

Statues, Symbols and the Culture War during Election Season

Tearing down statues, renaming buildings and streets, contesting the roles of historical figures has played a prominent part of the agitation around the uprisings in 2020. The defense of confederate statues and names of military bases has begun to play a large role in the election campaign as well. This educational is intended to explore what role attacks on these cultural symbols play, and how revolutionaries participate in these battles.

Here is a guide for the meeting held Tuesday, 7/14/2020, from 6-7pm.

We will investigate the topic of the culture wars around statues and symbols, the meaning of these struggles, and the implications for revolutionaries in our work to unite the movement for a new society.

The SISTR committee (Supporting Indigenous Sovereignty and Treaty Rights) collaborated to pull together some texts to ground our discussion. The topic is so huge and multi-faceted, so we are just highlighting some recent news and basic information to ground the discussion. One article and two short videos:

- [Now This: Confederate Statues https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55ehKPUM7dc&fbclid=IwAR11RLNMcGFttgJTxyLmqhgqw0WxPhASJtC_buaUjSL4MMoTF0zhuy4bygM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55ehKPUM7dc&fbclid=IwAR11RLNMcGFttgJTxyLmqhgqw0WxPhASJtC_buaUjSL4MMoTF0zhuy4bygM)
- [Now This: July 3rd Lakota Protest Against Mt. Rushmore Trump Rally https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZ1_hAw8Ttc&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZ1_hAw8Ttc&feature=youtu.be)
- [NY Times: What Does It Mean To Tear Down A Statue? https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/11/style/confederate-statue-columbus-analysis.html?fbclid=IwAR2B44vT9LpVrOPqJ2LzhQB-DRJ76lB7qSLzvNCARlyIcZHfCmWzF-Tro3c](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/11/style/confederate-statue-columbus-analysis.html?fbclid=IwAR2B44vT9LpVrOPqJ2LzhQB-DRJ76lB7qSLzvNCARlyIcZHfCmWzF-Tro3c)

Consider these questions for the discussion:

1. What's behind the movement to remove/change monuments, names, and symbols? What does it represent?
2. What is Trump's strategy in rallying around these monuments and becoming increasingly fascist and racist in the process? To what extent is the ruling class united around this strategy?
3. How does all this relate to our tasks as revolutionaries? How can we harness this energy and motion in our own work and contexts?

Something to think about as we consider these questions is what philosopher Karl Marx wrote:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over

the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. For instance, in an age and in a country where royal power, aristocracy, and bourgeoisie are contending for mastery and where, therefore, mastery is shared, the doctrine of the separation of powers proves to be the dominant idea and is expressed as an "eternal law."

From the LRNA Program:

In spite of worsening economic conditions, nothing can be accomplished until the American people hold a vision of where they want to go and what they want to be. Creating this vision with them is the overriding task of revolutionaries and the foundation of our organization.