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Why I Support Occupy The Hood

Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin

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The new mass movement, Occupy Wall Street, has already birthed a number of movement of oppressed peoples of color:Indigenous/African/Caribbean, etc. They are DeColonize OWS, the People of Color Working Group, and Occupy the Hood. It is Occupy the Hood, which is an actual Black working class political tendency, which has the most promise as far as Africans in America are concerned. They are not only trying to pressure the white majority to make a place the for voices of Black/POC people, but also organizing an independent tendency which can organize in our communities around issues effecting us especially. it is that latter dimension which really excites me.

For years, I have heard, but not seen a Black revolutionary mass movement in the hip hop era, which is free of middle class conventional politics or being manipulated by some power-hungry preachers/politicians. This movement has the potential to create a genuine mass moment of the poor and oppressed, based in the urban inner cities. It is a youth centered movement, but seems to understand if it raises issues of oppressed peoples in Harlem,

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North Philly, South Memphis, or other hoods in other places, they can bring a true majority together, an army of the poor.

In order for that to happen, they have to put the people and mass grassroots politics in command, and be based totally around popular issues. In saying “politics”, I am not talking about electoral politics, which I consider virtually useless and weak, I am talking about putting the Black poor together as a class, and then using their numbers to confront the white capitalist government and its financial sector in an anti-capitalist protest movement.

It is this what made the Black protest movement of the 1960's so dynamic, not just a number of small militant groups fighting isolated in various communities. Black Power was a widespread, but decentralized mass movement which superseded the civil rights phase, even before the assassination of Dr. M.L. King. Groups like the Black Panther Party, League of Revolutionary Black Workers and others had become mass movements in their own right, instead of tailing after white radicals.

This can happen again, and in my mind, Occupy the hood is that movement best situated to make that happen in this period. They are part of the Wall Street tendency, and can unite with other POC tendencies and even anti-racist/anti-colonial whites to wage an internal battle inside OWS to make it accountable to POC's instead of just white middle class workers who have lost their jobs, homes, or money in this period. We have suffered far worse.

Over 1 million Black/POC people are in the prison system, which destroys not just the prisoner but his family and community. We have the highest levels of unemployment in the USA, “officially” 16.7%, but actually far higher at Great Depression levels of 26%. We have the highest number of urban homeless. We have record levels of infant mortality, approaching the 3rd world. On and on we are catching hell more than anybody, and we are the class of surplus labor that all economists speak of who have considered the matter.

But we need to organize, not not just bemoan our fate or curse our luck. We can change everything with out all-out struggle, on

our own terms. We do not have to be shackled by the racism and backwardness of white workers. Through a movement like Occupy the Hood, we can organize not only our own communities, but through that organize the world who would unite with our struggle. So, to end this, I see the potential of this movement more than anything else to come along in the hip hop era. They seem to “get it”, and understand instinctively that they can organize their peoples to not only destroy Wall Street, which is based on our slavery and exploitation, but the entire system of capitalist oppression. Memphis has been designated the poorest city in the USA. I'm honored to be part of this movement in anyway, and will do everything I can to push it forward. I am not interested in “leading” it, they seem to have already gotten founders and collective leadership that can do the job at this early stage. I hope that all power will continue to rest in the local communities, and that they shut out all manner of political opportunists seeking to become the next Obama or politician using the movement as a launching pad. Only if power is in the hands of the people will it succeed.