

Build on the Rebellion

"It's a declaration of war on Black America." This was the conclusion reached by outraged African Americans across the country as word spread that the four white thugs in Blue uniforms who brutalized Rodney King had walked. The jury's decision reminded many of the Supreme Court's verdict in the Dred Scott case from slavery days: "The Black Man has no rights the white man is bound to respect."

The Rodney King verdict gave a green light to police brutality and police racism across the country. But within hours, the people of Los Angeles changed the light to red, rising up in furious rejection of the verdict. Rage and resistance spread across the country with the news. Other cities saw outbursts of urban rebellion as it has not been in two decades--Las Vegas, Seattle, Miami, Atlanta, San Francisco and others. Elsewhere too, militant demonstrations and other forms of protest involved hundreds of thousands. High school and college students were particularly active with walkouts, strikes and demonstrations spreading as the week went on.

African Americans, whose community and very lives the verdict threatened, have made up the core of response. Joining in were women and men of other nationalities, whites included, who were sickened by injustice and racism and who seized the opportunity to strike back at the way things in this country are going.

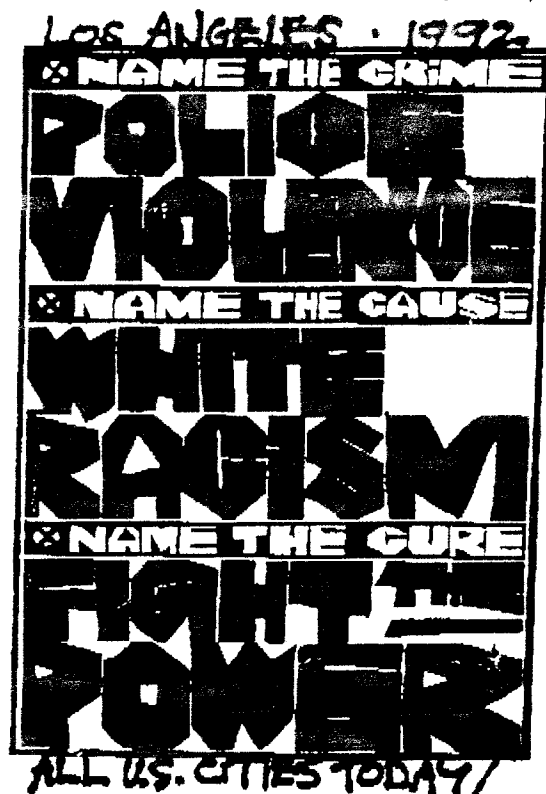
Let's be clear: It's not just Rodney King; it's a whole criminal justice system which doesn't work. It's a whole political system which doesn't work.

"No Justice, No Peace!" has been the battle cry of this upsurge. When we chant it now, the police and the high and mighty know it is no empty slogan. The rebellion worked. Poverty and racism, the oppression faced by people of color in this country had been totally invisible topics in this year's presidential campaign. Now they are the flavor of the day on talk shows and editorial pages.

Martin Luther King stated that rebellions are the words of the voiceless. Those that have not been heard, those that have no organized way to voice their rage will revert to any method at their disposal. People whose lives have been looted by economic injustice, by homelessness, by failing educational systems, by policy brutality, by racist discrimination and capitalist inequity, will rebel.

This rebellion has left the rulers of the United States scrambling for stop gap measures to pretend they are concerned. This gives the Black community and all progressives space to raise again the demands we have fought for so long: for jobs for the youth (and adults too), for education, for housing and health.

In the aftermath of the rebellions, African American communities are pulling together, and voices for unity, self-determination and political power will be heard. Only by building up organization and alliances will we be able to wrest basic change out of the power structure. And organization can make all the difference the next time a storm of people's anger sweeps through this country, helping our communities to target the real enemy and limit the damage suffered by the people.



Freedom Road Socialist Organization