

2012: A United People's Crusade for Truth, Workers' Rights, Human Rights and Justice

Joelle Fishman

I'm going to address the 2012 elections in the context of our long-term vision.

And why this election must become a united crusade for truth, for workers' rights, human rights and justice.

Why this campaign must become a crusade to raise class-consciousness, bring people into action, and build the structures of labor, the structures of community, and the structures of the Communist Party and YCL.

1. Life and Death Elections

The senseless murder of young Trayvon Martin, victim of racial profiling, tragically illuminates much of what this election is about. The deadliness of the racist extreme right-wing message carried to its logical horrible conclusion. And the power of the anti-racist, democratic minded majority to take collective action and intervene on the side of justice as civil rights and labor marched together.

We enter this election exhausted from three and a half years of poisonous hate speech, constant attacks on the integrity of the first African American president, obstructionism in Congress, and an orchestrated infiltration of state legislatures with anti-union, anti-worker, anti-democratic bills including Stand Your Ground.

This drumbeat of racist and anti-union stereotypes and fear tactics is the underpinning of the entire Republican agenda. It is life threatening for millions of people.

Newt Gingrich brazenly called Obama "the food stamp president." He was speaking in code to place blame on people of color and those who are poor and unemployed. He was taking the spotlight away from corporate greed and looking to create divisions within the 99%.

In a matter of weeks, Paul Ryan's budget, endorsed by Mitt Romney, practically ends food stamps (SNAP). Such lack of basic nutrition threatens the lives of 4 million seniors, 4 million adults who receive disability benefits, and 23 million children - including 10 million children in households with cash income below half the poverty line.

This election is not only about survival, not only about closing the wealth gap. It is also about coming out of the election even stronger to continue the fight. This election is not the end of the growing crusade for justice - it is the beginning.

We enter this election fresh from the mighty battles to protect public workers' right to collective bargain, and workers' right to organize. To outlaw racial profiling. To secure the right to vote. Battles to secure Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid and the fundamental right of women to health care, and healthcare for everyone. Battles to invest in sustainable green energy. To fund public education, for LGBT rights. Battles to create sustainable jobs with a living wage for 23 million people in need of work including over 80% of Black and Latino youth. Battles to stop foreclosures, close the wealth gap and make the greedy 1% pay taxes.

The most reactionary sections of capital are lining up behind the Republicans, and so are some sections of finance capital that contributed to Obama in 2008.

Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO, speaks of this election in terms of values. The values espoused by President Obama upholding the contribution of work and those who do it, versus the values of individualism and corporate greed that Romney embodies.

This neck-in-neck election is a fight to uphold working class values that reject racism and division and represent the common good of all. Values based on hope not fear.

This election is not about a political party. This election is not about a candidate. This election is about our lives, our future, the heart and soul of our nation. It is about whether the 99% and the working class within that will be able to get onto higher ground. Will we be left fighting for our lives? Or, will we be in

position to further the struggle toward a transformation of our country to put people before profits.

2. We have to be outspoken on the economic issues

Denise and George Edwards could not travel to this conference. But Denise called to discuss the situation in Western Pennsylvania. She said the restart of General Motors in Detroit has put thousands of people to work in the Pittsburgh area, making car parts. Having a job has been the best argument to pull people away from supporting the Tea Party, she said.

Democracy Corps and Women's Voices / Women's Vote did a survey in 44 Congressional Districts that had been Republican, went for Obama in 2008, and then back to Republican in 2010. These districts are critical not only for the outcome of the Presidential race, but also for the House and Senate.

Like elsewhere, the top issue is jobs and the economy. When the facts of the Paul Ryan budget were explained to these voters, including the cuts to human needs and the Medicare voucher plan, they shifted to support Obama. They also disagreed with Republican policies to maintain the Bush tax cuts to the rich.

Many women shifted toward Obama in response to the harsh and cruel Republican policies, even opposing funding for contraception.

The poll shows there is a lot of work to be done, but with a strong platform for jobs and fair taxes, Obama and Democrats can win voters in swing districts including white voters who supported the Tea Party in 2010.

Many hoped Obama would advance a stronger jobs bill. Sen. Harkin's new Rebuild America Act is comprehensive and far reaching. Other bills target massive infrastructure repair. Organizing around a strong jobs and economic program can enlarge the debate and inspire more voters to get involved.

If the Tea Party-influenced Republicans win control, any progressive legislation will continue to be shelved. The vicious Ryan budget will prevail on behalf of Wall St. If the Democrats win a majority in the House and Senate, opportunities open for grass roots struggle on behalf of the Congressional Progressive Caucus "Budget for All," and legislation for jobs to meet people's needs.

Taking a page from our history of change through non-violent action, unions and community groups are holding 99% Spring actions to confront corporate greed. Women's groups are mobilizing on April 28. Immigrant rights and workers rights marches will take place on May Day. And on Juneteenth, the marches and actions for Youth Jobs initiated by the YCL will be a great contribution.

Visible support for demands to rebuild our nation's infrastructure, to create green, sustainable jobs, to shift military spending to human needs and tax the rich will help expand the debate.

3. Labor and the core forces for social change

This election is a life-and-death fight of the 99%, which includes the working class and goes beyond. As a working class party, we understand the working class, the real producers of wealth, will lead us into the next stage of struggle. We have a strategic commitment to build the labor movement, the organized sector of the working class.

Unions are a top target of the extreme right wing. The AFL-CIO grass roots crusade will engage 400,000 members to canvass their co-workers and neighbors with a unity message for Obama. SEIU will mobilize another 200,000 members with the same goal. This is political independence. The experience will create new leaders and new methods to confront capital beyond the elections.

Racially and nationally oppressed people, women and youth - the core forces for social change - are also targets of the extreme right-wing. Polls show a high level of support for Obama from each of these sectors.

With some exceptions, there is recognition of the danger from the corporate controlled right-wing Republicans. Where there is disagreement with Obama on foreign policy, civil liberties, immigration reform, or other issues, a stronger movement on the ground is needed to shift these positions.

Strengthening and enlarging union, civil rights, community and youth organizations during this election will lay the groundwork for year round organizing, and for future elections in which candidates who come out of the movements, including the Communist Party, run for office.

4. The struggle for voting rights

The demographics of our country are rapidly changing. Texas is already a majority minority state. Our population is younger and more culturally diverse, especially with Latino growth. It is also becoming more progressive. Taxing the rich has overwhelming support, as does ending the wars.

The rise of hate groups, the Tea Party and the Republican right-wing are the modern day attack dogs and hoses attempting to shut down progress.

A dangerous, lavishly funded effort is underway to suppress the vote of African Americans, Latinos, women, and youth.

The battle for voting rights is front and center.

Protests have forced ALEC to shut down their "Public Safety and Elections Task Force," which pushed voter-suppression and Stand Your Ground laws through many state legislatures.

Unions, the NAACP, Planned Parenthood, La Raza, Youth Vote are fighting back with massive voter registration and protection campaigns. The Obama organization has outreach groups for each section of the population.

Citizens United [*Supreme Court decision*] permits multi-millions to flow into swing districts from secret super PACs. The airwaves, social media and postal boxes will be flooded with lies and hysteria to smear Obama and create provocations.

The Democratic Governor's Association says right-wing super PACS are "on an ideological crusade against workers and women." This includes Restore Our Future and Crossroads GPS (the Koch brothers). Karl Rove's American Crossroads is at the \$200 million level with TV ads in the swing states of Wisconsin, North Carolina, Montana and West Virginia.

A people's crusade is essential to turn back the "attack dogs," show how racism hurts everyone and raise sights for what is possible.

The challenge is to start knocking on doors right away with the working class values message to set the framework for the debate. In southern states, the mid-west, coast to coast. In urban, suburban and rural areas — in red states, but also blue states. Nothing can be taken for granted. That was proven in the 2010 elections.

5. The Communist Party and YCL

The Communist Party USA and YCL are also a part of the core forces for social change. We bring our historical united front experience, our working class unity approach, our strategy and our vision of Bill of Rights socialism.

So it is no surprise that Tea Party Republican Congressman Allan West chose to wade into the swamp of anti-communist red-baiting by charging the entire Congressional Progressive Caucus are members of the Communist Party.

But it's not just Allan West. On Breitbart.com, Presidential candidate Mitt Romney said: "There will be an effort by the quote vast left wing conspiracy to work together to put out their message and to attack me."

To quote Rachel Maddow: whenever the Republicans are losing support, you can count on them to dredge up anti-communist red-baiting.

Like racism, anti-communism is a part of their playbook. They want to create fear and they want to undercut the contribution that we bring to the movement.

But there is a flip side. The attacks by Glenn Beck and Rush Limbaugh have gotten more people interested to find out what is socialism and what is the Communist Party.

In polls, more young people prefer socialism than capitalism. Why not? Their future in a caring, more equal society will be much richer than in the one they know now that is dog-eat-dog and lacking much hope or opportunity.

It is not self-serving to say that we have a responsibility to enlarge our ranks. That is the biggest contribution we can make to this election and to our country in the ongoing movement for social change and equality.

Instead of "waiting for later," the time is now, in the midst of this historic 2012 crusade.

As we knock on doors in our working class communities we are not only turning out the vote, we are giving people the opportunity to be part of the struggle to organize in their neighborhoods for a better life, starting with, but going beyond, the elections. In a few short months, people can become grass roots leaders and join the Communist Party and YCL. That has been our experience in Connecticut election campaigns.

The YCL Summer Youth Voter Project in Florida will be a wonderful contribution to uphold voter rights in one of the most restrictive key battleground states. And a state where Obama is slightly ahead in the polls. We can imagine all the youth who come from around the country going home with new experience, understanding and enthusiasm on how to challenge and overcome voter suppression and build the YCL.

The Political Action Commission has some materials in your packets and is issuing UNITY, a monthly electronic newsletter. Sharing People's World articles on FaceBook, by e-mail and any other way, is an important ideological tool.

This election is a matter of life-and-death. This election crusade has the potential to be a much larger victory than the election itself.

If the labor movement comes out stronger, the civil rights movement stronger, the women's movement, the youth movement stronger, the environmental movement, peace movement stronger, and if the Communist Party and YCL emerge stronger among the working class, larger, and with new respect we will be in position to move onto the offensive for worker's rights, human rights and justice.

One of the union organizing conventions has a great slogan to close with: Lead, Unite, Fight — Win for the 99%!