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Industrial Workers of Africa

Listen, Workers, Listen!

Manifesto of the Industrial Workers of Africa, issued in
Johannesburg, September 1917, in Sesotho and isiZulu
September 1917

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Workers of the Bantu race:

Why do you live in slavery? Why are you not free as other men are free? Why are you kicked and spat upon by your masters? Why must you carry a pass before you can move anywhere? And if you are found without one, why are you thrown into prison? Why do you toil hard for little money? And again thrown into prison if you refuse to work? Why do they herd you like cattle into compounds? WHY?

Because you are the toilers of the earth. Because the masters want you to labour for their profit. Because they pay the Government and Police to keep you as slaves to toil for them. If it were not for the money they make from your labour, you would not be oppressed.

But mark: you are the mainstay of the country. You do all the work, you are the means of their living. That is why you are robbed of the fruits of your labour and robbed of your liberty as well.

There is only one way of deliverance for you Bantu workers. Unite as workers. Unite: forget the things which divide you. Let there be no longer any talk of Basuto, Zulu, or Shangaan. You are all labourers; let Labour be your common bond.

Wake up! And open your ears. The sun has arisen, the day is breaking, for a long time you were asleep while the mill of the rich man was grinding and breaking the sweat of your work for nothing. You are strongly requested to come to the meeting of the workers to fight for your rights.

Come and listen, to the sweet news, and deliver yourself from the bonds and chains of the capitalist. Unity is strength. The fight is great against the many passes that persecute you and against the low wages and misery of your existence.

Workers of all lands unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to win.