

## DEMOCRACY FROM BELOW

The “NUMSA moment” is OUR moment

Resolution on Trade Unions, Social Movements and the Struggle for Social Justice and Deepening of Democracy from Below

Adopted by the Inaugural National Meeting of Democracy from Below

University of KwaZulu-Natal, eThekweni

30th November-1st December 2013

Noting:

1. The continued exploitation of workers in the workplace;
2. The failure of the ANC government to protect workers from starvation wages, exploitation and casualisation;
3. The poor state of solidarity and cooperation between trade unions and organised formations of the unemployed, the landless and the homeless;
4. The cooption and abuse of sections of the trade union movement by employers, the government, the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP);
5. The neglect of worker struggles and interests by most trade unions at the behest of political alliances, career interests and bureaucratic control from above;
6. The problematic, sexist and patriarchal approaches adopted by sections of the trade union movement as well as our mass movements on the role and position of women, sexual harassment, sexual power relations between women and men in trade unions and our movements, and on the transformation of gender relations in society and in trade unions and our movements themselves;
7. The decline in the tradition established in the 1970s and 1980s of worker and trade union involvement in community struggles of the unemployed, the homeless and the landless;
8. The strategic failure of the trade union movement to date to effectively organise farm workers, casual workers, informal workers and other marginalised workers who are amongst the most exploited sections of employed workers;
9. The growing socio-economic distance between employed workers and the unemployed;
10. The massacre of striking workers by police at Marikana on 16 August 2012 and the continued anti-worker violence by the state on behalf of the bosses; and
11. The unwavering resilience and ability of workers to mobilise and fight for their rights, a living wage and broader social justice.

Believing that:

1. The “NUMSA moment” is OUR collective moment as workers, the unemployed, the homeless and the landless;
2. Workers at work, the unemployed, the landless and the homeless belong to the same side of the struggle for social justice;
3. The struggles of workers are also struggles of communities;
4. The struggles of communities are also struggles of workers;
5. The only way to challenge and defeat elite anti-worker and anti-poor policies, and to deepen democracy and advance social justice from below is through sustained mass participatory organising of employed workers, marginalised workers, the unemployed, the homeless and the landless;
6. Democratic bottom-up control of all organisations of workers, the unemployed, the landless and the homeless are key in the struggle for social justice;
7. The rising militancy of workers and the political and policy debates in COSATU and other unions reflect popular concern and restlessness with inequality, underdevelopment, the rising democratic deficit and failed promises for post-apartheid change;
8. The workers’ movement must be at the forefront of the struggle for transformative socio-economic justice and deepening democracy; and
9. The trade union movement must undertake serious self-introspection and sustained action to advance progressive positions on its role, positions and actions on the role and position of women, the need to challenge male power and sexism, and the transformation of gender relations in society and the trade union movement itself.

We therefore resolve to:

1. Call on mass movements of workers, the unemployed, the homeless and the landless to rise to the historic occasion and seize the “NUMSA moment” by laying the seeds for the sustained democratic and participatory organising of the mass of our people to change South Africa forever;
2. Call on mass movements of the unemployed, the homeless and the landless to reach out to employed workers and the trade union movement to build concrete solidarity, unity in action and genuine non-party political worker-community alliances based on common programmes to challenge anti-worker and anti-poor policies, to advance the struggle for social justice and to deepen democracy from below;
3. Call on the trade union movement to revitalise itself through returning to the traditions of democratic worker control from below in the shopfloor and in the trade union structures, a rejection of sweetheart and business unionism, being at the best and most committed of service to the needs and interests of workers, organising farm workers and other marginalised workers, as well as genuine and principled support of, and solidarity with struggles of the unemployed, the homeless and the landless to advance social justice and deepen democracy from below;
4. Call on the trade union movement to build solidarity with mass movements of the unemployed, the homeless and the landless on the basis for mutual respect for independence and autonomy of both these mass movements and the trade union movement;
5. Call on trade unions and our mass movements to actively foster principled debate and ongoing political education on the role of workers, trade unions, and mass movements of the unemployed, the

homeless and the landless in the struggle for social justice, the deepening of democracy, challenging sexism and patriarchy, and the transformation of oppressive gender relations in society, in the trade union movements and in our mass movements;

6. Undertake a sustained programme of action as Democracy from Below (DfB) to advance and concretely realise the above perspectives.

ENDS

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