

Statement on the Dissolution of the League of Revolutionary Struggle

On September 8, 1990, at a national conference of the League of Revolutionary Struggle, a formal dissolution vote was taken.

As former League members, we are proud to have contributed over these past 12 years to the people's struggles for peace, justice and equality, and we remain committed to this struggle. But we have reached a point, shaped by our own experience and by world events, where a large majority of us wish to move beyond the Marxist-Leninist framework, and do not feel that today's movement is best served by a Marxist-Leninist organizational form.

In the spirit of continuing the struggle into the 21st Century, we announce the dissolution of the League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-Leninist) and present the following explanation.

The History We Stand On ^{we?}

Since the League's founding in 1978, the overwhelming majority of its membership has been comprised of people of color. We have always seen ourselves in the tradition of the millions of American Indians, Africans and African Americans, Asians and Pacific Islanders, Mexican, Chicanos and Latinos, and progressive whites who have risked and sacrificed their lives in the 400+ year struggle for democracy, justice, and equality in this land.

The history of the United States is marked by persistent movements by its people to expand basic freedoms and make real this country's stated commitment to political and economic democracy. This has not been a peaceful journey. Many have given their lives fighting to make these ideals a reality, while more have suffered because of the greed and neglect that have persisted. As political activists in the closing years of the 20th century, we honor the freedom fighters of the past, and we rededicate ourselves to continuing the quest for social, political, and economic justice.

In the immediate sense, we who formed the League received our political baptism in the Civil Rights Movement and the struggles for self-determination in the 1960s. Many of us participated in the Freedom Rides and in campaigns for voting rights, in efforts to win community control of the public schools, in the fight against police brutality, in struggles for union rights and for decent wages and working conditions, in the battles to create ethnic studies and to open the doors of higher education, and in ongoing efforts to win respect and dignity for workers and minority people.

We drew much of our inspiration from leaders like Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, Corky Gonzalez, Lolita Lebron, Stokely Carmichael, Emma Tennayuca, and Carlos Bulosan. Organizations like the Black Panther Party, SNCC, La Raza Unida Party, the Brown Berets, the Young Lords, the Nation of Islam, Los Siete, and many others, provided us with different kinds of examples of how to carry out the struggle in our own communities.

The League was formed in 1978-79 by uniting the August Twenty-ninth Movement, I Wor Kuen, the Revolutionary Communist League, and several local collectives in a multi-national organization dedicated to a society based on equality, justice, democracy and socialism. Our primary objective in forming the League was to find collective solutions to the problems plaguing our communities, and to struggle to fundamentally improve the lives of the people in this country.

In our search for answers, we studied the experiences of freedom fighters in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. We discovered that in most cases, the national liberation movements that inspired us most – from Mozambique to Cuba to China, Vietnam and others – were led by Marxist-Leninists. We adopted Marxism-Leninism as our theoretical framework, which helped us to understand the nature of capitalism and imperialism, and presented a revolutionary vision of socialist society that ideally would be free from oppression and exploitation. Organizationally, we also adopted aspects of Marxist-Leninist organization, such as tight-knit collective functioning. While some members felt the need to

remain confidential because of the existence of repressive laws specifically directed at members of Marxist-Leninist groups, the League always publicly shared our views and ideas through various publications, forums and workshops.

Even as we identified ourselves as Marxist-Leninists and drew from Marxist-Leninist theory, we never proceeded from Marxism-Leninism as a dogmatic or exclusive guide, and we carried out much of our work through the development and application of fairly new and creative approaches, much of it departing from the "classic traditions" of Marxism-Leninism. Perhaps this is why we have always defied easy categorization. Many of the American left, especially those associated with the Communist Parties of China and the Soviet Union, dismissed us as insufficiently theoretical, and looked down upon our emphasis on mass organizing. Some of them criticized our decision to work with the Democratic Party, and our approach in electoral politics to support progressive candidates and unite broadly to open up the political process to many who had been locked out. They never understood our desire to build a broad united front, nor our firm belief since the inception of the League that no revolution could occur without the support of the majority of people – a perspective that has been the starting point of our mass work and political program over the years. Most of all, they disagreed with our strong support for self-determination for people of color, a principle that we have upheld because of our profound belief that a truly democratic and just U.S. society could never be achieved without a firm commitment to equality and self-determination for African Americans, Chicanos, and other oppressed nationalities.

Throughout our history, our concern has not been with labels, but with getting work done and keeping our eyes on the prize. Because of our history of real work and our record of concrete achievements, we have never had an identity crisis, and our theoretical views have been developed out of our actual work, not out of books. Since 1978, we have organized among the grassroots and played an important role in leading and supporting many of the critical struggles of the last 12 years. We are proud to say that we have made a real difference in people's lives and in strengthening the grassroots movements.

The essence of who we are and what we have stood for can be best seen through our work and accomplishments. We were proud to participate in the Watsonville cannery strike, Jesse Jackson's historic 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns, in the student movement of the '80s and the fight for educational rights, in the Eleanor Bumpurs Justice Committee, in the movement for redress and reparations for Japanese Americans interned by the U.S. during World War II, in the anti-apartheid and divestment struggle, in the fight for immigrants rights and language equality, in movements for political empowerment for people of color, in struggles for workers rights, against plant closings, and for better wages and working conditions, in the movement for women's rights and equality, in struggles to defend affirmative action, voting rights, and other gains of past struggles, and in countless other issues and struggles of these past 12 years.

In all of these struggles, we contributed our energy and skills, as well as a political perspective and vision. We have stressed the importance of empowering the grassroots so that their voices and demands would be heard, and so that movements would hold accountable elected political leaders and others. We have helped build strong multi-racial coalitions at times when racism polarized ethnic groups and obscured their recognition of their common interests, while we also promoted respect for the autonomy and independence of various nationality groupings. And, during the Reagan years, we worked with people from all strata of society to help build a progressive united front that could take on the right wing and resist the attacks on the progress of the past 30 years.

Through these efforts, we have helped to unify and strengthen the mass movement in important regions of this country.

New Thinking for a New Era

In deciding to dissolve the League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-Leninist), all of us are emphasizing the positive nature of our shared history and collective work, while clarifying that we have different views among us regarding how to best carry out our work under the new conditions we face, and how best to achieve our common goal of fundamental social change.

In reviewing the developments in the world, a large majority of us feel that there are aspects of Marxism-Leninism and the practice carried out in its name that are inappropriate, unsuitable, and even antithetical to the vision we hold of a democratic and just society. Specifically, the majority of us do not agree with the following principles of Marxism-Leninism:

1) The actual practice of many different social movements in different countries has shown that a wide variety of beliefs and theoretical systems have contributed to advancing the interests of working people and society in a forward direction. The majority of us do not believe that Marxism-Leninism is the sole or leading ideology for fundamental social change, nor that Marxism-Leninism or any other ideology should have hegemony and should by definition have a special leading role in the mass movements, nor that this ideology is intrinsically superior to any other progressive theory or ideology.

2) The majority of us disagree with Lenin's view of the vanguard communist party, and do not believe that a single party can or should determine the direction, strategy and tactics of the struggle for fundamental change. We have never advocated that fundamental change could or should come about through a seizure of power by a vanguard party claiming to act in the interests of the working class and the majority of society.

3) The majority of us disagree with the goal of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," and believe instead in multi-party democracy and free elections. We oppose dictatorship of any kind. Most of us also believe that in practice, the application of this principle has meant that a minority acts for and defines the interests of the majority of society. Such a view is antithetical to a belief in genuine democracy. Movements for justice should practice and embody the values and principles that they strive to achieve in society.

At the same time, a minority of us believe that the main problems have been in the incorrect application of Marxist-Leninist theory, and not the theory itself. A minority of us believe that Marxism-Leninism continues to be the best theoretical and ideological guide for the struggle.

These broad theoretical differences can only be resolved over time. Nevertheless, we as former League members all continue to share a vision of a better society, and we have areas of general agreement on the pillars of a successful American strategy for fundamental change. We remain optimistic that fundamental change will occur in this country, and we remain committed to creating a society that is free from exploitation and oppression. This view comes from our work in communities across the country, in the struggles of the people for a better life, and from study of past movements and efforts: We believe that fundamental change in America will take the support of the majority of people who will demonstrate with their votes that they want such a change. We believe in building a united front of people from all classes and walks of life in common struggles for economic and social justice. We believe in building multi-national unity based on full equality and self-determination for people of color. We believe that jobs, education, health care, and housing are rights, and not privileges. And finally, we believe that society must be reorganized to put human needs before profit.

History is made by people struggling to alleviate human suffering and to put society's resources at the disposal of the majority of the people.

In the course of centuries of struggle, many, many different organizations have come into being which served their present age as vehicles of progress and advancement. The history and dissolution of the League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-Leninist) can be seen in this context. Through years of work, ties have been made, bonds forged, and networks developed.

Those of us who comprised the League are proud to have participated in this movement, and we will continue to be active. Most of us want to keep working together on common issues, while others of us may choose to do other things as well. While we may have different views among us regarding how to achieve fundamental social change, we have all agreed to adopt the attitude that time and practice will ultimately show us which path is best in achieving this goal.

Rest assured, whatever new vehicles of change emerge in the '90s, the struggle will continue.