

## Martin Luther King's dream unrealized

### Black leaders call March on Washington for Aug. 24

By ANDREW POLLACK

The militant outpouring on the streets in reaction to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, racist murderer of Trayvon Martin, combined with a series of other recent attacks on people of color in the U.S. (such as the Supreme Court's gutting of the Voting Rights Act) has most observers predicting a big turnout in DC on Aug. 24. The event will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington, which featured Martin Luther King's speech, "I have a dream."

Benjamin Jealous, president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), one of the main groups endorsing this year's march, told the London *Guardian* that given these events, the significance of the march had "multiplied rapidly." But Jealous added: "The reality is that large civil rights marches have in the past been heavily funded by unions. The trade-union movement has come under withering attack in recent years and its resources are fewer as a result."

Jealous is certainly right about the vicious, and all too often effective, attacks on unions—attacks that make labor's participation on Aug. 24 all the more necessary. Thanks in part to the ferment that the civil rights movement had inspired, the unions recruited heavily in the public and service sectors during the 1960s and '70s, especially among Black and Latin@ workers. Most of those unions remain massive today, though they are under heavy assault, while unions in private industry have greatly shrunk or disappeared.

The crucial question, however, is not how much dues money or staff unions have to allocate to the march, but the political relationship of labor to today's antiracist movement. From that perspective, it's worth looking back at previous Marches on Washington.

The first, which remained only a call and never actually occurred, was that conceived by A. Philip Randolph, founder and head of the Brotherhood of Pullman Sleeping Car Porters, and was to have occurred in 1941. Randolph was a



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(Left) M.L. King at 1963 March.

leader of the Socialist Party, i.e., he was a reformist "socialist."

Explaining the roots of Randolph's March On Washington Movement, Evelyn Sell, in her review of Herbert Garfinkel's "When Negroes March" in the *International Socialist Review* (Winter

1960), wrote: "Mr. Garfinkel traces the March on Washington movement from the time that the depression signs of 'No Help Wanted' changed to the pre-World War II signs, 'Help Wanted—White.' Negro leaders appealed to President Roosevelt ... on behalf of the Negro commu-

nity, which was frozen out of the 'benefits' of the war preparedness program. ... It was at this point that Randolph issued the first call for 'An "all-out" thundering march on Washington."

"Local March committees were set up in 18 cities, outdoor rallies were held, poster walks took place, funds solicited, MOW buttons were sold by the thousands. Counter-pressures and appeals for national unity on the part of the government only served to encourage the March supporters in their project."

Just one week before the March was to take place, however, Roosevelt ordered a Fair Employment Practices Committee to be set up, and Randolph called off the March. A struggle began over how to enforce the FEPC's provisions, and the committee died after the war, throttled in a bipartisan effort.

Of course, Randolph's insistence on his right to tell the masses when they could come into the streets was a ma-

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## Rage at Trayvon verdict!

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

The acquittal of vigilante killer George Zimmerman gave notice to the world that racism is alive and well in the United States. For many days after the verdict was handed down, protesters repeatedly took to the streets of cities and towns throughout the U.S. and internationally. The initial marches and rallies ranged up to 5000 in New York City, 2000 in Minneapolis, 1000 in Oakland, and many hundreds in other cities.

On July 13, a Florida jury composed of five white women and one woman of color found Zimmerman not guilty in the slaying of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. Although Florida's population is 30 percent Black, not a single Black person was placed on the jury.

Trayvon Martin's mother, Sybrina Fulton, told the press that she was shocked at the jury's verdict: "They didn't see Trayvon as their son, they didn't see Trayvon as a teenager, they didn't see Trayvon as just a human being that was minding his own business."

In February 2012, George Zimmerman had trailed Martin, first in his car and then on foot, as the Black high school student walked home through a gated community after having bought a snack at a local shop. Within minutes, as Trayvon neared his family's house, Zimmerman shot the youth through the heart—killing him.

Zimmerman was not taken into custody after killing Martin, and the police did not retain his gun for analysis; Zimmerman was allowed to return home with his weapon. The killer remained free for weeks without having been charged with a crime—until mass protests forced prosecutors to indict him.

Once at trial, however, the court refused to allow the key issue of racial profiling to be examined. This would have had a crucial bearing on determining why Zimmerman had stalked Martin. And so, the jurors never got to hear the fact that "Witness 9," a cousin of Zimmerman, had told a Sanford, Fla., police officer following the shooting, "I know George. And I know that he does not like Black people, and would start something."

Instead, Zimmerman's attorneys were given full leeway to build their case on the allegation that their client had killed Trayvon in self-defense, a stance that was bolstered by Florida's onerous "stand-your-ground" law. The judge denied the prosecution's motion to instruct the jury that it could consider whether Zimmerman, contrary to his claim of self-defense, had provoked the incident as the "first aggressor." Pertinent to this issue was the fact that witness Rachel Jeantel had testified that Martin told her from his cell phone that he was being followed by a "creepy-ass cracker."

In order to sway the jury, defense attorneys tried to make the victim of the shooting appear to be the villain, as if Trayvon had somehow pulled the trigger! Spurious evidence was entered into the record to show that Trayvon Martin fit the stereotype of a gangster—he wore a hoodie on occasion, had tattoos, and might have smoked marijuana. The picture of Trayvon as a "thug" was parroted by the media, which readily displayed photos and documents that the defense lawyers had given them.

But none of that spoke to the elementary fact that Zimmerman had no legitimate business in pursuing and threatening Martin, let alone killing him. He had even been instructed by the police dispatcher to leave Martin alone. And Trayvon Martin, for his part, had done nothing illegal and had no weapon. His only crime was "walking while Black!"

As Michelle Alexander, author of "The New Jim Crow," writes, "If Trayvon Martin had been born white he would be alive today. That has been established beyond all reasonable doubt. If he had been white, he never would have been stalked by Zimmerman, there would have been no fight, no funeral, no trial, no verdict. It is the Zimmerman mindset that must be found guilty—that views Black men and boys



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**Attorneys and the media made Trayvon Martin look like the villain — as if he had pulled the trigger!**

(Above) Thousands march up Broadway in New York to protest acquittal of Martin's killer, July 14.

as nothing but a threat, good for nothing. ... [a mindset] that has birthed a penal system unprecedented in world history."

Despite the fact that evidence in regard to racial profiling was not allowed into the trial hearing, the jurors appear to have been undecided or split for a time.

Two weeks after the verdict, the only non-white juror (a Latina), spoke from the heart, stating that she felt George Zimmerman "got away with murder." Juror B29 reported that she had favored convicting Zimmerman of second-degree murder when deliberations began. "I was the juror that was going to give them a hung jury," she explained. But by the second day, she said, she no longer felt evidence given in the trial was sufficient to convict Zimmerman under Florida law.

Angry shouts rang out as soon as news of the acquittal reached protesters outside the courthouse. Some people wept at the news. The next day, July 14, attorneys for Trayvon's family expressed gratitude to the

thousands of people who during the past 17 months had demonstrated and signed petitions for justice—many avowing, "I am Trayvon!"

President Obama, on the other hand, took the opportunity to piously declare, "We are a nation of laws, and the jury has spoken." Obama sought to deflect the mass outrage over the verdict into an abstract discussion about "gun violence."

The president chose to ignore the fact that "gun violence" in the United State is used as a code word allowing police forces to profile and entrap young Black men in "stop and frisk" operations. The real perpetrators of "gun violence" are commonly the police themselves. The explosive growth of the national security and surveillance industry, especially since 9/11, has only increased the danger of violence toward young Black men.

In July 2012, the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement produced a report showing that police and other governmental forces kill a Black man at the rate of one every 28 hours. This rate mirrors the high percentage of Blacks in the U.S. prison system—70 percent of the prison population is non-white; 9.2 percent of African Americans are under correctional control. It is these conditions that sustain and encourage gun-packing vigilantes, wannabe cops, like George Zimmerman. ■

### **Black Agenda editor Glen Ford: Verdict shows racism persists in U.S.**

Socialist Action reporter Marty Goodman interviewed Glen Ford, Executive Editor of Black Agenda Report.

**Socialist Action:** The African American community is reeling from the murder of Trayvon Martin and the acquittal of George Zimmerman, the racist vigilante. What does this say about present-day life in the U.S.?

**Glen Ford:** I think one of the reasons the community is reeling is that it must confront the shock of a reality that has not changed in many fundamental aspects. People liked to think that it had changed. Black folks had been told by their leaders—this leadership class that emerged after the Black Power and Black freedom movement of the sixties—that the U.S. had undergone some kind of fundamental change.

The entire establishment narrative, carried on by the media, was one of the U.S. constantly improving and getting

rid of old baggage and remaking itself.

Now one confronts not just the savage and vicious murder of Trayvon Martin, and not just the jury's verdict in that murder, but a corporate media reflecting a huge portion of white public opinion that approved of the verdict, that believed there was not a sufficient case against Zimmerman. But for Black folks, as I wrote, his guilt was as obvious as a mob lynching at high noon in Times Square, and so there is shock in the realization that things have not changed in the fundamental sense of race relations.

Part of the rage comes from the sense of impotence because Black folks have been brought up to believe that if we pull the right levers we can get redress of our grievances in this country; that there is no need any more to take to the streets to confront the contradictions of this society in ways that are not necessarily sanctioned by the

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