



# MOBILISE UNITED ACTION OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, TRADE UNIONS AND “ETHNIC” COMMUNITIES TO DEMAND: **JUSTICE FOR TJ, JAIL FOR THE RACIST MURDERING COPS**

It's one of the most horrific crimes imaginable: a police vehicle ramming the back wheel of a 17-year-old boy's bicycle and sending him flying through the air to be impaled on a spiked metal fence. Ten years ago, this is exactly what happened to an Aboriginal boy called TJ Hickey after racist cops in another police vehicle chased him through the streets of Redfern. Then, violating the standard emergency procedure of sawing off the fence so that the stake could be carefully removed in hospital, police barbarically ripped TJ from the fence and threw him to the ground. Even as TJ lay bleeding, police proceeded to search him rather than immediately call for an ambulance! The next day, TJ died of his gruesome injuries.

TJ's killing has been followed by ten years of cover up by the police, courts and various governments. In the meantime, the rate at which black people die at the hands of state authorities continues unabated. In one case in January 2012, Kwementyaye Briscoe died in Alice Springs after being taken into supposed “protective custody” for merely being drunk. Even NT coroner, Greg Cavanagh, admitted that police flung Briscoe onto a desk, left him bleeding on the ground, dragged him along the floor to his cell and failed to give him any medical treatment even though they knew he was by then in a comatose state. Their heinous actions caused Kwementyaye to die. Since 1980 over 500 Aboriginal people have died in custody.

Without any doubt, Aboriginal people cop the worst police brutality in Australia. However, the racist authorities also target working class youth of African, Asian, Islander and Middle Eastern origin. Last June, 17 year-old Sudanese youth, Einpwi Amom was tasered by police even *when* he was handcuffed and surrounded by six cops. Einpwi's alleged “crime” was that he had sworn at officers. When Einpwi tried to run away from them, he hit his head on the stairs of Blacktown station. He lost consciousness for two minutes only to wake finding cops brutalising - and then tasering - him. Fortunately, a friend managed to capture footage of the attack on her phone. Yet such cop brutality is all too common in working class suburbs. Even low-income white people – such as public housing tenants – can face police harassment. Indeed, the simplest Marxist analysis shows that **the main role of the police, courts, army, Royal Commissions, prisons and other state organs in a capitalist country is to enforce the rule of the rich, big business owners over the working class that they exploit.** Although cops sometimes do catch real criminals, whenever the exploited masses stand up for their rights the police's main function becomes all too clear. Thus, in August 2012, mounted police in Melbourne violently attacked the picket lines of building workers who were struggling against the attempt of greedy tycoon Daniel Grollo's firm, Grocon, to undercut workplace safety and drive out the CFMEU union.

The racism of the police force comes directly from their role as the bully boys for the ruling class in Australia. The all important unity of the working class is constantly threatened by the bosses' *divide and rule* tactics in which whipping up racism plays the lead role. And the ruling class seeks to divert onto Aboriginal people and non-white “ethnic” communities the masses' frustration about the constantly declining state of social services and their day to day basics of existence. But the ruling class' oppression of Aboriginal people has an added dimension – it is aimed at perpetuating and justifying the conquest of the first peoples of this land. Indeed, the “culture” of the police and legal system in this country is inherited from one of their major founding functions – to drive Aboriginal people from their land, to carry out murderous “expeditions” against Aboriginal people who resisted and to at various times attempt outright genocide.

Yet, despite this vicious capitalist state determination to bury the truth about TJ's murder, his family has courageously continued to demand justice. Upon every anniversary of the police crime against TJ, they and their anti-racist supporters have marched in protest. This year's 10th Anniversary March will rally at 10:30am, February 14 at the corner of George and Phillips Streets in Waterloo. Trotskyist Platform urges all our friends to join this march and to do so understanding that no justice will be granted by any benevolent act of the racist, capitalist authorities. It will have to be *won* by united action of all those targeted by the state that murdered TJ – Aboriginal people, militant trade unionists, ethnic minorities and the poor.

## JUSTICE FOR TJ CAN STILL BE WON BY THE UNITED FORCE OF ALL THOSE WHO ARE TARGETED BY THE SAME STATE THAT MURDERED HIM

Those running the campaign for TJ have sincerely been through every legal process in the book in their quest for justice. First, they had to bear listening to the findings of a police inquiry into TJ's death that was, as expected, a total cover up. Then the coronial inquiry was yet another whitewash. Eyewitnesses who saw TJ's bike being rammed were prevented from testifying and the bike itself was held by the police and not presented to the coroner. Then, last April, TJ's mother, Gail Hickey, and the Indigenous Social Justice Association met NSW Attorney General, Greg Smith. Smith made vague promises but ten months later nothing – of course - has happened. The state institutions have continued to cover up TJ's murder whether NSW has been administered by the ALP regime that was in power when TJ was killed or by the current conservative coalition. Federal governments have impeded justice - and will continue to do so - whether it is the Liberal/Nationals or the ALP or even the ALP/Greens who are in power. With the authorities slamming one door after another, some involved in the campaign have become demoralised and fear that justice can never be won. Instead, they think that the best that can be achieved are token gestures such as an apology from the NSW parliament. Yet what the denial of justice for TJ really proves is that justice certainly cannot be won through the current presiding strategy of the campaign. The hope that in some corner of the system there will be someone willing to stand up for justice has been dashed every step of the way. All the whitewashes demonstrate this. ***Rather than appealing to state institutions, justice for victims of police brutality can only be won by mobilising in opposition to this state.*** A united opposition of all those who are ultimately in the gun sights of the racist, bosses' state. A campaign that is so uncompromising that the authorities *out of fear* are forced to concede justice.

Many Aboriginal people do understand that the state authorities are their enemy. This was seen in the heroic February 2004 struggle of hundreds of mainly Aboriginal youth in Redfern. In response to TJ's murder, they held back heavily armed cops in a nine hour pitched battle that resonated with and inspired oppressed people all over the world. This Redfern struggle, along with the November 2004 resistance on Palm Island (that saw up to 15% of the island rise up to burn down the police station and courthouse in response to the whitewash of the police murder of Mulrunji Doomadgee) will one day take its place alongside the heroic deeds of Pemulwuy, Yagan, Windradyne, Jandamarra and many others who led Aboriginal resistance to the colonial invaders. The heroes of Redfern and Palm Island demonstrate the courage needed to really oppose the racist, rich people's state. But to triumph today, Aboriginal resistance must also have behind it the support of "ethnic" communities (who themselves face racism), anti-racist activists and *most crucially* the industrial power of the organised workers movement. **Once big business owners who run the country see their profits being hurt by trade union industrial action against racist police terror then they will be forced to rein in their marauding thugs in blue.**

How the idea of working class action in defence of Aboriginal people can be made a reality was seen in the campaign in defence of Palm Island resistance hero Lex Wotton. The Sydney-based campaign simply demanded that the enemy drop all charges against Lex. It made no appeals to any state institution whatsoever to be a vehicle for justice. Instead, the movement openly appealed to the common class interests that workers have in defending Lex and in opposing state oppression of Aboriginal people. Thus the calls for the rally in the lead up to Lex's trial emphasised that:

The subjugation of Aboriginal people is an extreme form of the repression that the authorities are also unleashing against trade unionists who stand up for workers' rights. The ABCC construction industry police are spying on and intimidating CFMEU construction union members and continue to initiate jail-carrying charges against individual union activists.

Thus the movement was able to win the support of the Sydney Branch of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA). This culminated in a stop work action by all Sydney port workers on 7 November 2008, the day Lex was being sentenced by a Townsville Court. Although it was not powerful enough to stop Lex being jailed, the burgeoning movement and the MUA stop work compelled the authorities to give Lex a notably lighter sentence than the ten years plus sentence that they had been planning.

Today, with the Abbott regime openly threatening repression against unions, especially the CFMEU, there is much potential to show workers the common interest that they have with others targeted by the bosses' state – like Aboriginal people. A strategy like the one that the campaign for Lex's freedom was waged on is what we need for the campaign for TJ. However, success will not simply depend upon what the campaign itself does. To ensure that the MUA stop work in defence of Lex is the norm rather than the exception for the union movement, we must struggle to replace the pro-ALP ideology and leadership that currently dominates our unions with a Marxist program of struggle based on opposition to this racist, capitalist state. As that struggle develops then not only will we be able to more powerfully fight for justice for TJ, Mulrunji, Eddie Murray and Brazilian student Roberto Laudisio, to sadly name but a few of the victims of racist state terror in Australia. We will eventually be able to sweep away the *entire* capitalist state so that not only horrific racist state crimes - like the murder of TJ – but also the incessant exploitation of long suffering workers will be but things of the past. **Justice for TJ!**

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