory and practice.

In the experience of the struggle for land and grassroots organisation, we have learned that only collective, cooperative work, which does not separate the intellectual sphere from the manual sphere, can lead to the full development of human beings and a just society where everyone enjoys the fruits of their labour equally.

³ Base Groups are a part of the organisational structure of the ENFF. The concept of “Base Groups” is detailed further in the section *Organicidade* (Organisational Structure).

On the other hand, we live in a capitalist society that separates those who work from those who live off the labour of others. Work takes on a painful, oppressive, and alienated character, separating theoretical study from practical work. For this reason, reaffirming work as a pedagogical dimension contributes to the construction of this new society and, therefore, needs to be exercised at different levels.

The ENFF is the fruit of voluntary and collective work in permanent construction. It embodies a different perspective on work from that of capitalist society. It is, therefore, the commitment of everyone who goes through the school to contribute to its construction by giving their time and labour power. A new generation of activists, leaders, and cadre is forged, who study and take part in organising processes and are willing to carry out all kinds of tasks necessary for the struggle of the working class.

Most practical tasks should be carried out by everyone, regardless of gender, task or position in the movement, religion, or any other social distinction. Except for some tasks that require specific technical training to be carried out, such as cooking or professional driving, all the daily tasks necessary for the immediate survival of the collective, such as cleaning and dishwashing, are distributed to the Base Groups, who must carry them out cooperatively and with discipline so that they are done well.

In addition to these essential tasks, several other tasks need to be carried out for a school to function optimally, and here we have what we call collective work. Collective work makes it possible to link manual and intellectual labour intentionally. It can be a first step towards abolishing the traditional barrier that separates them, starting with accomplishing what is necessary before moving on to skills associated with collective planning, cooperation, and self-organisation. The division of tasks, at the same time, contributes to upkeep and sustainability and allows cadre to exercise new forms of human relations. This type of work is usually organised around a specific timetable that is an integral part of the course and activity programme, and the students are divided into groups to carry it out according to their interests, aptitudes and the needs of the moment at the school.

Additionally, the ENFF incorporates voluntary work, not as a spontaneous act but as a commitment and responsibility to the greater cause. Voluntary work includes that of various comrades who come to the school to contribute on a voluntary basis, whether it is as educators who teach classes, artists who perform, workers from different areas who contribute to specific tasks (for example, organising the library), or even groups who get together to clean, garden, and organise the space.

Carrying out different types of work based on pedagogical planning can influence character development, social attitudes, and practical skills for carrying out

tasks. Work can, therefore, make a necessary contribution to each activist's worldview.

“Organicidade” (Organisational Structure)

Organicidade, a word born out of the fundamental needs of the struggle, is our way of organising, mobilising, and collectively building a social movement and, consequently, a way of organising the school. It is an effective way of guaranteeing that everyone participates in the organisation's political processes. This organisational structure ensures that everyone has tasks and responsibilities and is directly linked to the objective of learning to organise and exercise power. We have learnt from socialist pedagogy and popular education that it is not just a question of developing the ability to study or work individually but of developing the ability to work collectively.

Organisational structure has to do with the method of operating and leading. It is not static; it is dynamic, built through practice and reflection, and requires consistently applying the principle of collective construction. It is a process that needs to be constantly evaluated in order to contribute to achieving the objectives that the school and the organisation set themselves.

In practice, organicidade as a pedagogical dimension involves developing the method and forms of participation. Responsibilities are delegated to each individual, and spaces are set up for decision-making and implementation. The school's organisational structure involves organising the class into Base Groups, Coordination Groups, and Assemblies in dialogue with the course's Political Pedagogical Coordination and the school's work sectors to which they are assigned.

The living out of socialist and humanist values (study, comradeship, solidarity, the spirit of sacrifice, work, etc.) and organisational principles (planning, division of tasks and responsibilities, collective leadership, evaluation, criticism and self-criticism, etc.) are all fundamental to the advancement of the organisational structure.

During the courses, we bring together groups that all carry their own contradictions but have the task of resolving them collectively. In an organisation, it is possible to go backwards through individual behaviour, but progress can only be made through collective, conscious, committed, and consistent behaviour. That is why it is essential to ensure permanent spaces for criticism and self-criticism to identify vices, missteps, gaps, limits, and deficiencies in the process to improve and raise our awareness and practice in various areas.

Each educational space must find the best way to organise everyone who takes part in the training process and the struggle in a way appropriate to each political culture's reality. Still, this dimension must be effectively organised to enhance the practical action of the Subjects in political activity.

Mística

Mística is a very characteristic dimension of the MST's pedagogy. Like all the other dimensions, it does not just refer to the training process but is present in the totality of life and is related precisely to our way of seeing and feeling reality, the world, and our political project.

Let me tell you, at the risk of sounding ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love. It is impossible to think of an authentic revolutionary lacking this quality. We must strive every day so that this love of living humanity is transformed into actual deeds, into acts that serve as examples, as a moving force (Guevara, 1965).

As Ché describes so well, *mística* has to do with the feelings and emotions that mobilise us. It can be understood as the fuel for our daily struggle and the motivation that keeps people going in the fight for social transformation and envisioning a collective future for humanity. It can be translated as inspiration for all

moments and dimensions of the struggle. It is how we express our anger, commitment to the struggle, unity, solidarity between people, and building a socialist society. *Mística* is the daily expression of what we want in the new society, not in the future, but in the new society that is lived and felt in every moment of the present.

Mística is fundamental to life and the struggle. Without *mística* in everyday life, we lose joy, enthusiasm, interest, and the will to live and fight. Without *mística* in the struggle, we lose our will, combativeness, creativity, and love for the cause and our comrades.

Nevertheless, this energy has specific characteristics: it is transformative, agitational, and mobilising. It is, therefore, at the level of the battle of ideas and emotions. This far-reaching, transformative energy is closely linked to behaviour and ethics and can make a decisive contribution to human development and revolutionary action.

The word *mística* also refers to an aesthetic manifestation, a cultural expression of collective feelings, and a representation of reality that can give everyone a broader understanding of themselves and the world around them. It is thus a strategic cultural and political practice that is intentionally carried out in different spaces. Our vision of the world – the class struggle – is represented in these moments. These moments represent our values and symbols – hope, trust, unity, solidarity, anger, commitment, joy, and tenderness – to our enemies and allies in the struggle. It is also a popular work

methodology that involves planning, preparation time, division of labour, collective study, various manifestations (music, theatre, poetry, symbols, dance, etc.), collective dedication, and evaluation.

In schools and courses, it usually takes place when the whole group meets at the start of the day. However, it is not limited to a single action; it must permeate the whole struggle. It expresses itself in the small details of everyday life, such as how we celebrate the struggles and the fighters who have gone before us and the presence of the symbols that identify and give belonging to our struggles. For this moment to effectively mobilise comrades, it must interact with the political culture and cultural traditions of the place where it is held, use symbols that make sense to that social group, and organise ways and means to make it happen.

Revolutionary Art and Culture

Culture can be understood as the human experience of participating in processes of work, struggle, and collective organisation, which translates into a way of life or being human. Culture also produces and reproduces knowledge and worldviews. Therefore, it can be said that culture is the production of social life as manifested in various forms. It encompasses everything that results from human labour, which transforms nature, and it gains significance through workers' awareness. It includes everything that derives from

the transformation of nature through the labour of human beings and which, at the same time, gains meaning through their consciousness.

In capitalist society, the culture of the dominant class becomes the dominant culture. A single cultural standard is created that both imposes and limits access to the cultural goods produced by humanity. In this way, working with art and culture in the interest of workers implies a critique of the hegemonic culture of capitalist society. This hegemony is materialised especially in the Cultural Industry - which cultivates and projects values based on individualism and competition. The Cultural Industry creates a separation between those who are in charge and those who are not, and those who produce art versus the forces that produce art as a mere commodity. These characteristics result in a culture of and for alienation.

Political education that considers the dimension of art and culture represents a step towards mobilising counter-hegemonic class action. This helps to give Subjects the conditions – political, ethical, and cultural – to critically understand what seems natural to them. It must carry a strong anti-colonial and anti-imperialist component as a movement to appreciate and strengthen the cultural identities of oppressed people and articulate ancestral knowledge with modern knowledge. It must seek to overcome purely economic visions that leave out dimensions such as culture, language, and peoples' roots.

Art and culture involve human Subjectivity because of their creative and imaginative elements. Within art and culture, there is a vision of the desired reality, which is why they are directly linked to consciousness-raising. In this sense, a school should be organised and developed so that the various artistic forms – such as cinema, music, theatre, dance, poetry, and literature – are always present. These forms should be included in the pedagogical and methodological elements during study times. Additionally, they must occur during the organisation of different activities, in the organisation of spaces, and the everyday forms of expression of all those in the school setting.

Here, we highlight the possibilities of organising continuous and permanent actions whose main objective is the education and development of the human senses (hearing, seeing, touching, etc.) and the human body in general. This includes pedagogical times for artistic training and technical training via artistic workshops, showcases and literature spaces, theatre, dance and music performances, organisation of cultural evenings, decoration of spaces, exhibitions, and relaxation spaces, among others that apply to each context.

The strengthening of culture also affects the way we carry out various everyday actions, such as the way we eat, our relationship with people (especially children and young people), our work, the way we look after nature, the way we celebrate, healthcare, and even the relationship between organisations, *mística*, and internationalism.

Therefore, the opportunity to enlist the senses is an act of humanisation; it allows us to develop our capacities for analysis and organisation. This includes knowledge about oneself and one's abilities and the different forms and possibilities of collective knowledge. To consider revolutionary art and culture as a pedagogical dimension is also to realise that the task of political training is also about creating a revolutionary political culture.

Socialist and Humanist Values

Cultivating socialist and humanist values must be central to all the pedagogical dimensions mentioned here. They must govern our practices and be the beacon that guides our reflections as revolutionary Subjects committed to social justice, solidarity, and the structural transformation of society. Of course, this dimension goes beyond the training process itself; it indicates the need for human development in the social relations of all the people who participate in and lead processes of organisation and popular struggle.

We are deeply marked by the values of the capitalist, patriarchal, and racist society that oppresses and exploits us. Overcoming bourgeois values such as individualism, selfishness, sexism, racism, homophobia, xenophobia, and meritocracy, among others, is fundamental. It is the expression of the kind of thinking that results in actions that only benefit the

dominant, oppressor class. While the old order is not entirely defeated, we must cultivate – even if imperfectly – the socialist and humanist values consistent with the society we want to build. Today, we are fully capable of living out new kinds of values among ourselves and practising collectivity that is committed to and consistent with the struggle.

We must make qualitative leaps forward in this permanent dialectical relationship of building the new within the old. New gender relations, for example, are not isolated and separate from what has historically been established as prejudices and relationships between men and women, as well as sex and sexuality. As with other possible examples, it is about not reproducing the logic created by the dominant system.

In the same way, we need to be committed to building an ethic based on socialist and humanist values in the principled nature of our actions, both individual and collective. Socialist and humanist values such as conscientious discipline, solidarity, companionship, love of study and work, humility, dedication, joy, generosity, knowing how to listen, the ability to constantly improve, unity, respect for collective agreements, and human diversity bring with them the responsibility to put into daily practice everything that we believe. This is part of building an emancipated society.

Challenges

The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility, we have the opportunity to labour for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom (hooks, 1994).

bell hooks points out important words for thinking about the formative process: possibility, freedom, openness, collectivity, and transgression. That is what training is: a continuous and ongoing process that combines struggle, organisation, and study. That is why it must always be nurtured, stimulated, challenged, organised, and evaluated.

The method that the MST and ENFF have been developing has enabled them to prepare activists and cadre to work in popular movements for more than two decades. It has become a reference for many grassroots organisations in Brazil and around the world. It is a political education that not only focuses on study but understands that the intentional experience of all the pedagogical dimensions is the path to the integrated human development of all those who pass through the school and courses.

However, the task of political education is enormous, especially in times of multiple and structural crises, which lead capitalism to develop new forms of exploitation and alienation of the working class. These crises, therefore, increase the challenges of overcoming the current order. Among the many that could be listed here, we would like to highlight a few for further reflection: how to balance political education and individual development more fully; how to extend these processes to a greater number of Subjects; how to link education with processes of joint, mass struggle; how to educate the new generations for the current challenges; how to keep continually improving the method through evaluations, debates and the incorporation of new techniques and methods; and how to incorporate new references to continue training individuals committed to social transformation.

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CUBA

Cadre Formation

Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Center

We understand “cadre” as those who are necessarily committed to a political project and formed through their organising on behalf of this project. To understand the extent of our conception of what a cadre is, it is first necessary to explain what we mean by a “project.” A project is built and developed through the struggles of organised people. As a revolutionary movement, our project seeks to end all domination and exploitation and build a path that leads to justice and the liberation of our people. Therefore, a project involves collective construction and a prolonged process to bring about the necessary economic, political, social, and cultural transformations.

It is critical to stress the importance of the cultural transformation that our project requires. We must construct socialism as a superior cultural system, not just as a system that exists in opposition to capitalism. Our project is built daily from our reality – a reality marked by hostility, violence, and criticisms of socialism. Within capitalism, we live under conditions

where all rebellion is stigmatised, and we frequently encounter setbacks in the class struggle. Under capitalist control, revolutionary processes are eroded, political organisations are exhausted, and we are forced to confront the strategy of cultural recolonisation. The struggle for our project means the expansive and radical transformation of the structures that cause the exploitation and exclusion of humankind. We must dedicate ourselves to a cultural upheaval of established paradigms and dogmas and move towards a new system of social relations.

This implies that we must live our project in advance and adapt its essence to the contradictions expressed in the material context. We must exercise our capacity to plan from reality – full of both possibility and adversity – through analysing strategies and carrying out the necessary tasks that characterise political cadre.

The political project – a daily struggle led by the people to overcome capitalism and transition to a new system – is only a part of the revolutionary process. The political instrument – the organisation – is the fundamental element without which the project does not exist. In an important letter from Ché to Fidel, written in 1965, Ché, in assessing the first five years of the Revolution, recounts his concern with the issue of organisation and comments that “No matter how good the cadre is, if the general organisational framework prevents it from doing so, it will only be able to perform a limited task” (1965).

The political instrument is responsible for driving the project and radicalising people at every moment, which requires the organisation of the masses. José Martí proposes that the core of radicalisation is in the journey to the root, to the masses. Fidel identified radicalism with the importance of being a mass movement, insisting that without a mass movement, no radicalism is possible. When we speak of the masses, we refer to the importance of strengthening the people as the Subjects of the revolutionary process. Fernando Martínez Heredia invites us to think of the people as polarised, not socially stratified. In this way, the people forge their common identity by naming their shared enemy, not simply by having shared characteristics. The people are aware of the history of oppressive relations in which they have been raised. Therefore, the political instrument is not an immovable social matter. It is not given; its history, composition, traits, and motivations are in constant flux. Nor is it an eternal entity awaiting the revolutionary Subjects' arrival. The concept of "the people" refers then to the existence and development of a given historical movement, to the social struggles in which a specific group participates.

The cadre are leaders who have earned this role through their experience of struggle. They are trained in the fight for a popular project with the people, organised in the instruments we need to create. Thus, cadre training consists of theoretical and ideological training and performing tasks carried out within the political project. Together, the tasks and the theoret-

tical education generate the political experience that trains a cadre. This experience is developed throughout life and conditioned by circumstances that allow our political work to be suited to our times.

Characteristics of a Cadre

A political cadre is the masterpiece of the ideological engine that is the organisation, not a top-down transmitter. A cadre is a pathfinder and a guardian of the spirit of the Revolution.

In 1962, a text by Ché was published in the magazine Cuba Socialista, where he defined the cadre as “the backbone of the revolution.” Based on this conception, he proposed some central characteristics of a cadre.

Clarity and Political Development: A cadre must interpret reality and its contradictions in order to challenge the masses’ common sense while also perceiving their most intimate desires and motivations. By “clarity and political development,” we mean ideological, ethical, and practical preparation.

Revolutionary Disposition and Readiness: The attitude of a cadre includes the readiness to face any debate, nurture an insatiable curiosity, and set an example. This disposition also includes being cognisant, on a daily basis, of the feelings and passions of the people. The role of a cadre is to carefully choose the ques-

tions they ask to coordinate all the activities they direct while also stimulating commitment and participation.

Discipline: The discipline of a cadre is not only related to the correct and efficient performance of tasks; it also involves discipline within collective discussions and respect for decisions and personal responsibilities.

Humility: A cadre understands that they will never know everything, so they cultivate the ability to always listen and learn. They should also seek facts instead of rhetoric and learning instead of praise.

Loyalty: To be a cadre, it is essential to be faithful to the project under all circumstances.

Conviction of Victory: The cadre possesses a conviction of victory based on an analysis of forces but also relies on the strength of the justice of ideas.

Belief in the People: Belief in the people is the indispensable condition for any revolutionary change. A revolutionary is recognised more by their belief in the people they commit to than by a thousand actions carried out without them. They trust in the potential of the masses, whom they cannot treat as objects of their action. Revolutionary leadership does not consider itself the master of time, the master of men and wo-

men, nor the liberator of the oppressed. They constantly engage with the masses to fight with them for the liberation of both.

Our definition of what a cadre is and the characteristics we attribute to them would be incomplete without a reflection on the tasks they are responsible for. This is because, without a doubt, cadre are formed and forged through the performance of tasks. In each historical moment and place in the world, we must reflect on precisely what these tasks are since they correspond to the possibilities and challenges of the class struggle. Below, we describe the tasks that come from the experience of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Center. We also consider what tasks the cadre of popular movements and leftist parties have now.

1. Critically Interpreting Reality

To interpret does not entail describing nor condemning; it means understanding the causes, developing critiques, analysing the correlation of forces, imagining scenarios, and discerning each scenario's possible tactics and goals. This is not an easy task; there is a lot of dogmatism, radicalism, petty bourgeois leftist purism, and stageism in our work.

Contrary to a rigid framework of reality or a critique that does not indicate the way forward, the cadre must ask themselves, as Fernando Martinez Heredia does, what the possibilities of the unexpected are.

If the Cuban revolutionaries had waited until they had cadre prepared to advance the transformations, if they had waited until they had the military strength to confront the US, if they had waited for the development of the productive forces, or if they had waited for the impulse of other revolutions and the advance of socialism, at least in Latin America, perhaps they would never have triumphed.

The cadre must make use of criticism rather than staying in their comfort zone or within an ineffective discussion about the tasks at hand. Criticism must avoid aloofness or superiority because its ultimate goal must be learning. How much damage has been caused by useless criticism that pretends to look at the situation from the future, with all the possible variables already in place?

José Martí said: “[People] should live in an atmosphere of self-criticism because it is healthy, but always with one heart and one mind” (Martí, 1891).

That is the task of the cadre: to understand the relationship between determination and dogma-free behaviour, understanding the non-linearity of the processes – the times to mature, the times to move forward at full speed, and the times when standing firm can be the greatest feat, while never going backwards.

In order to develop a critical interpretation of reality, we can ask the following questions:

- ☀ How do we distinguish between theoretical statements and practical experiences?

- ☀ How will the contradiction between the stated project and power materialise?
- ☀ What is the relationship between the revolutionary project and the world of capital where it is forced to exist?
- ☀ What role do social conflicts play in a project of liberation where political leadership has been established?
- ☀ Where are the possibilities of disrupting the political and economic conditions?
- ☀ How does one build new habits and a new common sense?

2. Knowing about Production Processes and Technological Development

“A revolutionary cadre under socialism cannot be ignorant of the economy or of the production processes in agriculture and industry.”

FIDEL CASTRO, 1966

Subjectivity is challenged through the concrete reality of everyday life; from this reality, the necessary cultural and civilisational transformation is created. Knowing reality implies having a broad knowledge of the conditions of production, which requires accumulating knowledge of scientific and technological advances. The battle for developing productive pro-

cesses requires learning and mastering existing techniques. We cannot be political cadre without considering the production and reproduction processes of everyday life. It is from this knowledge that the political cadre can propose solutions to the people's immediate problems.

Knowing, understanding, and contributing towards developing productive processes is intimately linked to the question of work. It is closely related to the discussion on labour, which has been insufficient in socialism. Revolution is the abolition of the exploitation of human labour, but it is not the abolition of human labour. Freeing the workers from the exploiters does not mean freeing the workers from labour. Therefore, it is essential for us to discuss the nature of the work that must be undertaken to realise the revolutionary project and advance towards a new meaning for it. Likewise, we must rescue the humanistic value of work, understanding that it is an essential element in shaping human beings and developing their life in society.

3. Inspiring People's Participation

The socialist experiences have struggled to create their own type of democracy that works, while they continue to discuss the problems of domination ari-

sing from the model of democracy that we inherited from capitalism. The task of a cadre is to involve the people in the project, to make them feel it is their own, and to mobilise them not only in the streets but in the task of creating the project itself.

To the extent that the capitalist leadership denies authentic praxis to the oppressed, it will also deny the praxis of the revolutionary movement. Freire writes that “leaders who do not act dialogically but insist on imposing their decisions do not organise the people – they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress” (1968). Participation is central to socialism, but connecting with our people’s most radical traditions is essential. Only popular protagonism will strengthen the process, even if it does not manifest how we expect or wish to control.

4. Organising Grassroots Work

“As individuals or as peoples, by fighting for the restoration of their humanity, they will be attempting the restoration of true generosity.”

PAULO FREIRE, 1968

Expanding strength and legitimacy and challenging disputes over the meaning of life, in the logic that reproduces daily life, requires being with the people in their processes of resistance and daily struggles. To this end, it is essential to build organisation. The task of organisation does not mean hastening the reservoir

of revolutionary knowledge of the masses but questioning their position in the process of transformation. For this, it will be necessary to understand the people's spirituality and ways of living in a faith community. It will be essential to link Marxism with the life of the people. We must develop an ethic based on solidarity and organisational forms that allow us to expand and grow from the point of view of struggle.

Building organisation is a fundamental challenge that we have to undertake as a priority, not for the moment when we are at risk of disappearing as a threatened and criminalised minority, but for the moment when we reach the point of contesting for power when we seem to be in a state of equilibrium.

To do grassroots work, a cadre must always clearly explain the task, the people responsible for it, the time to perform it, and the expected results. It is necessary to avoid the collective becoming an obstacle that conceals or impedes individual attitudes towards organisational tasks.

The cadre must build confidence that the grassroots will be able to face their problems through their organisation and mobilisation. What makes a typical worker, such as a mother in the neighbourhood, go out to a march or a meeting at night when she is tired from her daily work? What makes her connect her reality with the words of a national leader? What makes her feel part of a transcendent struggle and cook later or carry her children, even if she does not see results to her most immediate problems?

The revolutionary cadre has to build the popular organisation as a way of life that previews utopia as proof of the path to a fulfilling life for the present-day cadre. We do not sacrifice our lives for the future, but in the current struggles, we find happiness, which is also a process that must be planned and not expected to emerge spontaneously.

It is vital to overcome paternalistic and welfare approaches, which are instruments of manipulation that serve the conqueror since they function as sedatives. They distract the popular masses, diverting them from the real causes of their problems and the concrete solution to them. They fragment the popular masses into groups of individuals whose only expectation is to “receive” more.

Revolution is not the result of verbalism or activism but of praxis through reflection and action that transforms the structures.

5. Defending the Project Through the Necessary Channels

With slogans in favour of democracy, the enemies distort, blame, stigmatise, and criminalise revolutions. Defence cannot be based on tactics of mere preservation and denial of alleged guilt; the defence has to be based on the denunciation of false bourgeois democracy and its subordination to the interests of

imperialism. In Cuba, when we created the revolutionary national militias with the concept of the War of the Whole People, while it had a military dimension, it also had an ideological dimension. It was part of the political formation of the Cuban people.

6. Building Working Class Unity – Nationally and Internationally – Against Imperialism

Capitalism absorbs rebellion and puts it to work within the system. The Left remains stuck in assimilation strategies within the capitalist project and has yet to propose breaking it or building something different. The onset of neoliberalism fractured the identities of the oppressed, and many struggles were born, but it was difficult to build unity in their diversity.

We have to be disciplined and committed in the face of imperialism even when it hides or disguises its face, deploys violent attacks against all opposition, and naturalises its cruelty. In the face of that, our pledge has to be internationalism. The unity of the working class must be a fundamental aim of every revolutionary cadre.

The unity of the working class cannot be built on a political-electoral or circumstantial logic because that logic does not pursue the defeat of imperialism and the end of capitalism, which is the central enemy of the working class.

This commitment to working-class unity must be internationalist, or it will not be. Internationalism, as a

calling, principle, duty, and organised practice, upholds the possibility of working-class unity. To be internationalist is to triumph over the central challenge of building the unity on which the success of socialism depends. Internationalism is a principle, a foundational value, and a practice organised from the highest levels of leadership of the process.

Castro writes, “There will be some who might appeal to the people’s instinct of preservation and suggest that they abandon their most sacred obligations in the international field for the sake of security, for the sake of avoiding dangers. However, we know well the thoughts of our people. [...] We will never forget that we are part of that world which is against imperialism, and the defeat of that world would be our defeat and our enslavement. [...] We are not ones who are unaware of the risks, who ignore the danger – we have them. But to renounce that danger would be at the cost of renouncing our revolutionary nature” (1966).

7. Working on Communication as Part of the Battle of Ideas in its Cultural and Symbolic Dimensions

A first step is permanent, direct communication with the people, with narratives that strengthen popular participation and allow the connection of the people with the revolutionary cadre. We are not talking here of bulletins but of a direct dialogue between the cadre and their bases.

Fidel said, "By my revolutionary experience, I have never been better informed than when I talk to the people, when I meet with workers, with students, with peasants. In my lifetime, I have known two universities, one in which I learned nothing and another in which I learned everything. This is the contact with the people, with their worries, problems, with their anxieties, with those things that worry them. I know of no man who considers himself a political cadre who does not have the compassion to feel deeply the people and the problems of the people" (Castro, 1966).

The popular movement must have cadre who assume communication tasks as a priority struggle to dismantle the enemy's lies. These cadre must place that battle within the cultural war, which capitalism knows how to wage so well. In the cultural war, imperialism dedicates its most sophisticated resources because it knows that today, there is nothing more transformative in our communities than communication. Nevertheless, we lose this battle every day. The cadre has to be aware of the tools involved in this battle, building uncritical familiarity with the people, habits, and things that imbue meaning.

It is critical to engage in the exchange of knowledge in this cultural war and adopt the symbols of the struggle. The cultural war is fought from the places where life is organised – from its concrete reality – and it must be chronicled historically and culturally. It is a battle that is fought with concrete testimonies.

It is necessary to produce materials by and for the working class without avoiding any particular format; people are infantilised when it is assumed that they do not read or do not want to study. The challenge is to find the appropriate way to dialogue and the most useful approach in each circumstance.

Political Training for the Preparation of Cadre

Political education is an essential part of the class struggle. It is “all efforts of mobilisation, organisation, and training that prepare people to exercise the power which they must necessarily conquer” (Freire and Nogueira, 1989).

We train in order to share a strategy of struggle, save the memory against all forgetfulness, educate new Subjects, and respond to our societies' problems. Training rescues the memory of the struggle, raises essential problems for the oppressed, allows us to redevelop the understanding of socialism, recovers the intellectual spirit, and critiques the culture of capitalism.

Political training is the process of raising the level of consciousness of the cadre and the masses. It is the effort to make familiar the idea, the strategy, the program, the methodology, and the organisation of a collectively built movement. Training also turns information into knowledge, which becomes a material force to transform nature and society. It is never to be considered as erudition or academicism. The training process is done with the cadre, who are

recognised for their experience and commitment to the cause. To be effective, it has to include getting to know the cadre (tactfully and face to face), accompanying them (in both joy and sadness), and contributing to their preparation. Finally, training requires the adoption of content and methodology and a creative approach, contrary to any attempt to reproduce obedient tin soldiers.

Conceiving training as a system with different processes, levels, and forms makes it possible to understand and develop it parallel to all other organic processes. One way of organising it into levels could be:

- ☀ Formation of grassroots commitment to the class struggle
- ☀ Training of cadre
- ☀ Training of trainers who will have the task of disseminating the training methodology

What Training Should We Do?

- ☀ A contextualised training, anchored in the practices and contradictions of each concrete historical reality.
- ☀ A training that recreates the sources of meaning in life with the explicit intention of serving a project, aware of its political character and including multiple dimensions that deepen values and meanings.

- ☀ A training sustained by the certainty of the people's potential for popular organisation and mobilisation, not with their victimisation.
- ☀ A training oriented towards the process of structural transformation of society.
- ☀ A training interwoven with the analysis of initiatives and processes that combines the references and methodologies of organisations and processes with a common strategy.
- ☀ A dialogue-based training, understood as a union of those who want to shape the world through faith in the people; from this framework, new theories are produced as a result of praxis.
- ☀ A humanising and liberating training, in which the possibilities of liberation are realised within the pedagogical process.
- ☀ A training that creates revolutionary self-esteem in which Subjects are protagonists and authors of their history of struggles; it is neither obedience nor conformity but the power to create with agency.
- ☀ A problematising training, understood as both word and action, in which meaning is generated by "praxis," and it consciously develops the role of the Subject of history.
- ☀ A training that is a space of permanent *mística* and reconstruction of the history of resistance, the joy of fighting, and the pride of belonging to the army of the people and their symbols.

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ARGENTINA

Political Education as a Permanent Process

José Carlos Mariátegui School

“We are not calling the people to any desperate adventure. We are calling the people to the struggle, which begins by clarifying their consciences, proclaiming the truth, and speaking for those who are silent.”

JOHN WILLIAM COOKE (1971)

Political education is not an easy task. In Latin America, the long neoliberal night was implemented through blood and fire by military dictatorships in the Southern Cone and direct military interventionism in Mesoame-

rica during the 1970s and 80s and continued by liberal-democratic governments during the 90s. The period left in its wake decimated and dwarfed popular movements, demolished political organisations, and disjointed or dismantled political education systems in the face of the imminent “end of history.”

However, toward the end of the twentieth century, processes of resistance, struggle, and organisation began to emerge throughout the continent, disrupting the neoliberal model of accumulation and developing popular movements and organisations as collective actors capable of altering the course of history. These actors began to build processes of sovereignty and independence – with all the tensions and problems that this entailed – in a heavily globalised and financialised context. From the Venezuelan Caracazo to the gas and water wars in Bolivia to the 2001 crisis in Argentina, little by little, most of the countries of the continent echoed each other’s struggles, finding a point of unity in our heroic “No to the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA),” in Mar del Plata on 4 November 2005.

In this context, the new popular organisations born in the heat of the anti-neoliberal struggles were critical of and distant from the “old recipes” and “the old ways of doing politics.” This reproach was valid both for the establishment parties, as well as for the left parties and the political and theoretical orthodoxies, which were greatly diminished after the fall

of the Berlin Wall. In this new political praxis of the continent, great political educators emerged, such as Comandante Hugo Chávez Frías himself, and collective processes of political education, such as the development of a continental system of political education led by ALBA Movements and other grassroots platforms in the continent.

The Mariátegui School and many other political education schools in Latin America were born from this process of struggle. They emerged from the need to structure political education and systematise practices, experiences, and processes into a concrete methodology. These schools have the particularity of understanding political education as an integral and ongoing process. We often believe that political education is studying the complete works of great Marxist theorists and knowing them by heart, and, indeed, this is a widespread belief amongst political cadre. However, many of our movements are organic tools of praxis that are linked to the masses. That is why political education sees its most significant expression in praxis: in grassroots work, organising neighbourhood assemblies, and the daily work of organising in general. Through the experience of our school, in this chapter, we will analyse political education as a permanent process and, accordingly, the place of daily political praxis, the role of schools or educational spaces, some of the risks of thinking about political education as a closed-off space onto itself, and explore some perspectives towards the future.

The Development of the Mariátegui School at the Height of the Progressive Wave in Latin America

The José Carlos Mariátegui School is a political education school for cadre of the Argentinian and Latin American popular camp. Led by Argentinian popular movements born at the height of the crisis of 2001 and fueled by the “No to the FTAA” of Mar del Plata in 2005, the Mariátegui School had from its beginnings a socialist, Latin Americanist, feminist, and anti-racist orientation. The proposal to set up a school was consolidated in 2011 and 2012, and finally, in the summer of 2013, we held our first Latin American Political Education Course.

In the process of pedagogical exchange and taking into consideration the experiences of the public high schools in Argentina, we intuitively adopted popular education and the thought of Paulo Freire as an indispensable guide in our educational methodology. In the struggle for social change from and for our people, the thought and praxis of figures like José Martí and José Carlos Mariátegui were essential in the development of our political-pedagogical orientation. We grounded ourselves in the importance of not merely imitating and copying other experiences but of engaging in “heroic creation” (Mariátegui, 1995), the thought and praxis of Ché, Alicia Eguren, and John William Cooke, among many other Latin Americans. We also adopted the strength of the currents of Latin American thought, such as dependency theory, Latin American structu-

ralism, indigenism in its various forms, and the theory of internal colonialism, among others. The basis of the pedagogical legacy of the generation of the 60s and 70s – the moment of peak political radicalisation of the continent – prompted us to not only revisit and embrace a long national and Latin American tradition of struggle but also to consider our process alongside those of other peoples of the world, and to include other important points of reference: Marx, Gramsci, Rosa Luxemburg, Kollontai, socialist pedagogues, educators in the Chinese Revolution, educational campaigns in the processes of the decolonisation of Africa and Asia, etc.

Thus, with the systematisation of our experience and in fraternal debate with other schools and training processes in Latin America, we began to categorise our methodology using the categories that this political and theoretical heritage provided us. We named our method, our way of understanding and transforming social reality, as a dialectical historical materialist method (Lukács, 1923), in which Subjects have an active role in the making of history, not under circumstances we choose, but those that already exist and have been bequeathed to us by the past (Marx, 1852).

Undoubtedly, the development of a concept of political education, a methodology for our school, and a collection of theoretical and pedagogical currents that nourish our educational practices has not been linear. It has taken concrete steps on two distinct fronts: understanding and starting from the basis of our concrete and national reality – marked by its own history and certain traditions of thought and struggle

– and embracing every struggle and theory that has been oriented towards the revolutionary liberation of oppressed peoples.

Political Education as a Permanent Process

Starting from the basis of concrete praxis, to foster a moment of critical reflection and theoretical explanation of that praxis, to return to our territories with a new methodology reflecting that process is the path we seek to develop in our political education processes. However, in our regions, due to the shared make-up of the Argentinian popular camp, it is very common to collaborate with cadre who have been part of our organisations for many years, who organise in their respective territories for different struggles and lead mobilisation processes but who, however, have never participated in a political education space developed for that very purpose. How can this be possible if the comrades have not had the opportunity to formally “educate” themselves politically?

Our path has allowed us to shape the premise that all political praxis is educational. Participating in mobilisation is educational, grassroots work is educational, organising an assembly is educational, and carrying out an activity – whether it is handing out flyers, a conversation, or an event – is educational. All of these actions are educational because in the same process of life and activism, we reflect, we work, we study, we

are moved, we do small rituals, we make culture, we generate identity, we work on our values, we exercise community, and we are part of an organic whole.

If every form of political praxis is educational, why organise schools and training processes as a distinct form of political education? Would not grassroots cadre be politically educated through their own daily praxis? Schools and training processes are important and distinct because of two specific characteristics: (1) they are deliberate, and (2) they happen in the context of collective processes.

When we point out that they are deliberate, we mean they are planned in two ways. First of all, these educational spaces are framed in the strategy of our popular organisations and, therefore, contribute to the strategy of social transformation carried out by said organisations. They prepare us not only to respond to the particular historical moment but also help cadre gain a fresh perspective on the social totality and our role in it. Secondly, these spaces of political education crystallise a series of specific objectives according to the tactics of our organisations that provide us with various historical, political, practical, and theoretical tools to understand and act within our concrete reality. That is, political education has a strategic and tactical orientation, both reflecting the organisations' reality and their place in the social reality.

Secondly, we point out that the educational spaces prepared for this purpose are collective. Here, we

also find a double meaning of the collective that we want to highlight: these spaces are collective because they bring together a group of people in a specific time and space. This not only allows us to strengthen the organic fabric of our organisations but also shows the multidimensionality of political education. “Political education” is not merely reading and studying; reading and studying are a part of political education, but this is only one aspect among many other dimensions, such as the exercise of comradely ethics, sharing work with comrades, and understanding the place and role of each person. Political education, like any social process, is a collective act. At the same time, the moments of political education are the collective encounters between the most experienced generations of cadre and the intermediate and new generations. They are moments for the crystallisation of a collective knowledge that goes beyond the individualities and self-perceptions of the processes, and they bring together the collection of experiences and the knowledge of an entire political organisation. Political education crystallises a methodology developed collectively by the organisation, and for that reason, it is the most organic moment for strengthening the strategy of our political and social organisations.

Based on this conception of political education, it is necessary to reposition its role in organisations and movements. Spaces of political education are not the only source of education for cadre, but they are the

axis that guides, collectivises, and gives purpose to the work of an organisation, nourishing and socialising a particular strategy and tactics to educate its members so that our organisations become in effect that “collective intellectual” of which Gramsci spoke (1949).

When this conception of political education linked to praxis is absent, we risk holding courses or workshops without a connection to the concrete problems of our people. At the same time, if our approach is merely encyclopaedic and theoretical in its methodology, instead of educating prepared cadre, at best, we will get repetitive activism and, at worst, a disordered reading of our social reality.

However, in our experience, sometimes the problem has not been an “excess of theory” but an “excess of praxis” – concrete practice without political education. This situation, which might seem only a secondary deficit, leads to numerous problems over time, both for the cadre and the organisation. Activism without political education inevitably falls into the vice of pragmatism: working and resolving problems in everyday life more or less individually, without frames of reference discussed collectively, a shared methodology, or a link between praxis and strategic orientation. This excess of pragmatism begins to constitute a crystallisation of practices, ceasing to contribute to a collective and comradely strategy for transforming reality and instead contributing to an individual strategy of accumulating power.

This problem becomes more centrifugal when the lack of political training in collective spaces is a structural situation or condition of the organisation – when training is not prioritised or worked on as one of the organising pillars. When the organisations, their cadre, and their leaderships do not promote training, they can hardly orient their political, economic, and social intervention to transform the sense of the social reality because they become slaves of the conjuncture. Organising the working people, overcoming emerging obstacles, and accumulating power in different instances are practices that can be fetishised and become an end in itself if we lack the question of the “why?” or the “what for?” of our actions. Over time, these organisations, born as revolutionary movements, end up reproducing the given system and becoming devices of the status quo. They do not create collective solutions for the future and do not prefigure a new reality but merely manage the current state of things.

Multidimensional Crisis: Defending Some Certainties in a Sea of Uncertainties

So far, only a few reflections on our region’s political education and training schools have been presented. It has been a success and a virtue of Latin American popular movements to establish political education schools, training processes, and continental platforms for political education in recent years, driven by

the progressive wave in the region. However, this little “spring” reversed its cycle, and a new neoliberal “wave,” taking the metaphor of Álvaro García Linera, is currently overwhelming the region and aggravating the multidimensional crisis in which humanity finds itself.

An organic, political, and strategic weakening evidences the ebb stage the popular “Nuestroamericano” camp is experiencing. In this framework, political education is a countercyclical tool: it strengthens political organisation, empowers political intervention, and strengthens the strategic perspective of activism. This task requires creativity and daring: we cannot be content with keeping a count of the number of courses or workshops held or the number of students who passed through our political education programs. To understand political education as a permanent process implies anchoring our work in the proposals coming from the territories, linking the political education programs with political praxis, and carrying out continuous processes of conceptualising, planning, executing, and evaluating alongside the shifts of organisations.

However, the new neoliberal and conservative offensive also requires we develop areas of politico-ideological production and planning with and towards the social whole. Undoubtedly, this task is not exclusive to the field of political education, but political education must be included in it. At the current historical moment, political education is not only internal consolidation, it is also an ideological battle towards the

whole, contributing to the processes of mass mobilisation, in the strategic dissemination of our proposals, and in the invitation to dream and think of new horizons for the future. This is our current task.

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SOUTH AFRICA

Decentralised Political Education Processes

The Nkrumah School

Reviving our revolutionary Pan African Project requires us to build unity in our ideological commitment and struggle. The tools of analysis offered to us by scientific socialism must form the nucleus around which our work is built. The PAT Education Brigade responds to this political priority by developing education programs – both centralised and decentralised – that focus on political and ideological grounding. This development and formation of the next generation of cadre aims to strengthen the Pan African Project in order to reach its strategic objective: Socialism.

PAN AFRICANISM TODAY

In 2016, the Nkrumah School was founded in South Africa with this objective. From its founding until late 2018, the Nkrumah School served two main functions: (1) to introduce the cadre of organisations to Marxism and Pan-Africanism and (2) to use the courses as a mechanism to map the political landscape of the region.





In September 2018, the Third Pan-Africanism Today Conference was held in Winneba, Ghana, with representatives from over 60 countries. One of the key outcomes of the Winneba Conference was the decision to shift to sectoral work based on the specific struggles of the various organisations. Concretely, this meant that the Nkrumah School moved from only having centralised education programs to combining this with decentralised education programs that took the school's methodology to the various sites of struggle. The organisations at the conference resolved to do work targeted specifically to organised labour, peasant struggles, youth, feminist struggles, and cultural work. These, in turn, became the pillars of the school's work around decentralised education.

In 2020, decentralised education programs took a leading role in the school's work due to the circumstances and challenges of the pandemic, as well as the orientations that emerged from the aforementioned conference.

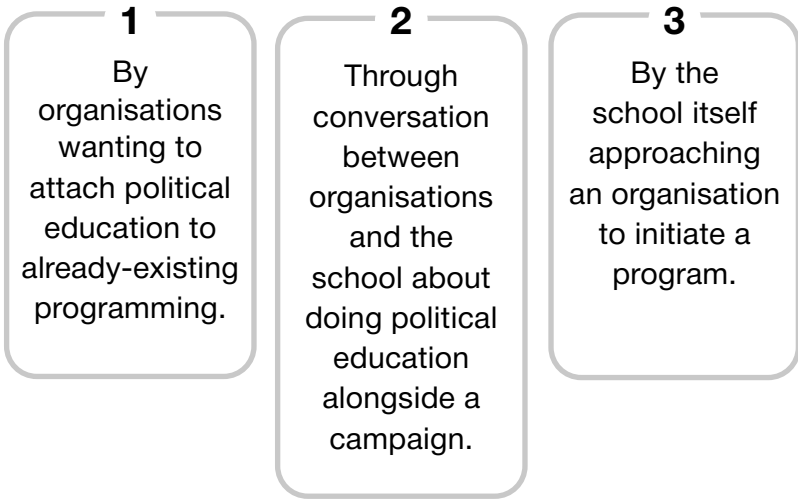
What is Decentralised Education?

From its founding, Nkrumah's centralised courses have brought the cadre of diverse organisations from around the world to South Africa and its residential school. However, within the decentralised education program, Nkrumah's Education Brigade – composed of eight to ten people who ordinarily had tasks associated with running centralised courses – travelled throughout the continent to facilitate popular education for particular organisations. While the principles and content remained focused on Pan-Africanism and Marxism, decentralised education allowed the school to design different kinds of curricula adapted to the needs of the members of various organisations.

Nkrumah's decentralised education program had four key objectives:

-  To lay the groundwork for the continuation of the work of the Pan-African project at the organisational level.
-  To move from the general issues that emerge in the Nkrumah School's centralised education courses into a more particular and targeted approach based on the specific struggles of the various organisations.
-  To continue political education in the context of COVID restrictions.
-  To reach more people more cost-effectively.

The decentralised education programs were initiated in various ways:



Together with the organisation, the Education Brigade would develop the program, considering the length, content, profile of participants, facilitators, materials, and program logistics. Through various drafts and re-drafts of a curriculum and methodology, the school and organisation would agree on a program appropriate for the organisation's context and the problem they were trying to address.

Adjusting the content according to the audience had some advantages well-suited to the decentralised education program's context. One significant contribution that the decentralised education program made was addressing the base of organisations in a relatable way, including conducting the program in the native language of the organisations' members.

The decentralised education program ran from the second half of 2020 until the second half of 2022. Halfway through 2022, the Nkrumah School concluded that they needed to make a qualitative shift, in which centralised education was once again more useful. This was primarily triggered by the decision to convene the III Dilemmas of Humanity Conference in 2023. Along with the end of pandemic restrictions, the school assessed that it was time to hand the decentralised political education, which had been catalysed in dialogue with the organisation, back over to the organisations and conclude the decentralised education work.

Examples

Several examples illuminate the work of the decentralised education program. One example of an organisation approaching the Nkrumah School to attach political education to an existing program comes from MVIWATA, a peasant organisation in Tanzania. MVIWATA hosts an annual program on International Women's Day. MVIWATA approached the Nkrumah School to develop a pedagogical component to their International Women's Day program. The program ran for three days, with one day dedicated explicitly to political education. A text was circulated beforehand, and the sessions were developed around the text.

Another program happened in June 2022, when members of the Education Brigade travelled to meet

with various organisations in Zimbabwe and Botswana who had previously participated in courses at the Nkrumah School or Pan Africanism Today conferences. The Nkrumah School and the organisations jointly initiated this program. The Brigade met with alumnae from the schools and the leadership of the organisations to assess and get recommendations for future political education programs. The Brigade held a one-day workshop for about ten people in one of the organisations. This particular workshop was themed around Red Books Day and was an intensive study of the Communist Manifesto. The participants had read the text in advance, and this discussion was about understanding the text and applying it to their context. While it was quantitatively a small group, it was qualitatively crucial for the work of the Nkrumah School. Again, reading materials were circulated beforehand, the Brigade contextualised the content, and a discussion was held. After the one-day program, the participants continued to debrief the conversation with one another.

One of the decentralised education programs with the most significant number of participants took place in Kimberly, South Africa, a diamond-mining region of the country, with new NUMSA (National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa) members. The induction was a two-day program with about 200 people. The Education Brigade did a political education session one afternoon. The session focused on explaining the development of capitalism and the fight against it from the vantage point of the history of the mining sector, particularly diamond mining in South Africa.

Lastly, some of the most extended decentralised political education programs happened with Abahlali baseMjondolo, the shack dwellers movement of South Africa. The program occurred at the eKhenana Commune, a land occupation in Durban. The physical location of the program allowed the Education Brigade to do more prolonged programs, ranging from ten days to two weeks. These were structured as mini-courses with applicable topics (e.g., the state, exploitation, organisation building, communes as an instrument in class struggle, etc.). These longer residential programs also included collective work, study, and *mística* as pedagogical dimensions. The purpose of this course was ultimately to strengthen the political resolve of those leading the commune in the face of severe adversity (assassinations, poverty, not yet fully developed strategy). This experience allowed the Education Brigade to incorporate more of the methodology used at the Nkrumah School's centralised courses, such as collective work and *mística*.

These examples highlight the varied experiences of the Nkrumah School's decentralised education programs. The programs ranged in the number and profile of participants, the duration, the content, and the reason for carrying out the program.

Successes

One of the decentralised education experience's main successes was the organic connection it created between the organisations and the Nkrumah School.

Through the planning and execution of decentralised education programs, trust was built between the leaders of the organisations and the Education Brigade. For example, the trust made it possible for the Nkrumah School to be more involved in assessing the extent to which organisations' cadre were developed through political education activities. Additionally, having only a couple of members of the Brigade travel to a given location, rather than having many students travel to South Africa, allowed the school to reach more students, considering the restrictions relating to costs and pandemic restrictions.

Secondly, the decentralised education program ensured a degree of continuity in political education. Instead of the experience of centralised courses, where students come to the residential school and have some experience detached from their organisational work, the embeddedness of decentralised courses in the organisation allowed for more structural continuity. This continuity allowed for a permanent exchange between the school and the organisations. One of the ways in which this was achieved was by incorporating alumnae from the centralised courses into the coordination of the decentralised ones.

Lastly, the decentralised education program allowed the Nkrumah School to develop its own cadre and experiment with education methods. In some cases, circumstances allowed for significant dialogue, though this was not possible everywhere. Similarly, some programs had substantial preparation before the cou-

rse kicked off, whilst in other cases, the school itself initiated the political education process - rather than forming part of it or being there for its culmination. Developing and executing a political education session tailored to a specific organisation's needs and context provided a particular challenge to the Education Brigade members that was beneficial for their growth. Additionally, the popular education principle of taking people's life experiences as a point of departure for education was more impactful in a decentralised, organisational setting than in a centralised course with a vast diversity of life experiences.

Challenges

The first challenge of decentralised education was finding the balance between meeting the program's objective without interfering unnecessarily in the organisations. In particular, programs that deal with strategy, tactics, and organisation-building always run the risk of inadvertently creating rifts between those participating in the course and the leaders of the organisations. The permanent exchange between the school and the organisations was a benefit of the decentralised education program, but navigating this balance was simultaneously a challenge.

Secondly, the proposed objectives of the Nkrumah School and the organisations occasionally came into conflict with one another. For example, the school was approached by organisations seeking to meet a specific organisational need, such as a union needing

to train shop stewards. While this was an immediate need of the organisation, it did not necessarily contribute to a larger objective of strengthening the pan-African and internationalist project. This is related to the fact that decentralised education, by necessity, does not foster international (and pan-African) solidarity in the way that centralised courses do.

Lastly, the decentralised education programs potentially interfered with and inhibited continuity by preventing organisations from developing their internal capacity to do political education. In some cases, the Nkrumah School's decentralised education programming even tacitly encouraged a delay in an organisation's development of its own political education work. This meant that in some cases when the school stopped doing decentralised education in mid-2022, the political education work of organisations also halted.

Reflections

The successes and challenges of the Nkrumah School's two-year decentralised education program have led to several reflections about how, or if, this process should be replicated.

If a school is contemplating decentralised political education, it is vital to be clear about the objectives. The Nkrumah School's decentralised education was a direct response to a particular need and the reality of

the continent at a specific point in time. The objective of decentralised education should clearly define the intervention one is trying to make.

In addition to the intentionality of the program, it is essential to be clear about its intended result. For example, is the program designed as a one-off activity, or is it intended to become a part of an organisation's long-term project? Is it the expectation that the school will continue the education work, or will it contribute to the organisation independently developing its education work? If you are attempting to catalyse an organisation's political education program, the decentralised program must be executed to ensure longevity and sustainability.

Lastly, it is essential to reflect on how doing a decentralised education program with one organisation contributes to a broader process of building an international working-class movement. Doing decentralised political education with an organisation can be a point of departure, but one cannot remain at this point. In some ways, the decentralised education allowed the Nkrumah School to indirectly present and ground the programs in the International Peoples' Assembly principles. However, in contrast to a centralised course that would explicitly present the International Peoples' Assembly, it was more difficult to concretely introduce the project of the Assembly and its strategic contribution to the work of organisations in this context.

The decentralised education program enabled the Nkrumah School to refine its analysis of the state of class struggle on the continent. The programs the school ran were opportunities not only to teach but also to learn from organisations and their cadre and leadership. As the Nkrumah School transitions back to centralised courses, it is essential to reflect on the experiences and lessons of the experience of decentralised education.

TUNIS

Dialectics of Emancipatory Pedagogy in Political Education: Experiences from the Tunis School in Education and Action for Popular Organisations

The Tunis School

The Tunis School has served as a political education space for movements and organisations across the Arab and Maghreb region since 2018. In crafting its political education framework, the school has adopted Emancipatory Pedagogy as a two-pronged me-

thodology, combining collective learning activities with joint practical exercises rooted in the concrete reality. Furthermore, the school's political education initiatives have significantly contributed to the development of two regional processes within the International Peoples' Assembly (IPA): the Women's Collective and the Youth and Student Front in Solidarity with Palestine and Peoples' Struggles. These processes have been bolstered by the school, which has become a key instrument in building the IPA as a mass-based project that integrates education, organisation, and mobilisation.

The Tunis School has also prioritised political education at the grassroots level of the regional organisations. To achieve this, it has developed the concept of National Pedagogical Committees, organised regional pedagogical meetings, and implemented follow-up political education processes post-course. Through these efforts, the school has successfully connected its structures with local organisations and maintained engagement with students after the courses conclude. As a result, these national education processes have amplified the school's impact, expanded its network, and increased the IPA's visibility and influence across the region.

The following chapter explores the political and organisational dimensions of Emancipatory Pedagogy at the Tunis School, demonstrating how it transcends being merely an educational space to serve as an effective

tool for popular mobilisation and cadre-building. Additionally, the discussion highlights the importance of decentralising political education, shifting from regional schools to national schools, with the goal of strengthening local political education processes and enhancing IPA coordination across the region.

The Political Dimension of Emancipatory Pedagogy: Cadre-Building in the Course of Action

Emancipatory Pedagogy extends the educational process beyond analysis and synthesis, emphasising the carrying out of concrete actions such as building solidarity campaigns, organising political education courses, and engaging with global initiatives. Within this framework, political education aims to build cadre for organisations, strengthening their political capacities through both intellectual and practical training. The intellectual component of the course drives the students to reflect on issues related to their daily struggles and develop tools for a deeper understanding of their reality. Meanwhile, the practical component moves them from concrete analysis to the creation of actionable initiatives and calls for mobilisation.

A successful course thus enables students to connect with their lived reality as part of movements and organisations, foster a shared understanding of political issues, and plan campaigns, courses, and mobilisa-

tions in alignment with a broader political strategy. In other words, the deeper the students learn, the more efficient their political practices should develop. To this end, the Tunis School adopts an Emancipatory Pedagogy that integrates theory and practice, employing a methodology that analyses the movement of history and equips students with the tools to act within it.

Additionally, the methodology of each course is designed to build a common understanding of the current political conjuncture, which is then translated into planned actions. Students participate in exercises that help them assess their political circumstances while proposing initiatives for collective struggle. The school also serves as an internationalist space where cadre from various organisations can share their experiences and struggles, enabling students to learn from different experiences of struggle and apply these insights to their own contexts.

Through the application of Emancipatory Pedagogy, each course contributes to strengthening coordination among organisations and forging strong relationships among students, enabling the development of joint work programmes and mobilisation initiatives. The course becomes a pivotal moment in which the student links thinking and understanding with concrete action and practice—two foundational moments in the process of building political cadre.

The Role of Political Education in Building the IPA Pillars and Collectives

The Tunis School has played a pivotal role in supporting the initiatives of the International Peoples' Assembly and mobilising students following each course. Organising courses on topics related to the IPA's political platform has been instrumental in introducing the IPA to organisations across the region. Additionally, the school convenes regional political and pedagogical meetings to sustain the engagement of students and graduates. Alongside formal invitations to the organisations, the school actively encourages students to participate in solidarity meetings and activities. Many students express their interest in joining the IPA's regional working groups, in areas like Solidarity, Communications, Media, Culture, and others.

One notable example of this engagement is the participation of students in the International Week of Anti-Imperialist Struggle. The Tunis School contributed by organising various activities – including seminars, courses, lectures, and meetings – focused on exposing imperialism, its mechanisms, and its crimes against humanity and the environment. These activities fostered unity among activists and organisations worldwide through collaborative efforts to combat imperialism and its manifestations in different regions.

Since most students belong to organisations aligned with the principles and programmes of the IPA, the Tunis School – by incorporating Emancipatory Peda-

gogy – has become a fundamental pillar of the IPA. It serves as a critical tool for fostering disciplined unity among organisations and strengthening IPA activities by contributing to the establishment of sectoral structures, participating in solidarity campaigns, and engaging in regional and international mobilisation efforts. The courses not only develop conjunctural analysis but also propose tasks aligned with IPA initiatives. Beyond learning about issues and identifying tasks, students innovate and create organisational structures to execute these initiatives.

In this way, political education functions as the dynamic backbone of the IPA organisations in the region. It drives their coordination forward, equips them with trained cadre, and provides the energy necessary to enhance their impact.

Two Examples of Realised Emancipatory Pedagogy Processes

Since its establishment, the Tunis School has facilitated numerous courses and engaged hundreds of participants, advancing programmes based on Emancipatory Pedagogy. These efforts have led to the creation of new IPA structures and processes: the Youth and Student Front in Solidarity with Palestine and Peoples' Struggles, the IPA Women's Collective, and various solidarity actions.

1. The Youth and Student Front: A Process of Realized Emancipatory Pedagogy

Since its inception, the Tunis School has created spaces for coordination between participating organisations. During the pandemic, the school sustained communication with organisations and students through online courses. One such course focused on Palestinian issues and concluded with a call to coordinate student actions around shared concerns, particularly solidarity with the Palestinian people. Building on these outcomes, the school organised a pedagogical meeting in collaboration with the IPA Secretariat in the region, leading to the establishment of the Arab and Maghreb Youth Student Front to support Palestine and peoples' struggles.

The Youth and Student Front was officially launched on 17 January 2023. The founding meeting included participation from 18 student and youth organisations across the Arab and Maghreb region, with six additional organisations joining later on, bringing the total membership to 24 organisations.

The Front's work is centred on political education, grassroots mobilisation, and the creation of solidarity networks. The Front has initiated numerous mobilisation campaigns and organised solidarity protests on university campuses, as well as study sessions, which have helped it grow and attract additional youth

organisations. Operating with a dedicated secretariat and a pedagogical committee, the Front conducted its inaugural course in collaboration with the Tunis School from 5 to 25 August in Tunisia.

The primary goal of this course was to enhance participants' political and organisational skills while providing a platform for dialogue among the region's youth on shared issues, particularly in the face of growing challenges related to normalisation efforts and imperialism. The course reflected the Front's commitment to building its organisational strength and amplifying its impact on youth and student movements. It also generated significant media engagement, with news of the Front's activities spreading through traditional media outlets and digital platforms, including social media.

Key ideas emerging from the course included organising broader solidarity campaigns for the Palestinian cause, establishing ongoing training programmes, and expanding solidarity networks to support struggles in the region and beyond.

The Front has since become a prominent voice for students and youth, embodying the spirit of resistance and solidarity against normalisation and imperialist control, while advancing efforts to build a conscious grassroots movement capable of driving meaningful change.

2. International Anti-Imperialist Action and the Building of the IPA Regional Women's Collective

The regional Women's Collective is a key pillar of the IPA in the Arab and Maghreb region. It was established following the Anti-Imperialist Conference of Arab and Maghreb Organisations, held in Tunisia in early February 2020, as part of the International Week of Anti-Imperialist Struggle campaign. During the conference, women from leftist parties, feminist organisations, and human rights groups convened a parallel meeting to address the feminist struggle against imperialism and outline a regional strategy. The collective was created to implement the recommendations of this meeting, which emphasised the need for collaboration with the Tunis School to develop a political education course focused on women's issues and organisations.

A major focus of this collaboration has been the establishment of Women's Courses to facilitate collective action among women and provide targeted training sessions. Through a series of activities, seminars, and discussion sessions, the Women's Collective designed an educational programme around three key priorities: providing ideological and intellectual training, strengthening class-based feminist struggles, and bridging perspectives among leftist activists.

To date, the Women's Collective has organised three feminist courses: two online courses during the CO-

VID-19 pandemic and a third in-person course held in Tunisia in August 2024. These courses engaged over 120 women militants from 42 leftist organisations – including political parties, trade unions, and feminist groups – across 11 countries in the Arab and Maghreb region. The Women’s Collective, in coordination with the Tunis School, played an active role in forming the political and pedagogical committees responsible for the courses. The committees set the following objectives:

- ☀ Building and training feminist leaders in the Arab and Maghreb region to spearhead feminist and political struggles.
- ☀ Strengthening the Women’s Collective and enhancing collaboration in grassroots struggles and women’s mobilisation.
- ☀ Establishing national feminist schools to oversee feminist courses rooted in Emancipatory Pedagogy.

Following the latest in-person course, the Women’s Collective, in collaboration with the Tunis School and the political pedagogical committee, is working to establish national feminist courses in each participating country. This initiative engages past course participants to localise and expand feminist education.

In alignment with the third objective, significant portions of the in-person courses in Tunisia focused on exploring the pedagogical dimensions of Emancipatory Pedagogy. These sessions included discus-

sions on popular education methodologies, building schools, forming political pedagogical committees, and grounding these efforts in the analysis of local realities and contexts. The aim was to develop course programmes that reflect the unique interests and concerns of each country while linking these to broader struggles against imperialism, Zionism, and traditional education systems.

Participants engaged in collective reflection on the structural and fundamental causes of the challenges affecting their daily lives and rights. They worked to formulate responses informed by their grassroots experiences, intellectual perspectives, and daily struggles. This process ensured a connection between local struggles, broader political movements, and the overarching framework of class struggle.

National Pedagogical Committees as an Instrument of Mass-Level Emancipatory Pedagogy

Since its establishment, the Tunis School has viewed the courses it organises not as an end in themselves but as a means to achieve the organisational and political objectives to strengthen the work of organisations in the region. The school has prioritised the development of political training programmes rooted in the specific realities of countries and local organisations.

In this context, the Tunis School has directed its efforts towards designing curricula and establishing

mechanisms to organise national schools. It has also worked to develop pedagogical tools that engage students beyond the courses and integrate them into a regional process of Emancipatory Pedagogy. This approach respects each organisation's political and ideological frameworks while maintaining the independence of its political stances and areas of work.

The Tunis School emphasises organisations' involvement in designing political training programmes and taking responsibility for building training sessions. This approach aims to create cadres capable of transferring their experiences to their organisations in ways that align with their countries' unique conditions and specificities. Exercises for developing political training programmes form a significant part of the school's curriculum, equipping students with a shared understanding of the principles and methodology of Emancipatory Pedagogy while integrating these with the experiences of organisations at the national level.

The school intentionally works to empower students to transfer the knowledge and skills gained through the school and popular education to their organisations and countries. This process aligns with the political realities of their contexts and the needs and programmes of their organisations. To achieve this, the school actively encourages the transfer of political training experiences by involving past students in political pedagogical coordination, facilitating their participation in regional pedagogical meetings, and engaging them in the creation of national pedagogical committees and courses.

Emancipatory Pedagogy at the Grassroots: From Regional Courses to the National Pedagogical Committee

Each course organised by the Tunis School emphasises the importance of creating structures to develop local education processes and facilitate the exchange of experiences. To achieve this, the school has established National Pedagogical Committees (NPCs), which are tasked with organising training and designing political education programmes tailored to the needs and objectives of participating organisations.

The NPCs are considered “pedagogical” because they employ an educational approach that equips learners with the skills, knowledge, abilities, and behaviours needed to enhance political awareness among activists. This approach reinforces their daily commitment to collective work. Emancipatory Pedagogy provides a training framework rooted in the essential needs of organisations, translating concepts into concrete organisational structures, programmes, tasks, and activities that can be practically implemented during political training sessions.

At the same time, the NPCs are considered “political” because they design training programmes aligned with the objectives of the organisations while contributing to unity and internationalism. These program-

mes foster dialogue and debate on political and social issues, encourage the exchange of experiences among organisations, and promote interaction between activists. Furthermore, NPCs inspire continued engagement beyond the courses, such as participation in mobilisations, solidarity campaigns, and anti-imperialist struggles.

The Tunis School facilitates the construction of NPCs through a series of interconnected activities and structures. These efforts begin during the courses themselves and extend beyond their conclusion through post-course communication groups, study days, and pedagogical discussion groups.

Communications Groups

One key tool for maintaining connections among students after each course is the creation of communication groups. Following the conclusion of a course, the members of the political pedagogical committee establish a communication group named after it, which includes all participants and committee members.

These groups facilitate ongoing communication among the participants and between them and the Tunis School. They serve as platforms for sharing updates, discussing issues relevant to the regional organisations, and exchanging experiences and initiatives related to the IPA and the Tunis School.

Pedagogical Meetings and Study Days

The Tunis School has consistently organised virtual meetings and study days for course graduates to address specific regional issues and deepen discussions on approach and methodology. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, the school sustained its pedagogical activities by hosting online courses. These efforts ensured the continuity and vitality of the school's educational programmes while maintaining communication, training, and support for participants.

Inclusion of the National Pedagogical Committees Exercise in the Courses

The fourth course of the Tunis School marked a significant milestone in building National Pedagogical Committees (NPCs) by introducing a dedicated exercise for their formation. A substantial portion of the programme was allocated to this exercise, in which participants were grouped by country and tasked with developing local emancipatory training programmes tailored to the needs and realities of their organisation or countries. At the course's conclusion, each country presented and discussed its programme, gaining practical experience in designing and organising emancipatory education programmes through all stages of development.

Pedagogical Discussion Groups

Following study days and pedagogical meetings, the school creates communication groups that include representatives from organisations interested in forming pedagogical committees. These groups facilitate discussions, provide updates on local courses and national committees, and serve as platforms for collaboration.

Communication with National Committees

After NPCs were established in Morocco, Lebanon, Palestine, and Western Sahara, the Tunis School maintained continuous communication and provided ongoing support. This included contributing to their courses and offering guidance and pedagogical assistance to strengthen their initiatives.

Integrating Pedagogy and Politics

The purpose of the communications groups extends beyond pedagogy. They serve as key entry points for engaging with various political issues in the region. These groups keep participants informed about developments in different countries and organisations while also enabling collective action.

In addition to participating in the IPA's international and regional campaigns, the groups became spaces for proposing and organising broad solidarity efforts.

The students played a crucial role in these campaigns, such as the solidarity campaign for political prisoners in Morocco, the “Save Sheikh Jarrah” campaign, the “Lives Before Profits” campaign, and other social media and communications efforts.

Conclusion

The Tunis School has significantly contributed to building the IPA and promoting internationalism in the Arab and Maghreb regions by creating a space for Emancipatory Pedagogy tailored to grassroots organisations and movements. Its focus on cadre development through political education ties directly to the daily struggles of participants within their organisations. By addressing regional and international issues, fostering a common understanding of political dynamics, and engaging in solidarity and mobilisation campaigns, the school deepens students’ learning and practice both during and after their participation.

This work requires the school to adopt a political pedagogy that integrates theory with practice, enabling students to analyse and understand the movement of history while developing tools for struggle aligned with this movement. It also equips them with the ability to act and take initiative within the framework of popular struggles in the region. Through its training programmes, organisational tools, and involvement in grassroots movements and solidarity campaigns, the school has effectively linked learning with action, achieving the core goals of Emancipatory Pedagogy.

GHANA

Political Education Courses and Regional Coordination

Amílcar Cabral School

In December 2022, the West Africa Peoples Organisation (WAPO) was founded as an anti-imperialist network of pan-Africanist formations, political parties, and broad anti-imperialist and progressive movements across West Africa. The organisation's formation can be traced back to the Pan Africanism Today conference held in Winneba, Ghana, in 2018, where pan-Africanist groups from around the world convened. The stated goal of WAPO is "to mobilise the working peoples of West Africa to end poverty, inequality, corruption, discrimination, and violence inflicted on the region by centuries of colonialist and imperialist domination" (West Africa Peoples Organisation, 2022).

At the Winneba Conference of 2018, the ideological seeds of WAPO were sown by adopting a joint assessment of the situation facing the West African sub-region. The recognition of a need for a unified front

against imperialism and capitalism within the subregion propelled the formulation of WAPO. The organisation's framework acknowledged the strategic significance of anti-imperialism as a rallying point for a diverse range of progressive movements and groups, encompassing trade unions, political parties, and women's and youth organisations.

WAPO's emergence marked a significant step towards transcending the colonial borders that have historically divided West African nations. By uniting over forty delegates from ten of the fourteen West African countries, WAPO demonstrated a commitment to working collectively to dismantle the legacy of imperialism and colonialism. This initiative emphasised shared aspirations for the world, rallying groups around a common purpose.

The Role of the Amílcar Cabral School in the Formation of WAPO

The 2018 Winneba Conference facilitated the birth of the Amílcar Cabral School, which incorporated the pedagogical method and methodology represented by the schools of the Internationalist Collective for Political Education (ICPE), particularly the Nkrumah School in South Africa, the Tunis School in the Arab-Maghreb Region, and the Florestan Fernandes National School (ENFF) in Brazil.

Adopting the pedagogical dimensions of the ICPE marked a departure from the traditional “study group” method employed in the region’s previous political education efforts. The experiences of the schools of the ICPE allowed the Amílcar Cabral School to develop a more holistic method and methodology primarily targeted at youth.

Initially, the Amílcar Cabral School’s courses were broad and general, focusing on understanding the region’s sociopolitical landscape. However, as these courses progressed, it became evident that a more targeted approach was needed to align with the strategic goal of coordinating regional organisations. These international courses became critical spaces for anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist organisations to develop a collective understanding of West Africa’s challenges. The need for a common framework to comprehend these challenges and devise coordinated tactics emerged as a recurring theme.

The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 prompted a reassessment of strategies. The closure of borders halted international courses and forced a revision of the curriculum and a shift toward national courses. This adaptation allowed for a greater focus on the Ghanaian national context. This process also aligned with and facilitated the transition of the Socialist Forum of Ghana into the Socialist Movement of Ghana. The Socialist Forum of Ghana was founded in 1933 with the mission of advancing the cause of socialism and pan-Africanism in public discourse.

The launch of the Socialist Movement of Ghana in August 2021 provided a platform for allied organisations to convene and deliberate on deepening cooperation within the subregion. This led to bilateral discussions between the Communist Party of Côte d'Ivoire and the Communist Party of Benin, setting the stage for broader collaboration.

The creation of WAPO was, in many ways, informed by the experiences of the Amílcar Cabral School. The Amílcar Cabral School emerged as a catalyst in shaping the groundwork that facilitated WAPO's formation, notably through cultivating trust, unity, and a shared vision among diverse organisations within the West African sub-region.

The history of the left in West Africa had been marked by fragmentation and distrust. The legacy of imperialist aggression against leftist formations had engendered scepticism between organisations. Overcoming these historical barriers necessitated a qualitative shift. The Amílcar Cabral School was pivotal in building political trust and confidence among organisations.

Through years of engagement at the school level, the Amílcar Cabral School fostered an environment where organisations collaborated, interacted, and solidified relationships. In its first five years, the Amílcar Cabral School has trained over 500 cadre within the sub-region and throughout the world. Cadre, who had attended courses at the Amílcar Cabral School, assumed leadership roles and facilitated the work

between organisations. The school's emphasis on internationalism and solidarity and the need to build a movement beyond national boundaries reaffirmed the necessity of collective action in a region historically divided by imperialism and colonialism.

The relationships nurtured through the Amílcar Cabral School facilitated the groundwork for WAPO's emergence. The cooperation fostered by years of engagement meant that when the time came for organisations to embark on a regional project, the agreements were more readily reached. The Amílcar Cabral School provided a platform for activists and cadre to grow closer, enabling the formation process within WAPO.

Successes

The formation of WAPO is a testament to the power of ideological alignment, political education, and collective efforts. From the early convergence of pan-Africanist, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist ideologies at the Winneba Conference to the establishment of the Amílcar Cabral School, the journey toward WAPO's creation exemplifies how a solid ideological foundation can galvanise diverse movements and organisations toward unified struggle.

The Amílcar Cabral School's adoption of the method and methodology – developed by the ENFF in Brazil but tailored for the regional context of West Africa –

provides a structured space for revolutionary thinkers to cultivate a deeper understanding of the region's challenges. The engagement in critical discussions, reflections, and sharing experiences facilitated a rigorous intellectual groundwork, which subsequently found expression in WAPO's broader initiatives.

The Amílcar Cabral School played an instrumental role in the construction of robust political instruments, both in Ghana and in the sub-region. By nurturing cadre and activists with a deep-rooted understanding of Marxist principles and a commitment to anti-imperialist thought, the school has provided both political training and has equipped individuals with a range of technical competencies.

In the five years between 2018-2023, the Amílcar Cabral School has offered 24 courses, including International Political Theory, West African regional, Labor, and National courses. A total of 820 activists from 82 different organisations and 35 countries – predominantly from the African continent – have been trained through these courses.

The school's success can be observed in its role within broader campaigns and solidarity projects of the International Peoples' Assembly. The Amílcar Cabral School has been one of the foremost platforms for disseminating information about the anti-imperialist struggle to the sub-region.

Challenges

One significant political challenge of the sub-region is the diversity of languages represented. However, the Amílcar Cabral School has demonstrated an unwavering determination to surmount this challenge. The School recognised that while languages may differ, the shared struggle against the exploitation and dehumanisation wrought by capitalism and imperialism transcends linguistic borders. One of the ways that the Amílcar Cabral School sought to overcome this barrier was the implementation of a multidimensional pedagogical approach that utilised art, culture, and *mística* to engage participants beyond the confines of language.

A second challenge is the fact that political education is a permanent process. The need for an ongoing process to undertake this essential task is a constant demand. However, the availability of resources – both human and material – is finite. This limitation poses a challenge in ensuring a consistent flow of resources to contribute to the political education process.

Additionally, the dynamic nature of political education necessitates flexibility to address the ever-evolving context of the region and the organisations. Each organisation brings its own unique context to the school, which demands a responsive approach.

Reflections on the Process

The reflections on the history of the Amílcar Cabral School and its influence within the West African context reveal both triumphs and challenges inherent in fostering political education and engaging in working-class struggle. In recent years, a resurgence in interest in training and education has become apparent. This interest presents opportunities and challenges requiring thoughtful consideration and strategic intervention.

While expressions of interest have emerged from various organisations, parties, and trade unions, there is a need for a clear framework and methodology to underpin something that goes beyond mere “interest.” The absence of a unified approach can lead to discussions on crucial concepts, such as pan-Africanism, deviating from a common political framework. For example, NGOs organise many seminars and trainings, but these do not meet the objectives of WAPO. The Amílcar Cabral School’s experience provides insight into the importance of not only fostering enthusiasm but also a deep consideration for the method and methodology of the political education process.

As the region witnesses this resurgence of interest, the lessons learned from the Amílcar Cabral School and the broader process of the schools of the ICPE must illuminate the path forward to continue political education’s transformative role in the ongoing struggle for working-class liberation.

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BRAZIL

Popular Education and Grassroots Work

Paulo Freire National School

The legacy of Paulo Freire's life and activism directs us to the necessary link between popular education and the organisation of the people. Disconnected from an organisational process, popular education becomes academic and ineffectual. Without popular education, the organisation becomes too focused on "activism" and lacks the appropriate tools for analysing the world. Consequently, organisations can fall into sectarianism or complacency, both symptoms of naïve thinking.

The concepts Freire outlined in 1968 in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* are extremely relevant; they are the historical theories that give the Paulo Freire National School its *raison d'être*. Our school, inspired by the experience of the Florestan Fernandes National School (ENFF), was likewise born to develop political education for the working class. However, it faces the

challenge of constructing a space for political and technical training that contributes to urban grassroots organisation, including cadre from political organisations, community leaders, young people, women, and residents of the poorest urban communities in Brazil (periferias). The school seeks to contribute to grassroots organisation processes and strengthen political organisations through grassroots education.

In light of this challenge, we understand that the ultimate goal of our school must be to develop grassroots methodologies rooted in popular education. These methodologies can be systematised and replicated in different contexts as an outcome of the experiences of Brazilian grassroots organisations. To provide our school with the capacity to develop such methodologies, we need an organic relationship with the concrete practices of grassroots work, shifting from theorising toward constructing a working praxis-based method.

To this end, we have adopted hands-on experiments in territories as our work method. Based on these experiences, the school is able to combine theoretical study with concrete practice, using these experiments as a way of exercising praxis in order to improve our work in the service of grassroots movements. To this end, we also rely on a methodology that seeks to systematise experiences. We record what has happened in order to encourage reflection, collective development, the construction of popular science, and contemplation about our practice.

Therefore, we present an overview of our experiences developing the “Popular Health Workers” model

in this text. This model is still being developed collectively, but it is a good example of a popular education and political training methodology linked to popular organisation and grassroots work.

Solidarity during the Pandemic and the Experience of Popular Health Workers

The COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil has aggravated the severe, preexisting social and political crises. The election of the fascist Jair Bolsonaro as president signalled the height of the onslaught of the neoliberal project and the beginning of a period of significant deterioration in the living conditions of the population. Added to this context is the profound delegitimisation of progressive and left-wing organisations and ideas in our society, putting us on the defensive from an ideological point of view as well. We believe that the way to overcome this combination of political, social, institutional, and health crises is to focus on re-establishing an organic link between the Left and the Brazilian people. This should involve building processes to solve the concrete problems of the working class in conjunction with politicisation and consciousness-raising. In this process, building a greater commitment to solving collective problems through political debate is possible, thus expanding our capacity for mass mobilisation.

In this context, solidarity was more evident than ever in the Brazilian *periferias*. With the intensification of ine-

qualities and crises, high rates of illness and mortality, and hunger, the struggle for survival encouraged solidarity as a way out for the people. The **Periferia Viva** (Long Live the Periphery) campaign was launched as one of many solidarity campaigns organised during the COVID-19 health crisis. The campaign brought together popular movements from the countryside and the city to fight the virus and hunger. It consisted of gathering agroecological produce from agrarian reform lands, collecting donations of food and hygiene products, and delivering baskets of these materials to families on the periferias of urban centres.

In the Brazilian periferias, solidarity has always been the means of survival through establishing community relations between neighbours and families. However, due to the pandemic, this element has taken a significant leap forward, connecting the peripheries of the cities with the countryside. This popular solidarity, combined with grassroots work, seeks to identify and engage individuals willing to collectively solve the community's problems, thereby transforming the struggle for survival into a joint political struggle. It is essential that this solidarity differs from the charity or assistance models practised by some churches or even by private endeavours; the latter see the people as mere beneficiaries and passive objects, not as active political protagonists who are in the process of liberation and transformation of the system that pushes them into this reality.

This continuous work was only possible because we mobilised the energy, time, and resources of a group

of individuals and, above all, popular organisations and movements. We based this on the recognition of the need to respond to the situation together. It became clear that we could not operate a campaign individually, within each movement, because of the need not just for a large number of activists but, above all, the specific accumulation of organisational and political issues.

In addition to grassroots organisations, mobilising a wide range of volunteers was a significant driver in publicising and collecting money for the campaign, organising the cleaning of the food baskets, and producing content for communication with the families.

This collaboration in collecting and preparing the baskets resulted in forming a third group shortly after the first deliveries. This group was created by families that received the baskets, including the local volunteers willing to take part in the deliveries and socialise families' other needs.

All the experiences of this first moment of the solidarity campaign highlighted the challenges of continuing the work. In addition to the context of the profound deterioration of people's living conditions, the Bolsonaro government's genocidal policy also propagated a massive campaign of misinformation about the virus. This made it necessary for the movements to develop a methodology for disseminating information about the essential precautions in the pandemic context alongside the solidarity actions in the territories.

Thus, Popular Health Workers courses began to be organised. These courses aimed to train residents in the periferias to share and amplify the knowledge they had acquired with the people in the community. The goal was to strengthen and develop new conditions for collective and community responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. With grassroots movements at the helm, this entailed joining efforts with the SUS (Unified Health System) and linking people to social welfare, education, sanitation, housing, and food.

In addition to the goal of collective care, within a context where we could not rely on the government, we also sought to address the fundamental needs related to structural issues in Brazilian cities and society. It is necessary to build participation and activities that pinpoint the causes and perpetrators of such ills. This also led us to identify the steps required to mobilise actions, street demonstrations, agitation, and propaganda to denounce Bolsonaro's policies that stripped rights from the people.

Peoples' Kitchens

The Paulo Freire National School in São Paulo was influential in organising solidarity actions. The school distributed food and organised legal and health consulting by mobilising lawyers, doctors, nurses, and social workers to provide advice and disseminate information. To do this, we carried out a series of actions throughout 2020 and 2021 with various unions, civil entities and volunteer workers.

The courses for Popular Health Workers were a way of advancing our political and organisational work. The trainees who participated in the course continued to do education campaigns in their communities by disseminating information about the main health precautions to avoid disease.

However, as these initial steps of grassroots work in the territories developed, they increasingly allowed us to identify new challenges. The issue of hunger became an increasingly glaring and urgent problem. Addressing hunger requires much more profound and prolonged action, including structural actions that transform food production systems in Brazil. Based on this contradiction, which was becoming more and more latent, the question arose of what kind of actions we could take in the community to understand the roots of hunger and help us tackle it. Because of this reflection, itself the fruit of concrete experience in the communities, the Paulo Freire National School challenged itself to think of ways to respond to these other challenges.

By having knowledge of the landscape – which we had already acquired in the training of Popular Health Workers – an initiative began in order to organise and train a new group of people: Popular Food Workers.

The proposal for this new form of organisation and training in the community focused on addressing hunger, which occurs to different degrees among the residents. Some have no guarantee of food on a daily basis, and others only have basic access to foods

with low nutritional value and ultra-processed foods. At each meeting, time was organised for group activities in two important spaces: the vegetable garden and the kitchen. In the garden, we cultivated the land and planted seedlings and vegetable seeds consistent with the typical Brazilian diet. Throughout the course, we saw the seedlings grow and the transformation of nature through work on and for the land; we saw healthy food sprout from the cultivated soil.

In this process, we were constantly inspired by Freire's teachings. For him, literacy is a historical process, not just about drawing and memorising letters. You have to read the letters and read the world. Because the oppressed read the world differently from the oppressor, it is fundamental in the literacy process that the oppressed say "their word."

The training of Popular Food Workers is part of this popular literacy method based on the reality of people's lives. This reality is marked by issues such as the fight against hunger, the need for healthy food, and a popular agrarian reform. Through illiteracy, the bourgeoisie intentionally silences the people's demands on these issues. Silence is a mark of our colonial history that manifests itself in many ways, including hunger.

Therefore, Popular Food Workers are members of urban communities who work to promote grassroots organisation to solve concrete problems. They seek to create a solidarity network that develops people in

the community as protagonists capable of reflecting on social contradictions at the national and local levels and collectively acting on them.

The course modules use the popular education method. According to Freire, within this method, “no one educates anyone, and no one educates themselves; people educate each other” (Freire, 1968). The starting point of popular education is identifying the concrete reality the organisation exists in within the community, the underlying issues, and what training is required to develop individual and collective ways of solving problems based on the values of solidarity and collectivity.

We, therefore, see food as a central issue for the Brazilian people. It is a concrete contradiction experienced in the daily life of our communities. For this reason, there is a need to build initiatives to tackle hunger, both immediately and structurally. This is accomplished by building power in the periferias, focusing on grassroots work by popular movements to generate income, autonomy, and community organisation.

The Popular Food Workers Course was created as a tool to respond to these challenges. The course promoted the training of community members to debate the issue of hunger and its relationship to social inequalities in our country. Additionally, the course addressed how to act together to tackle this problem

in the participants' communities. An example of this was the distribution of lunchboxes, chairs, and other tools to aid the construction of People's Kitchens, community organisations, and income generation. People's Kitchens emerged as a powerful space for food production and distribution through popular organisation. For us, kitchens are not just physical spaces but also places of communion through socialising, dialoguing, and strengthening community ties. Notably, most of the people mobilised to build the kitchens and participate in the courses were primarily Black women, who are generally the head of the household in these communities, meaning they are also responsible for food and social reproduction in their homes.

Therefore, the course's ultimate goal was to train Popular Workers in urban territories of the periferia. These workers are tasked with mobilising and engaging the community in the fight against hunger, working to build permanent People's Kitchens, and advancing grassroots organising.

To this end, throughout the course, spaces are created for debate and collective reflection that examines the issue of hunger in Brazil based on specific realities and experiences. Additionally, spaces are dedicated to technical training to prepare and distribute food and manage People's Kitchens. This process is intended to create grassroots groups who are building kitchens with a grassroots political character in their neighbourhoods.

Over time, we have perfected our methodology for building the course and the experience of organising grassroots groups through practice and reflection. This process has gone beyond the pandemic period to the present day. To hold the course in a city or region, a PPC (Political Pedagogical Coordination) is set up. In our case, the PPC included members of the Paulo Freire National School and the People's Brazil Movement (MBP). We divided this PPC into community PPCs for each neighbourhood where the classes were held. These territorial PPCs were joined by local leaders and other people interested in contributing to the coordination of the course. Their task was to organise the various stages of the course in the territory, make the necessary arrangements to set up the infrastructure and venue for the course, and mobilise residents to participate (through gatherings, door-to-door canvassing, etc.).

The course was divided into six stages, held in various locations in the communities. The classes included discussion time in the classroom and practice time in the kitchen. It was evident that the location and structure available for the classes were crucial for the methodology of the time in the kitchen. Some spaces had a place for discussion but no kitchen, others had a minimum infrastructure but needed some outside equipment, and others already had a kitchen.

From the point of view of grassroots organisations, the time spent on the course is fundamental for establishing contacts in the territories and building bonds

of trust in the community, making the movements a resource and source of leadership in the community. The course also opened up the possibility of expanding local connections that will make it possible to construct a People's Kitchens that can remain in operation after the end of the course. This is possible by identifying places where kitchens already exist (schools, neighbourhood associations, public welfare facilities, etc.) and collecting donations or loans of equipment (pans, cutlery, gas cylinders, etc.).

Conclusion

The development of Popular Health Workers and the solidarity actions carried out during the pandemic were a pilot exercise for developing a grassroots work methodology combined with popular education. This method can be easily replicated and implemented to solve concrete problems. From this initial experience, we identified that this form of organisation connected to training courses can be duplicated. However, they must consider the pressing issues of the specific territories where the work will be carried out, whether Popular Health, Food, Culture, or Housing Rights Workers. The basic concept of the process is the self-organisation of the people to solve their collective problems by identifying the structural root of these problems.

From the most critical period of the COVID-19 pandemic and with the exacerbation of so many structural

problems in our country, a historical window has opened up that has helped to strengthen the perception of solidarity as a central axis for organising in the Brazilian periferias. Developing the methodology of Popular Workers has been part of this context.

Despite the long process of experimentation and development of the Popular Workers' methodology, we see this as an ongoing process that we must continuously improve and adjust to the political situation and the demands made by the communities. The challenge ahead is to devise strategies to root ourselves more deeply in the communities while keeping the kitchens running regularly. This will require us to improve our political and organisational skills and expand our capacity to coordinate resources and infrastructure. With every step we take, more challenges open up. However, that is what keeps us fighting for healthy food, dignity, and rights for all the Brazilian people!

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HAITI

The Original Marxism of the Caribbean People: Experiences in Education and Training from the Caribbean Reality

**Charlemagne Péralte
Political Training School**

The Charlemagne Péralte Political Training School⁴ (CPPTS) was founded in 2019, in the context of a deep crisis in Haitian society. This multifaceted crisis,

⁴ Charlemagne Péralte (1886 - 1919) was a Haitian nationalist leader who opposed the military invasion of our territory by US troops in 1915. He organised an extraordinary guerrilla force of more than 15,000 peasants who engaged in resistance from 1915 to 1920. Charlemagne Péralte is the symbol of resistance and the defence of the dignity and sovereignty of our country.

connected to the global crisis of the capitalist system and imperialist domination, fabricated a chaotic situation to maintain absolute control over our territories. The construction of the School corresponds to a strategic orientation adopted by the Haitian revolutionary forces to build unity in the struggles towards socialism and to give priority to the tasks of political education using Marxism as a fundamental basis.

The main objectives of the CPPTS are:

To form cadre who are responsible, informed, and endowed with a high level of social and political awareness and who are willing to be fully involved in the struggles for the revolutionary transformation of their communities and our country.

To provide ideological and political training for constructing a socialist, democratic, and popular movement capable of radically changing the living conditions of the masses and the country's socioeconomic situation.

The CPPTS is an instrument to promote convergence and unity between the organisations and movements of the revolutionary Left in our country. The school is managed by a council formed by the Federation of Peasant Associations, which is comprised of the following actors: Tèt Kole Ti peyizan Ayisyen (Heads Together Small Producers of Haiti - TK); Mouvman

Peyizan Nasyonal Kongrè Papay (National Congress of the Papaye Peasant Movement – MPNKP); Coordinación de las organizaciones del Sureste (Regional Coordination of the Organisations of the Southeast – CROSE); Mouvman Peyizan Papay (Papaye Peasant Movement – MPP). Finally, La Plateforme Haïtienne de Plaidoyer pour un Développement Alternatif (Haitian Platform to Advocate Alternative Development – PAPDA) is also a member of the Federation and the political-pedagogical team.

The CPPTS has already trained nearly 400 leaders who play a crucial role in energising popular struggles.


Methodological Approach

The work of our school is based on the methodological approach developed in the social movements in our continent and the diverse experiences of socialist construction. The Freirean tradition, as well as the works of Augusto Boal, Arturo Escobar, Orlando Fals Borda, Celestin Freinet, Florestan Fernandes, and many others, nourish our pedagogy as well as the strong Haitian and Caribbean Marxist tradition. Alternative experiences such as the construction of communal socialism in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the educational experiences of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) at the Florestan Fernandes National School (ENFF) are permanent sources of inspiration.


The training program contains 75 days of training spread over almost a year in sessions of fifteen days



each. Between each session, students return to their community to conduct research and fieldwork as outlined in the school curriculum and questions that arise during the training.

One of the school's strengths lies in the Papaye Peasant Movement's vibrant tradition of political education and the excellent academic and administrative coordination work of a multidisciplinary political-pedagogical team composed of comrades with long histories of struggle.

 The structure of the training programme is built on the rich experience of emancipatory popular education processes over the last seventy years in Haiti.

The Caribbean Region

 The Caribbean has produced many of the most important contributions to the Marxist tradition worldwide, but unfortunately, they are still largely unknown to this day.

 This is a prime region for analysing capitalism and imperialist domination. Its geopolitical position is fundamental to understanding the emergence and development of capitalism. Historically, our territory provided labour and raw materials that were fundamental for developing many capitalist powers. In the Caribbean,  we suffered in a distilled form from the different colonialisms of France, England, Holland, the Uni-

ted States, Spain, Portugal, etc. From the Caribbean and the revolutionary experiences of its peoples, we can make observations about capitalism that cannot be seen from the socio-historical experience of the working class in Europe.

The Caribbean continues to play a particularly important role in the process of capitalist accumulation on a global scale for reasons that can be summarised as follows:

The Caribbean is a transit zone for goods between the Atlantic and the Pacific, which has seen an exponential increase because of the dynamics of Asian industrial production. Control of this transit space is vital for transnational capital.

The Caribbean Sea represents an essential reservoir of exceptional mineral and biological resources that are at the centre of inter-imperialist disputes in the 21st century.

All the countries of the Caribbean region constitute a reserve of exploited and over-exploited labour within the global circuits of capital valorisation. Our countries are all net exporters of cheap labour, and we experience the tragedies of the constant migratory flows to the North on a daily basis.

The Greater Caribbean region is home to a considerable number of tax havens that are an

important link in the strategies of hoarding and plundering the wealth of our people.

These factors allow us to understand the over-militarisation of the region – encircled by military bases and numerous sophisticated control devices – in a context in which the United States is concentrating on the task of curbing the expansion of China’s economic presence in the region.

The peripheral situation of the Caribbean has not changed since the sixteenth century. According to the diagnosis of the brilliant Puerto Rican Marxist economist Emilio Pantojas, “The role of the Caribbean has moved from the plantation to the tourist resort, but its economic position remains peripheral. In the twenty-first century, the Caribbean has moved from after-dinner to post-work leisure products. The region’s competitive advantages are still its cheap labour, its tropical climate and geography, and its subordinate linkage to the capital circuits of North America and Europe” (Pantojas-García, 2022).

Beyond these considerations, it should be stressed that the US is not in total control of the region thanks to the admirable resistance of the Cuban revolution and the Bolivarian process. Moreover, the recent resounding electoral successes of progressive governments in Colombia and Honduras introduce new vulnerabilities into the strategies of imperial domination.

We are nonsubmissive, rebellious people capable of generating radical ruptures within the world system and numerous social and political innovations. Caribbean peoples have engineered three great revolutions in 1804, 1959, and 1999 that introduced substantial changes in the architecture of the world system.

The anti-colonial, anti-slavery, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-plantation Haitian revolution emerged as the fruit of the uprising of the enslaved. It introduced new central values in an “alternative” modernity, opening up new horizons and repertoires in emancipatory struggles. The only triumphant revolution organised by the enslaved masses was the first wave of globalisation of peoples’ rights. The slaves of the European Caribbean colonies, roused by the victorious example of the Haitian Revolution, revolted again and again in Guadeloupe (1794), Saint Lucia (1794), Cuba (1795), and Venezuela (1795). In Puerto Rico, the slaves of the Aguadilla Party attempted an insurrection on 15 October 1795.”

The Cuban revolution of 1959 launched a process of building a new socialist project, combining the struggle for independence and sovereignty with a social revolution that transformed the meaning of social relations toward radical equality and “equality,” as the Marxist philosopher Etienne Balibar defines it. Cuba has become the reference for all revolutionaries in the world and shows that it is possible to get out of capitalist barbarism. Revo-

lutionary Cuba has become a force by reinventing solidarity and internationalist praxis.

Since the electoral triumph of the movement of the Fifth Republic led by Hugo Chávez Frias, the Venezuelan people have been teaching important lessons by renewing the socialist project in light of the challenges of the twenty-first century. The extraordinary resistance of the Bolivarian revolution in the face of the criminal aggressions of the US government is a source of pride and hope for all people of the Caribbean and the world.

Parallel to these three heroic creations, there are, in the Caribbean, multiple processes of struggle and radical questioning of the capitalist order, with many uprisings in Martinique, Guadeloupe, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The music and popular arts of the Caribbean region are sources of inspiration for all those who want to build a different world. These revolutionary struggles and projects are part of the continuity of a strong will to build societies liberated from capitalist domination and racism.

Contributions from Caribbean Marxism

In *Capital*, Marx conceives of capitalism as a world system in which colonialism and imperialism are decisive: he alludes to the plundering of metals from America, raw materials from Asia and the Caribbean,

the Atlantic slave trade, and so on. Especially toward the end of his life, Marx was very interested in the revolutionary possibilities of peripheral societies such as Russia and Algeria. Professor Néstor Kohan argues that this “late Marx” broke with linearity and stagism by developing a multilinear vision of history⁵.

In the Caribbean, we have a large arsenal of critical thinking and practice based on the struggle of non-Eurocentric Marxism. Caribbean Marxists expanded Marxism from the workers’ struggles, introducing new questions and categories based on a view from the South linked to the strategic interests of the exploited.

From the struggles of the peoples of the region, we can identify an immense sum of theoretical contributions and methodological innovations that can illuminate the struggles of the oppressed today. We can identify some axes and controversial issues that enrich Marxism by provoking what the Haitian philosopher Jean Jacques Cadet calls: “broadening Marxism” in his magnificent work recently published on Haitian Marxism (Cadet, 2020).

Of course, in this text, we have to salute such giants as Jose Martí, Fidel Castro, Aimé Césaire, Eric Williams, C.L.R James, Walter Rodney, Maurice Bishop, Forbes Burnham, Farabundo Martí, Frantz Fanon, Ramón

5 Nestor Kohan has an abundance of works on Marxism and its reception in Latin America. We can consult, for example: *Marxismo: la teoría de Marx y sus seguidores* (1st edition). Era Naciente. 2008.

Emeterio Betances, Máximo Gomez, Caamaño, Jacques Roumain, Jacques Stephen Alexis, and many others who have not only made substantial theoretical contributions but dedicated their whole lives to accompanying and sometimes leading the revolutionary struggles of their people. They demonstrated the necessary dialectical connection that every revolutionary intellectual wishes to build between his ideas and his practices, in the spirit of what Antonio Gramsci called the “organic intellectual,” often going beyond the limits defined by the Italian communist.

We recall the definition of revolution offered by Fidel Castro that illuminates the path of the necessary anti-capitalist revolutions that we must carry out: “Revolution means to have a sense of history; it is changing everything that must be changed; it is full equality and freedom; it is being treated and treating others like human beings; it is achieving emancipation by ourselves and through our own efforts; it is challenging powerful dominant forces from within and without the social and national milieu; it is defending the values in which we believe at the cost of any sacrifice; it is modesty, selflessness, altruism, solidarity, and heroism; it is fighting with courage, intelligence, and realism; it is never lying or violating ethical principles; it is a profound conviction that there is no power in the world that can crush the power of truth and ideas” (Castro, 2000).

Many circles of intellectuals and political activists in the Caribbean claim the Marxist framework. The Fabian Society was a social democratic organisation

that was the seed of the British Labour Party. The Fabians were colonial agents; they did not fight for decolonisation but criticised the conditions of workers in the colonies. The Governor of Jamaica, Sidney Olivier, published a paper in 1906 entitled “White Capital and Coloured Labour.” He is perhaps one of the first to argue that racism is much more than just part of the superstructure and presents it as “a structural principle which organises capitalist political economy and labour exploitation along racial lines.” Great theorists such as Eric Williams and C.L.R. James further developed this central idea in Caribbean Marxism.

The presence of Caribbean soldiers in the First and Second World Wars was another channel for appropriating Marxist concepts and ideas. Some soldiers returned to their region of origin frustrated by the racism and mistreatment suffered during the war and spread the Marxist ideas they encountered on the battlefield in Europe. For example, the war experience significantly influenced Frantz Fanon’s ideological formation. In the English-speaking Caribbean, a generation of brilliant political leaders emerged who drew on Marxism to analyse the role of the Caribbean and slavery in the expansion of the capitalist system and the importance of racism. In this generation, we highlight the notable contributions of C.L.R. James and George Padmore, who worked and fought for a revolutionary Pan-Africanism inspired by the crucial sociological work of W.E.B. DuBois. This generation

includes the brilliant Marxist Oliver Cox, who is undoubtedly the father of the world-system theory later taken up by Immanuel Wallerstein.

After the Second World War, theoretical circles emerged in the Caribbean, such as the New World Group (NWG), led by influential figures like Lloyd Best, George Beckford, and Norman Girvan of Jamaica. This current is not Marxist in a strict sense, but in its plurality, it partially includes the Marxist vision. This group develops the theory of the “plantation economy,” which helps to clarify the nature of the dependency relations between the centre and the periphery of the world system and offers valuable tools to fight against the various forms of neo-colonialism. The economist Walter Rodney makes a remarkable theoretical contribution with his famous book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, which analyses the question of “development” from a new perspective of the oppressed. The ambition of the NWG is the development of a critical Caribbean perspective. They did a lot of work, often with a structuralist perspective, on the unique specificities of the Caribbean economy. The group’s contributions created a new, indigenous way of thinking, constituting a new school of Caribbean political economy.

We will examine some fundamental elements of the theoretical contributions of Caribbean Marxists through the theoretical works of Oliver Cox, Eric Williams, C.L.R. James, Jacques Roumain, and Jacques Stephen Alexis. We stress that the Caribbean revolutionaries introduced many new categories that we cannot present in this text.

Oliver Cox and the Theory of the World System and Structural Racism

Many think that the world-system theory is a theory of Wallerstein, Arrighi or Samir Amin⁶, but they themselves acknowledge that this theory arose in the Caribbean, thanks to the contributions of a professor from Trinidad called Oliver Cox⁷ (1901-74).

He was a Trinidadian Marxist who came to historicise the role of racism in capitalism. Here, we have a significant contribution from Caribbean Marxists: a structural, revolutionary, materialist view of the role of racism in capitalism.

Cox produced three volumes on the evolution of capitalism since the twelfth century. We cannot understand capitalism without understanding the historical and current structural role of racism. There has never been capitalism without racism. Because it is structural, Oliver Cox explains that racism can only be over-

6 Samir Amin (1931 - 2018) is a great Egyptian intellectual and revolutionary activist who published outstanding works applying Karl Marx and Frederic Engels' theory of value to the study of the world capitalist system in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. He invented the theory of delinking and described very precisely the explanatory laws of uneven development and peripheral capitalism and his most influential work is "Accumulation on a Global Scale, Twenty-First Century, Buenos Aires and Mexico, 1975."

7 Oliver Cox (1901 - 1974) is an author of the Trinidad and Tobago Marxist school who is the originator of the World-System / World-Economy concept.

come through a revolution that overthrows the system itself. Hence, we have a revolutionary vision of anti-racism.

His focus on the structural role of racism in the division of labour and the organisation of relations of production represents a break with the dominant view; many authors tended to consider the overwhelming fact of the racialisation of social relations and its decisive weight in the mechanisms of regulation as a lesser consideration.

Eric Williams and the Multilinear Perspective on the History of Modes of Production

Eric Williams (1911-81) was born in Trinidad and Tobago. He lived, studied, and worked in Great Britain, the United States, and his own country. In his country, he played a decisive role in the struggle for independence at the head of the political party he founded in 1956 called the People's National Movement. He was elected Prime Minister, a position he held for an extended period (1956-1981). Despite his closeness to the Marxist school in his country, his great friendship with C.L.R. James, and his profound admiration for Fidel Castro, Williams' political conduct was not that of a Marxist revolutionary. We can classify him as a reformist and nationalist but liberal, very much influenced by the Cepaline theses.

Despite his limitations as a politician and ruler, his scientific work is rooted in Marxism, and he made several notable and consequential contributions to developing critical thinking in the Caribbean. In his most important work: “Capitalism and Slavery,” he puts forward three fundamental ideas⁸.

On the fundamental role of slavery in the development of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, Williams demonstrates in great detail – supported by a solid argument based on statistical series – that the slave system was the engine of British mercantilism that made possible the enormous and rapid accumulation of wealth that propelled the so-called industrial revolution. With this argument, he counters the time’s dominant historiography, attributing nineteenth-century Europe’s changes to technological discoveries. In this, he makes a Marxist demonstration that the source of wealth is collective labour.

The second important element of Williams’ argument is a call to broaden the analysis of the sequence of modes of production presented by many authors who hold a linear and mechanical view. Williams pushes for a nuanced analysis of the evolution of modes of production and how the capitalist mode of production

8 Eric Williams (1911 - 1981) is a theorist and political leader from Trinidad and Tobago who, with his book *Capitalism and Slavery*, published in 1944, introduced new questions about the relationship between the capitalist system and the key role of slavery in its processes of accumulation. From this, he clarified the specificities of Caribbean social formations.

operates various combinations and interactions that feed the increase of profit flows instead of eliminating previous modes of production. The conclusion this paper comes to is that slavery in the Caribbean is a product of the unfolding of European mercantile capitalism. This multilinear view of historical development has substantial strategic and political consequences.

The third important idea of the book is how racialisation is a structure of capitalism. Williams shows that within a number of other possibilities, the cheaper African slave trade was imposed on the British and European settlers. Thus, slavery is the basis for the emergence of racism, creating an equivalency between blacks and slaves.

Cyril Lionel Robert (C.L.R.) James and the Marxist Reading of the Haitian Revolution

C.L.R. James (4 January 1901-31 May 1989) is a Marxist from Trinidad and Tobago who is best known for his famous work on the Haitian revolution *Black Jacobins*, published in 1938, which offers the first Marxist reading of this period, demonstrating the influence of the Haitian revolution on the French revolution. James, who was all his life a revolutionary cadre, produced an important theoretical work relevant to the struggle of the exploited in the Caribbe-

an, the Black liberation movement in the US, and the liberation movements in Africa, in which he was an important actor, for example, at the side of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana. He was an important figure in the struggles of the oppressed on three continents.

James was also a forerunner in the idea of the necessary autonomy of Black revolutionary movements, which must be integrated into the struggles of the proletariat but must also develop specific struggles against the racialisation of social relations.

Jacques Roumain and Jacques Stephen Alexis and Indo-Afro-Creole Marxism in South America

Jacques Roumain (1907-44) and Jacques Stephen Alexis (1922-61) are two critical Haitian artists and revolutionary Marxist leaders. Both died prematurely. Alexis was tortured and assassinated in 1961 by the dictator François Duvalier, and Roumain died in 1944 from the after-effects of torture during his numerous imprisonments.

Their literary, scientific, and political works are fundamental to understanding the communist movement in Haiti and the originality of Caribbean Marxism. Roumain founded the first Haitian Communist Party (PCH) in 1934 and launched a manifesto, *Analyse schématique 32-34* (Schematic Analysis, 1932-34), which is

a fundamental reference in the discussions on the social formation of our country and the construction of revolutionary political parties⁹. Alexis founded another communist party, the Parti d'Entente Populaire (People's Consensus Party – PEP), in 1959 and wrote at the same time “The Manifesto of the Second Independence,” which explains the programmatic options of a revolutionary party in our country.¹⁰ Another essential text by Alexis is “Marxism: The Only Guide to the Haitian Revolution¹¹.”

It was precisely in their organising and artistic works that they could express this popular praxis of the struggle for life. They managed to place it in opposition to the capitalist destruction that sought to dominate and annihilate them. They were able to construct a dialogue between the proposals for overcoming capitalism constructed outside their country with a practical socialism that their own people were living, all of which was articulated in Marx's proposal. They understood that this praxis is a cultural fact with a political dimension that needs to be strengthened, expanded, and promoted from the revolutionary path of the national foundational process of Haiti.

9 “Analyse schématique 1932-1934” is considered to be the manifesto text of the first Haitian communist party. This text can be consulted and downloaded free of charge from the virtual library of the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi: <http://bibliotheque.uqac.ca/>
10 The full text is available at: Manifeste du Parti d'Entente Populaire. C3 Editions 2021 Port-au-Prince Haiti

11 This document : “Le marxisme, seul guide possible de la révolution haïtienne (C3 Éditions, 2021) can be consulted here: <https://rekedu.org/jacques-stephen-alexis-en-theoricien/>

“The Haitian Revolution unfolds a revolutionary poetics of liberation, and Roumain, moreover, deploys, based on this previous experience, a revolutionary Marxist poetics of liberation on an Indo-Afro-Creole American basis” (Bauer and Friggeri, 2022).

Roumain and Alexis were advocates of voodoo, demonstrating the pivotal role it played in the emergence of a counter-hegemonic culture that was a determining factor in the revolutionary struggles that led to the victory of 1804. They were forerunners in working out forms of popular religiosity from Marxism. Alexis contributed to the “negritude” movement and offered new perspectives on the interweaving of art, artistic creation, and political struggle. He was one of the inventors – along with other Caribbean authors such as Alejo Carpentier – of the important concept of “the marvellous real,” based on a critique of the “depoeticisation of the world” brought about by capitalism.

Roumain and Alexis constructed literary works based on a novel vision of the relationship with nature, abandoning the most common forms of anthropocentrism to illustrate a relationship that breaks with the arrogance of Western civilisation and prefigures several later eco-socialist developments.

The Challenges of Building Socialism Today

“Black dignity is only in light of the political, artistic, theoretical, and philosophical revolts that Black people have led to impose their denied humanity and the meaning they gave it.”

NORMAN AJARI (2019)

The Haitian revolution proclaimed that citizenship is granted by the condition of the fighter, of the rebel, no matter where the rebellion of the Subjects takes place and no matter the place of origin or birth of these fighters.

We must identify and demystify the lies and manipulations that try to salvage the capitalist order, such as the “green and blue economy,” while hiding the real sources of the current disaster. Fighting false solutions to the global crisis of capitalism is a priority.

We must conceive and construct revolutions from the oppressed people who have seen the genesis of slave globalisation. We must create from there a “horizon in which human life would be possible in all its abundance and poetry.”

Marxist thinkers from the Caribbean invite us to accompany and produce a theoretical, aesthetic, and epistemic revolution with the oppressed. The con-

tributions of Caribbean Marxism in its richness, originality, and subversion of many categories of the dominant colonial ideology offer an ideal basis for building and accelerating revolutionary processes.

The Caribbean peoples, with their revolutionary processes, have much to contribute to the world in their current quests, which are decisive for the future of humanity. We can and must contribute to thinking the unthinkable within the symbolism of the three stages of marronage.

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UNITED STATES

Base-Level Political Education

**Union of Southern Service
Workers**

**“Here is the magnificent climate;
here is the fruitful earth under
the beauty of the Southern sun;
and here, if anywhere on earth,
is the need of the thinker, the
worker, and the dreamer.”**

WEB DUBOIS (1946)

Under the beauty of the Southern sun is a grave history of exploitation and oppression. The US South, as it is known today, is the direct result of the systematic confiscation of land and the genocide and dispossession of the native peoples. Its very construction depended on the dispossession of the labourers who worked the land: those captured in

Africa and brutally enslaved in the Americas. It is the site of land expropriation, resource extraction, and worker exploitation. But on this fruitful earth, the exploited and oppressed – the indigenous, the enslaved, the workers – planted their feet and mounted an unceasing campaign of resistance.

The South is today – as it has been historically – the region of the US at the heart of racial and class oppression. The South has the lowest levels of unionisation, with the vast majority of Southern states having between 1.3 to 4 per cent of workers represented by a union. Southern states consistently top the lists of the “worst states to work.” Coupled with attacks on Black and Latino Southerners in particular, the South remains the poorest region in the United States, containing nine of the twelve poorest states in the country. Additionally, the white poverty rate in the region is the highest in the country. Prompted by attacks on public institutions, the South lags behind the rest of the country with the lowest education, literacy, and healthcare levels. There is a crisis in the US South today, which points to the region as one of strategic significance in the US and globally.

The crisis has been shown repeatedly to have been met with working-class struggle, including the movement for racial justice and the labour movement. Organising the South today depends on fighting a centuries-long strategy by those in power to systematically disorganise the region. The South has

been divided across all lines of difference. Racial hierarchies and divisions have been created in the workplace. Reactionary, racist, and xenophobic rhetoric divides the poor in the political sphere. Furthermore, the working class remains geographically segregated in their neighbourhoods and cities. Any movement that seeks to transform the region and, by extension, the country cannot postpone addressing these divisions; they must be confronted head-on through struggle and education.

“Here,” writes DuBois, “if anywhere on earth, is the need for the thinker, the worker, and the dreamer” (1946). In this historical conjuncture, becoming a “thinker” can no longer be considered within the purview of a privileged few; we must contribute to the process of multiplying thinkers from the grass-roots who can analyse the world around them and come to collective solutions. The “workers” can no longer be divided by race, gender, language, or industry; we must pursue the unity of the working class through organisation and education. And the “dreamers” must not be dismissed; we must dare to strategise creatively, dramatically, and concretely toward a shared vision of a better future. Finally, all three – “the thinker, the worker, and the dreamer” – must not be considered three persons; they are three unified components of creating an integrated, whole person. In this spirit, the Union of Southern Service Workers has come to life in the past decade.

What is the Union of Southern Service Workers?

The Union of Southern Service Workers (USSW) is a union built by the lowest-paid workers in the Southern region of the United States. USSW was launched in November 2022 by the same workers who have been organising for the last decade under the banner of Raise Up in the struggle to raise the minimum wage, improve working conditions, and fight for the right to unionise the service sector, starting in the Southern region.¹²

In the dawn of the neoliberal era in the United States, the available jobs quickly transformed from unionised, industrial jobs into service-sector jobs, especially in fast food, retail, and the “care industry” (i.e., home health aides, certified nursing assistants, childcare workers, etc.). Deindustrialisation and this transformation of employment was a victory for the ruling class, who celebrated that “the nature of the service sector is less suited to centralised wage bargaining” (International Monetary Fund, 1991). These low-wage, service-sector jobs are. To the workers

¹² “Raise Up” or “Raise Up the South” was the precursor to the Union of Southern Service Workers. Founded in 2013 in the Southern region of the United States, the organisation was part of the broader Fight for \$15 Campaign (established 2012), in which service workers waged a campaign to raise the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15.00. The campaign won many store-level, local, and state minimum-wage increases throughout the US.

that make up USSW, a union, at its heart, is not just about wages or contracts; a union is an organisation of workers coming together and using their precarious; they have an extremely high turnover rate, but workers typically switch between various jobs within the same sector. For example, turnover reached 144 per cent in the restaurant sector in 2022; 28 per cent of restaurant workers report leaving for higher wages, and 23 per cent report wanting a more reliable schedule and income. However, the workers cannot find these changes and instead return to different jobs in the same employment sector.

In addition to these challenges, labour laws seriously restrict the opportunities for these workers to formally unionise, even when the workers have organised and voted to form unions through the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The Fair Labor Standards Act created in the New Deal Era systematically excluded farmworkers, domestic workers, and tipped workers from the law's benefits, including minimum wage laws, overtime protection, and union rights. USSW has assessed that in the current conjuncture, more is needed to fight to be included in a system of unionisation that is set up to act against the workers strength to win changes that could not be won individually. To members of USSW, "unions" today must take the form of a social movement.

Who is the Base of USSW?

The base of USSW primarily reflects the composition of low-wage workers in the United States. Nearly 45 per cent of workers in the United States, ages 18 to 64, are classified as low-wage workers. “Low-wage workers” are typically defined as making less than \$15 an hour, but the median wage of this group is \$12.12 an hour, just \$4.75 an hour above the federal minimum wage. Fast-food workers – the largest proportion of the Union’s base – receive a median wage of just \$8.69 an hour, and 87 per cent of fast-food workers do not receive health benefits from their employers.

Low-wage workers are racially diverse; 52 per cent are white, 25 per cent are Latino, 15 per cent are Black, and 5 per cent are Asian. However, both Latino and Black workers are overrepresented in low-wage jobs. Women, too, are overrepresented, making up 54 per cent of the low-wage workforce. Of the low-wage workforce, almost 50 per cent of workers’ highest educational attainment is a high school diploma. Despite frequent stereotypes about low-wage workers mainly being teenagers or young adults, 75 per cent of low-wage workers are between the ages of 25 and 64, and nearly one-third are responsible for caring for one or more children.

The base of USSW represent the vast majority of people in the United States. They are the segment of the working class who are the most exploited and oppressed but, in reality, hold the most potential to wield political power. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these low-wage workers were designated “essential workers.” This unveiling of the actual value of the labour of low-wage workers created a moral conflict in workers’ consciousness and the masses of the United States at large about how society can and should be organised. While the pandemic facilitated a degree of momentum in the United States, absorbing low-wage workers into strong organisations on the Left posed a severe challenge. USSW’s experiences of base-level education provide insights into how an integrated notion of “organising” and “educating” can be particularly responsive to the needs of low-wage workers. Three pillars of USSW’s base-level education are important to emphasise:

Workers are the specialists in their problems, and political education prepares them to be-

“I’ve been called essential, but I’ve not been treated as such”

Work

“I have to work two jobs because I’m not paid enough”

ding the legacy of the struggle they follow.

“I want healthcare, but my job doesn’t offer me any affordable options”

“I struggle to pay my bills every month”

Workers are the specialists in their problems, and political education prepares them to become analysts of the solutions.

In the average USSW chapter meeting or workshop, the starting point for education appears similar to an agitational organising conversation. The first pillar of USSW's base-level education starts with the problems people face at work, in their neighbourhoods, and in their cities. While initial organising conversations often happen in one-on-one settings, chapter meetings and new member workshops allow workers to name the problems they face in a group setting. This is the starting point for changing workers' understanding of their problems as individual problems to understanding them as bigger systemic issues.

For example, during the Worker Power Summit in August 2021, workers formed a circle, and every time the facilitator read a statement that resonated with them, they stepped inside the circle.

Workers across job types, ages, races, and genders stepped into the circle and identified their common problems. The exercise did not necessarily reveal new knowledge. However, the exercise unveiled common problems as bigger issues. Activities and discussions like this create a space for workers to think out loud and name the world around them. While the education process can generate and solidify new ways to think about things, an essential part of the learning process is simply being able to put the things workers already know into words.

The starting point for base-level education is about beginning with the problems. However, all educational programming within USSW is solution-oriented. A common pitfall of political education within the United States is an overemphasis on simply creating a space for workers to share their problems, say what they want to say, and “get things off their chests.” This non-directive style of political education fails to develop the leadership capacity of the workers and their confidence in their ability to take collective action. All political education sessions within USSW heavily integrate the question of “What do you think it’s going to take to change things?”

Workers learn best through struggle.

A vital lesson that USSW has gained is that the base learn best through struggle. This “struggle” happens

during worker mobilisations and in more formal, pedagogical settings. Both settings for struggle provide opportunities for challenging workers to analyse the world around them and understand what must be done.

Struggle in Worker Mobilisations

In November 2021, workers at a Bojangles' fast-food restaurant in Weaverville, North Carolina, went on a weeklong strike over COVID safety concerns and demands for fair pay. Weaverville is a rural Southern town with a 95 per cent white population. All thirteen workers who walked off their shift were white and, for the most part, before the strike, admitted to having undeveloped or reactionary racial politics. However, the Bojangles' workers were joined on the strike line by a large delegation of Black worker leaders from Durham, North Carolina. This racially diverse, urban city has long been a home base for USSW, formerly Raise Up.

The Bojangles' workers – having never experienced political mobilisation before, let alone a strike – were scared to take action. However, the solidarity they received from USSW's base provoked a fundamental transformation in the workers' consciousness. These same workers now consistently speak up about how bosses use race to divide the working class, and they organise their white co-workers around the need to build a multiracial, worker-led movement to transform their lives. Later, formal popular education about the roots of racism and white supremacy in the United

States grounded this belief. Still, it was acting in solidarity across racial lines that provoked it.

Alongside this lesson, it is significant to note that the workers did not win their demands, and the strike leaders were fired from the Bojangles' in retaliation. Workers' ability to take action, analyse the result (whether the result is a win or loss), and then keep fighting is fundamental to consciousness-raising and leadership development. Political education responsive to the situation was essential when the workers were fired from the Bojangles'. The Bojangles' workers, alongside other members of the base, went through "Know-Your-Rights" workshops. USSW's "Know-Your-Rights" workshops emphasise three points: (1) workers have a protected right to organise on the job; (2) there are certain retaliatory measures used by bosses that are illegal and can be pursued in the legal system, but the way the system is structured, it is unlikely that there will be a positive outcome, and therefore it is crucial that organising is the first recourse, and; (3) workers' rights to organise have been under attack and have been decreasing, and ultimately, our organising strategies must adapt to that reality.

Struggle in "The School"

An essential part of the pedagogical process within USSW's political education is leadership development, with the understanding that education breeds confidence that can translate to different areas of workers' lives. One way this is exercised is by preparing the base

to experience and assist in facilitating workshops. Basic group facilitation skills translate to worksite organising skills and equip workers with a few key traits: confidence, discipline, and collectivity. For many learners, the ability to teach a Subject demonstrates proficiency. Working with the members at the base-level to build and facilitate sessions challenges them to develop new skills. Lastly, the exercise encourages them to learn how to speak as an organisation, not an individual, and to think about the political impact of what they say.

During the first Worker Power Summit in 2019, several more experienced base-level members were tasked with building and facilitating a political education session for new members. One session focused on wage exploitation, and the other on unions. For several months, the members underwent a series of activities to develop their capacities to lead the sessions effectively. During the Summit, having a worker themselves lead the session rather than an organiser provoked more substantive conversation amongst the group and also inspired workers who participated in the workshop to facilitate in the future.

Workers gain confidence through understanding the history of the struggles they follow.

Alongside technical learning such as “Know-Your-Rights” workshops and theoretical learning such as “What is Wage Exploitation?” or “What are Unions?”,

the use of historical learning has been one of USSW's most effective pedagogical tools. Historical learning about revolutionary movements in the Southern region is an essential intervention in the popular notion in the United States that it is impossible or not worthwhile to try to organise workers in the South. However, this minimises the legacy and contributions of scores of revolutionary struggles and leaders in the region. Highlighting unsung struggles helps connect the base to a larger landscape – regionally, nationally, and internationally – of revolutionary history.

Several historical events, figures, and popular organisations and unions have been of particular use in USSW's political education. For example, in 2019, USSW introduced the members to the 1947 struggle of the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Workers Union in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The Communist-led Tobacco Workers' strike provides an alternative example of trade unionism, termed "civil rights unionism": a model of labour organising that transcends the workplace struggle and views unionism not as an end but as a step toward working-class emancipation. The idea of "civil rights unionism" was fundamental as the members sought to transform Raise Up into the Union of Southern Service Workers in 2022; at the heart of this launch was redefining what labour unions can and must do within the region's current reality.

Another historical element essential for USSW's political education is the infusion of religion and morality. The US South has been nicknamed the "Bible Belt"

for its religiosity and high density of Christian churches per capita. Indeed, most USSW members are Christian. Within USSW, some of the best political education has integrated progressive religion and morality, including historical examples of how religion has been used as a revolutionary force.

In February 2020, members visited the Penn Center on St. Helena's Island, South Carolina. The Penn Center was the first school in the South for freed slaves in 1860 and was also the site of several conferences of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) during the Civil Rights Movement. During the February 2020 visit to the Penn Center, the members studied excerpts from King's speech "All Labor Has Dignity." Within the address, King uses the Biblical verse "I was hungry, and you fed me not, I was naked, and you clothed me not," to indict the United States and to declare: "America, too, is going to hell if she doesn't use her wealth" (1968). The Biblical connection provoked the most meaningful conversation of the day. It engaged the members in discussing the United States' violence against its people and the world. "All Labor Has Dignity" became a staple in workers' speeches on strike lines, mobilisations, and USSW's symbology.

Reflections

Two challenges for base-level education identified by USSW are (1) integrating new members into political

education and (2) engaging in rigorous evaluation of the political education process. The first challenge of integrating new members into political education is the need for more cohesion. Within the Union, there is often a window where new members are hungry to learn new skills and information; the failure to have consistent and frequent new member political education has contributed to occasional member attrition. The Union must engage in agitational political education early and often. However, since USSW expanded into several new states, forming city-based chapters has helped address this gap with more frequent meetings and political education. Secondly, USSW has yet to develop an evaluation process for political education, creating difficulties in systematising the lessons and outcomes of the political education process.

In June 2023, workers at a chain hair salon, Great Clips, in Columbia, South Carolina, went on strike. The day before, one of the leaders of the strike, Lydia, a 23-year-old worker, read W.E.B. DuBois' speech "Behold the Land" for the first time alongside other workers, organisers, and activists during a political education session about the political significance of the US South. The following day, on the strike line, Lydia pulled out her copy of the speech and read the excerpt:

Here is the chance for young women and young men of devotion to lift again the banner of humanity and to walk toward a civilisation which will be free and intelligent; which will be healthy

and unafraid; and build the world a culture led by black folks and joined by peoples of all colours and all races – without poverty, ignorance, and disease!

Lydia spoke about how DuBois delivered the speech in Columbia almost 100 years ago. She said that DuBois spoke of how necessary Columbia was then and how “[today], me and my coworkers are standing here at the Great Clips in Columbia, South Carolina... but we’re standing here for all Great Clips workers.”

Base-level education is only one aspect of USSW’s struggle. It would not be sufficient for a worker to memorise a historical speech absent unified, worker-led action. Education, revolutionary action, and mass participation must be integrated. USSW demands dignity and equal treatment; health and safety; fair and consistent scheduling; fair pay; and decision-making power. In the current context, the fundamental issue that Southern workers face is their lack of control over the decisions that impact their lives, including on the job. Ultimately, it is the assessment of the members of USSW that winning workplace demands is not enough. Therefore, the fighting capacity of the base of the Union must be developed on all levels. The task ahead for USSW is to create a long-term process of organising and education that builds power for the working class by any means necessary.

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UNITED STATES

Mass Education

The People's Forum

As the crisis of capitalism deepens, throwing the false promises of the wealthiest country in the world into stark relief, more and more young, working, and oppressed people in the US and North America express curiosity, an appreciation, and even a demand for socialism. But what does socialism mean to a population that has been the primary target of an immense ideological and political campaign against leftist ideas and practices; an ideological campaign that has accompanied the brutal economic, political, and militarised US-led war against socialist projects inside North America and has devastated entire nations and populations across the world? What are the possibilities for the North American people to raise class consciousness, build the necessary organisations, and wage the urgent battle against capitalism and imperialism, directly confronting the immense force of the US imperial project from inside its own borders?

The history of the anti-communist campaign in North America has created very complex challenges for those committed to struggle. This campaign has re-

sulted in not only the criminalisation of socialist and communist movements but has also normalised the fear of communist ideas. Public and private education teach false histories of the world that justify this fear, making the dismissal and censorship of not only Marxism but, in many cases, even rational scientific thought an automatic and normalised practice at all levels. This campaign of anti-communism, waged for decades in all areas of social and political life, has included all available institutions. As a result, anti-communism is not only an ideology of the conservative, consciously right-wing forces but also of the progressive sectors of society. False histories of socialism, false equivalencies between socialism and authoritarianism, the domination of anti-Marxist philosophy and capitalist theory in educational institutions at all levels, as just a few examples, have given a progressive costume for a right-wing ideology that denies the fundamental role of scientific analysis and Marxist concepts for organised struggle.

Organisers, activists, working people, all those who are no longer willing to accept the closed future of poverty, state violence, and unceasing war, and those who are eager and ready to struggle for change are thus more often than not orphaned from the history of struggle in North America and the world. Organisers are alienated from the method of analysis, the philosophical outlook, and the scientific certainty that class struggle can and does change reality. And due to the effectiveness of the ruling class ideological machinery, many fall victim to the progressive disguise

of imperialist ideas and take up imperialist positions themselves, convinced that these positions serve the international working class.

To confront this immense ideological machinery, the battle of ideas must be waged in every possible arena, with every possible tool, and it must open paths out of the alienation and violence that US capitalism and imperialism offer its own young people.

For these reasons and many more, it is not sufficient to simply disseminate the information that the ruling class obscures. Providing information, accessible content, and breaking the media blockade are essential. It opens the eyes of the working class to an analysis that corresponds with their lived reality in the place of the deceptive and false narratives that the dominant media presents. But we also need to create the conditions for the reception of this information and equip people to become voices of their own reality and their demands despite the imperialist assault. We need to give those searching for a strategy the opportunity to develop their capacity to recognise their fundamental place in human history, identify the deception of the ruling class, and seek out the information they need to advance. We need to create the conditions for those fighting in defence of humanity, ideologically and materially, to multiply and for others to take on the fight in their own way and of their own initiative.

The People's Forum (TPF) is a political education and cultural centre in New York City that takes up the task of waging the battle of ideas in both of these

ways: producing and amplifying content that represents the interests of the working class and the reality of our conditions and at the same time developing mass, public education programs that are that provide opportunities to develop analytical and practical capacity for organised struggle.

TPF was founded in 2018 and has dramatically evolved its political education program in the few years its doors have opened. In the earlier years, our education department prioritised supporting other educators who needed space to teach Marxism and leftist ideas to the public or their organisations. In a sense, we were a physical home for a broad spectrum of political education on the left, and we learned immensely from this experience. When the crisis of 2020 arrived, bringing with it the global COVID-19 pandemic and the massive uprising against police brutality and state violence, millions of young people of all backgrounds took to the streets and came face to face with the militarised machinery of the US state. It was a time of rapid accumulation of political experience; organic leaders emerged, coalitions formed and broke apart, and leftist organisations, including TPF, struggled to make a clear diagnosis of the moment and to find ways to intervene.

It became clear that the conjuncture and our task had shifted, and we faced both an opportunity and a challenge. The spontaneity of the uprisings, coupled with the severe economic crisis and increasing deaths due to lack of COVID preparations, spurred a considerable demand for political education, particularly among young people who did not yet have an organisational

or political life. Now unable to provide physical space for convening due to the pandemic, it was not enough to redirect our audience to other programs. With the guidance of our comrades of the ICPE, we launched a fully virtual, 13-week course in introductory Marxism and revolutionary history. We welcomed the participation of organised and unorganised students alike. The experience, with both its success and failures, broadened our network well beyond the locality of New York City and demonstrated the need for political education that can serve to bring more people into struggle and that can give a small taste of what the collective life of class struggle can bring, is both urgent and necessary. Since then, we have committed to developing TPF's mass and public education program, a task that has required many moments of experimentation but has ultimately given us and those who participate with us significant lessons and experience for what is to come next.

The proposal to develop mass education is a challenge, but there are a few principles that we have been able to clarify for our own programs through the past years of TPF's experience. We will focus on our experience with introductory and intermediate programs that have a participation level of 300-1000 students and which are the primary programs that bring new organisations and individuals to the TPF network:

Mass political education differs from political education for the grassroots and processes for cadre formation.

The key objective of mass political education is to reach both people who are in organisations and those who have been involved in mobilisation and action but are not organically in an organisation. This often implies welcoming participants who are politically and ideologically not firmly located in our political line or tradition and may even hold a variety of beliefs that are, at times, contradictory. In this context, the diversity of the course participants calls on us to have a more patient and flexible approach to presenting and discussing revolutionary theory. These are not spaces for cadre formation, even because we believe and support the fact that the core of cadre formation is carried out within an organisation where political orientation can and should be provided. Instead, we seek to introduce people to the transformative power of political education with a Marxist methodology, the principles of socialism in action, and the importance of discipline for the purpose of building a movement. We expose new organisations to a culture of comradeship and collective work, which they can then, and often do, start to translate to the forms most effective for their context and their base and the stage of political development that they find themselves in, as an organisation and as individuals.

Mass political education must teach and demonstrate the Marxist method because it is exposure to Marxism as a method, not simply a label or dogma, that will equip participants to make both theoretical and practical changes to their organisational strategy and, most importantly, that shows that there is the real and concrete possibility to change our lived conditions. To do so, we need to directly confront the dominance of anti-Marxist thought which is challenging given the vast diversity of participants' political orientations. Through experimentation, exchange, successes, and failures, we have some conclusions regarding this challenge:

a) We must address, explain, and demonstrate the Marxist Method immediately at the beginning of each program in a way that makes sense for the program itself. This demonstrates that we are not intimidated by the anti-communist context in which we are and that we are not afraid to clearly identify with Marxist, leftist, socialist, and communist projects, historically and today. It also shows that we will not engage in any deception with the participants. We demonstrate that we are not interested in indoctrination, forceful recruitment, or any other deceitful practice assigned to Marxism by the right wing. Education, especially education that challenges long-held views of oneself and the world

and in a context where dominant educational programs carry histories and practices of violence, is challenging on an intimate and personal level and requires trust. By recognising not only what we will do but how, we approach the participants with immediate and genuine honesty, without which trust would not be able to develop.

b) It is equally important to demonstrate the Marxist Method in every instance of the program and to encourage participants to stay alert to its use. This is particularly important for more advanced organisations seeking to further develop their political education processes. In the program content itself, we have many opportunities to show how the method can be used pedagogically. For example, a class on a particular moment in history can and should interrogate the conditions that defined the context of that time, identify the class interests at play, and the organisational forms that advanced class struggle through various challenges and conflicts. The questions we pose to the participants for discussion must also reflect a Marxist analysis; they must always go beyond comprehension and seek to invoke a scientific interrogation of our reality.

Mass political education must create the conditions for participants to engage with each other without intimidation or individual competition.

It is important not to belittle the participants by oversimplification, but at the same time, the content must remain accessible and understandable without complex vocabulary or formulations. There are concrete practices we have experimented with to make this possible:

a) We make an effort to employ the “spiral method”: to create multiple points of entry and engagement for each moment of teaching and discussion, particularly considering that the path to class consciousness most often begins with the lived and subjective experience. All discussion prompts, informal and formal, include at least one question that invokes the subjective experience, one that invokes an evaluation of material conditions/context, and one that invokes the theory of organised struggle or organisational forms. Presentations also include these three elements in their content so that everyone feels prepared and equipped to engage, regardless of where they are in their political formation process. They also have the opportunity to advance in their capacity to engage at any moment; there is no limit, for example, that confines anyone to the purely subjective level.

b) We also clearly communicate that the purpose of teaching the Marxist Method is not primarily to convince anyone to “become a Marxist” for its own sake but rather to identify and use the best method for analysis and practice available for revolutionary change. This not only counters the narrative that relegates Marxism to an outdated political affiliation but also allows for the multiple levels of political experience to engage freely throughout the program. Those unfamiliar with Marxism should feel they have the authority to interrogate it, argue against it, and ask questions of it, such as, “What can this method do for my struggle, and how?” Advanced theoretical understanding is never a prerequisite for active engagement, nor is ideological and political alignment. A culture of openness and an invitation to dialogue is essential for participants to have the confidence to raise their concerns and to take on the challenge of interrogating their own forms of thought and action.

Mass political education must contend with conflict in a way that demonstrates a commitment to a collective process and political clarity. Given the dehumanising nature of most educational experiences that young people today come from and the capitalist values of individual competition that are present in every area of life, many partici-

pants come to courses with an automatically defensive or combative nature. Combined with a course that challenges all involved to not only learn new information but also to interrogate their previous assumptions and ways of thinking, conflict is very common, either between the participants or between participants and the educators or course coordinators. We have learned that our response to conflict must demonstrate the values and political principles we teach. So, we insist on considering every question and contribution as valuable and practising generosity and commitment to the collective process.

It is very common for a participant to accuse someone who makes a comment based on a personal or subjective experience of “undialectical thinking.” In such a situation, the participant making the accusation may expect the course coordinators to verify their claim, seeking acknowledgement that they hold a more advanced political position than the other. Instead, we attempt to model, through teaching and facilitation, ways of prompting each other to build on each other’s knowledge to develop a collective understanding without compromising our political horizon. For example, we may respond to a subjective contribution with further questions to prompt the student to interrogate the conditions that created that experience. We may respond to the more theoretically confident participant with a prompt to define the theoretical con-

cept in their own words and give an example of it in practice. In other moments, we may directly disagree and take the time to explain why and engage in a dialogue.

In this way, we hope to disrupt the culture of memorisation and competition and demonstrate a way of engaging with each other that never denies the human experience; it is a pedagogy that maintains that everyone can advance their development and become theoretical contributors, not just consumers.

Mass political education must create the opportunity for an experience of collective work, even if it is limited or abridged. In this moment that requires virtual or hybrid (mix of in-person and virtual participation) programs and that involves a large number of participants in a public way, one method we have successfully employed for cultivating collectivity is to divide the participants into work groups. Work groups are assigned two primary tasks: 1. Discuss and debate the program's content in a small group setting using prompts that invoke different levels of experience, and 2. Complete a small group project that will be presented to the larger class.

This is adapted from the concept of base groups but renamed, as we cannot expect

the groups to operate as fully as a base group might in a cadre school where people share physical space and carry out a series of collective activities. However, we still find that it is essential to create this dimension of collective work, in particular for three reasons:

a) We have found that the most effective way to break through the isolation and alienation of capitalist culture in education is to create a setting where no one is able to simply consume and accumulate knowledge on their own. Both the discussion and project work require the individuals in the group to consider their decision-making processes, how to take and share leadership, how to communicate one's own thoughts not just for the sake of communication but for collective understanding; in essence, how to work together, an experience that can be transferred to life in an organisation.

b) Concerning the section above, a collective setting is incompatible with a culture of individual competition and defensiveness, especially regarding knowledge and knowledge production. Conflicts are inevitably generated when people confront this culture in themselves or each other, and the collective group provides another space where these conflicts can be experienced fully and hopefully resolved, often without

our direct intervention. This experience builds confidence and skills that can be applied to the inevitable conflicts that arise in any setting of collective organisation.

c) Lastly, collective work builds relationships that are much more profound than those that can be built in a formal classroom and gives a small window of what operating with comradeship and socialist values may feel like. For the many who are searching for a political home, building a sense of comradeship with others from various organisations can significantly impact their consciousness and political life and often gives impetus for individuals to take the step to join an organisation or collective.

With much urgency, we consider that we are still in a phase of growth, learning, and development of the practice of mass education, and we are left with many questions to develop our process of mass political education further.

While the challenges that remain are many, we are encouraged by the impact we have witnessed so far in these few short years. These courses have resulted in many returning students, bringing with them new friends and comrades to continue engaging in political education and making suggestions for future programs, with a willingness to participate beyond simply attending. We have also seen many organisations

begin to build their own political education programs and often adapt methodologies they experienced at TPF or seek our collaboration to do so.

But perhaps most importantly, in moments when the battle of ideas intensifies, when we express an urgent call for solidarity, for example, to counteract the US government's attempts to strangle the Cuban people into submission, our past students and their organisations very readily stand in solidarity with the call, even taking on the task of dialoguing with others in their context who were not yet so moved, and often in unexpected ways. It gives us hope that political education can be one step towards undoing the ideological machinery that has used all of its weight and power to try to convince the young generations in North America that there is no future to fight for. It is only the first step, but it is a significant step toward making more space, culturally and politically, for socialist ideas to flourish and for the majority to join us in the fight against global capitalism and US imperialism.

Points of Reflection for Schools in Development

Internationalist Collective for
Political Education

“By and large, pedagogy is the most dialectical, mobile, complex, and diversified of sciences. This assertion makes the credo of my pedagogical faith.”

ANTON MAKARENKO (1938)

A few years have passed since the first meeting of the collective of schools in 2017, which has since adopted the name of the Internationalist Collective for Political Education (ICPE). In this time, we have aspired to consolidate a shared vision for advancing political education on local, national, regional, and international fronts.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the eruption of mass uprisings in 2020 marked a profound

shift in the reality of our education projects around the world. The prevailing modus operandi of the ICPE, characterised by national, regional, and international courses often conducted in residential settings, suddenly became unworkable. In response to these challenges, the schools were compelled to analyse, evaluate, and confront their methodology, and overarching purpose.

The period of reassessment brought forth a critical appreciation for the need to maintain an adaptive and responsive science of pedagogy. For socialist political education processes, the imperative lies not only in grasping the lessons gleaned from past and present projects but also in constantly staying attuned to the specificities of the time, place, and sociopolitical context that shape the project.

Political Education is Contextual

To bring forth an example, the schools of the ICPE have always drawn significant inspiration from the Florestan Fernandes National School (ENFF) of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in Brazil. The nearly twenty years of experience accumulated by the ENFF is a rich illustration of the possibilities of building political education processes. Fundamental aspects of the ENFF's pedagogical dimensions – including *mística*, *organicidade* (organisational structure), collective work and necessary work, revolutionary art and culture, and internationalism, among others – have been observed and embraced by the schools of the ICPE. Indeed, several schools of the ICPE were birthed as a direct result

of organisational and pedagogical exchanges between their regions and the MST.

Yet, amidst this cross-pollination of ideas, there remains a steadfast recognition that political education is inherently contextual, woven into the concrete realities of the working class in diverse regions. Political education, therefore, cannot be approached with an abstract or detached orientation; it must organically grow from and respond to the specific landscape in which it unfolds.

Political Education Must Multiply Itself

Across contexts, however, the mandate for political education within popular organisations and movements is consistent – to intensify our efforts and capacity, sharpen our method, and undertake political education not as an intermittent series of events but as an enduring, permanent fixture of our political project.

It is apparent that merely stating the need for political education within organisations is insufficient without a clear definition of what it entails, how it is executed, why it is necessary, and with whom this collective educational process is undertaken. The notion that political education is a panacea for our organisational shortcomings is fruitless. Political education is a meticulous and perpetual process that demands thoughtful consideration, strategic planning and evaluation, and an unyielding commitment to raising the consciousness of the working class.

Political Education is Necessarily Holistic

Embracing political education as a permanent process necessitates that its implementation permeates every facet of an individual's humanity; the process rigorously transcends mere knowledge acquisition. In aspiring to make the working-class struggle an enduring element of consciousness, we must utilise every tool in our arsenal. Discipline, love, knowledge, and a revolutionary commitment to the collective good must intertwine to strengthen the foundation of our movement. This calls for a holistic and humanistic approach to political education that goes beyond the intellectual or academic realm to shape the very core of an individual's character.

Within this framework for political education, we can observe Ché's vision of the "New Man" (1965). The New Man is not merely a passive observer of history but an active protagonist, shaping the course of social transformation. Political education becomes a vessel for cultivating the qualities and attributes that define this prospect. To build toward the realisation of the New Man, the approach to political education must be marked by a distinctive boldness, creativity, and curiosity.

Political Education without Practice is Self-Contradictory

Amidst this formative process, it is apparent that the historical task at hand can only be achieved with a dialectical engagement with practice. The ongoing

development of our political education processes must not exist in isolation but should be intrinsically linked to the grassroots life force of the organisation. In this relationship, political education emerges as more than a theoretical pursuit; it is a strategic instrument crafted to equip cadre with analytical, political, and organisational competencies. These competencies, in turn, serve as a compass for navigating the challenges of the present struggle and charting a course for the responsibilities that await in the liberated society that lies ahead.

Political education involves a multidimensional and intentional process deeply embedded in the daily struggles of the people. To authentically engage in the educational process, one must be immersed with the masses, keeping a finger on the pulse of the challenges and aspirations of the working class. This demands the full integration of educators into the grassroots, recognising that political education in isolation is self-contradictory.

Yet, within this principle, a persistent tension endures. On the one hand, there is an imperative to avoid detachment from the life of the organisation, its struggles, and its base at all costs. On the other hand, political education can only be realised by allocating the necessary time, human resources, focus, and dedication to political education, ensuring its depth and quality. There must be an equilibrium between the two, which does not have an obvious solution but requires strategic foresight and a deep-rooted connection to the mission that fuels the educational process.

Undertaking political education requires vast and varied resources; it demands significant investments of time, human capacity, and conscientious preparation. To perceive political education as anything less than a strategic priority is to risk the deprioritisation of cadre development. Such a choice endangers the sustainability of our organisations and movements, undermining their ability to adapt, grow, and effectively navigate the challenges that lie ahead.

Conversely, a sustained commitment to the process of political education – inextricable from our practice – becomes a self-replicating undertaking. As people immerse themselves in the practice of political education, they not only enhance their own capabilities but contribute to the collective growth and effectiveness of the entire process. This cyclical dynamic is instrumental in propelling the liberation struggle forward. The cadre engaged in political education, through their deepened understanding and enhanced skills, become integral contributors to the tasks and goals of the organisation.

Call to Action for Schools in Development

The accumulated reflections from the schools of the ICPE serve as a call to action. Political education cannot be an afterthought, a spontaneous gesture, or contingent on periods of relative “calm.”

Moments of social upheaval – such as the global protests of 2020 or the recent surge of actions in solidarity with Palestine in 2023 – underscore the heightened im-

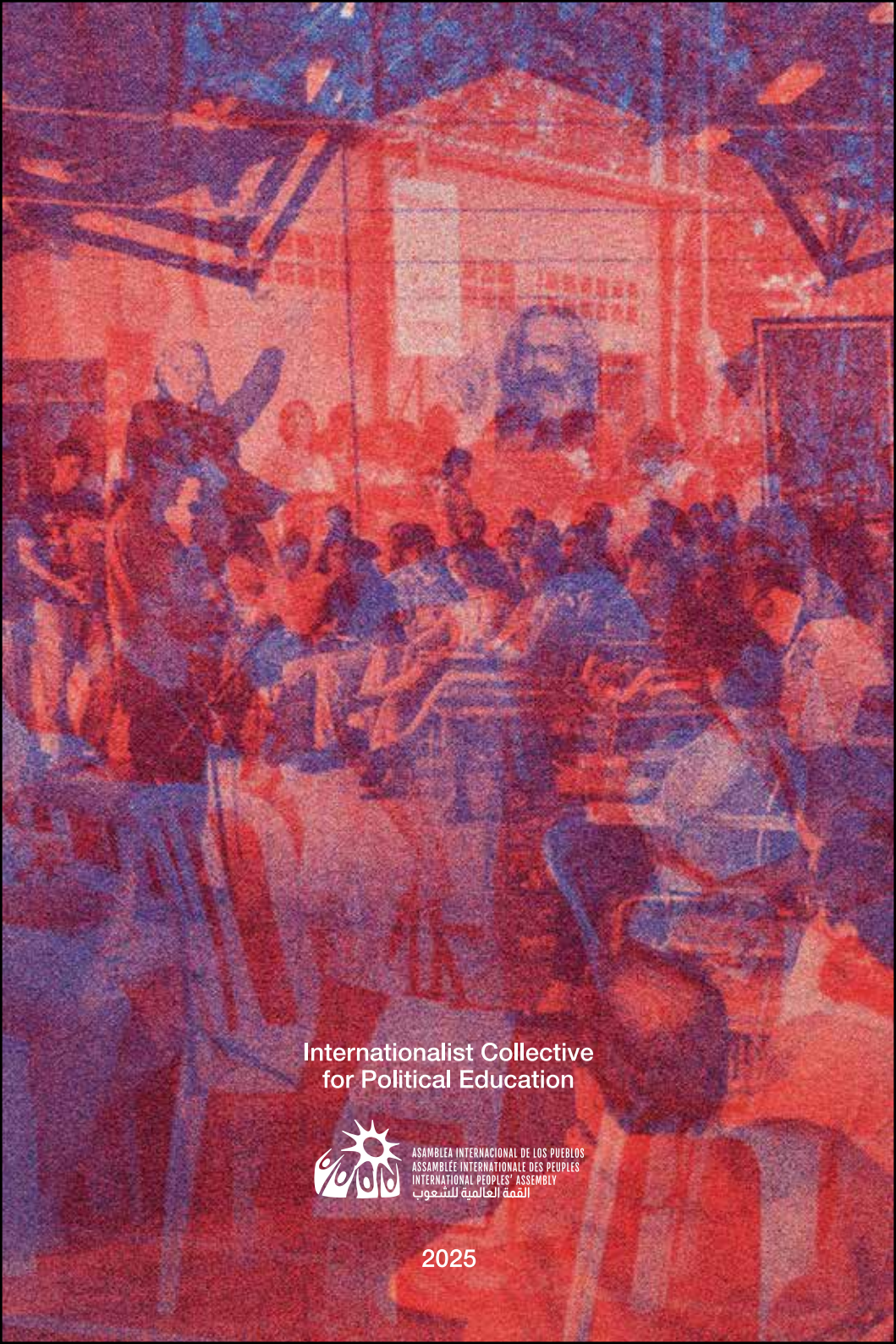
portance of political education. In these periods of intensified contradictions and heightened political awareness, the role of political education is indispensable. These critical junctures present unique opportunities for shifting the consciousness of the people. In these moments of crisis, agitation, propaganda, and education must play a decisive role to seize the momentum of societal shifts and build resilient cadre capable of navigating the complexities of an ever changing reality.

Soviet educator Anton Makarenko offers this advice to educators:

[The educator] has to experience his own dignity and the dignity of the class. He has to feel his responsibility to his class. He has to be capable of succumbing to a comrade as well as giving him orders. He has to be polite, stern, kind-hearted, and merciless, according to the circumstances of his life and his battles. He has to be an active organiser. He has to be steadfast and hardened; he has to be able to control himself and to affect others. If the collective is to punish him, he has to respect not only the collective but also the punishment. He has to be cheerful, bright, and disciplined, capable of fighting and of building, capable of living and of loving life; he has to be happy. He should be like this already, today, every day, not at a distant future.

It is this guidance that the ICPE echoes to comrades constructing schools of permanent struggle

in their organisations, movements, countries, and contexts. This pursuit is a daily commitment and a revolutionary responsibility in moments of both victory and defeat. It demands a pedagogy that is adaptable, dynamic, and resilient. It is a call to embrace the process of political education not as an afterthought, burden, or task to check off a list but as a source of joy and hope in our struggle toward liberation – **today and every day.**



Internationalist Collective
for Political Education



ASAMBLEA INTERNACIONAL DE LOS PUEBLOS
ASSAMBLÉE INTERNATIONALE DES PEUPLES
INTERNATIONAL PEOPLES' ASSEMBLY
القمة العالمية للشعوب

2025