

The Labor Movement: 21st Century Problems Require a New Model of International Solidarity

"The new human rights and youth-based solidarity movements worldwide can regenerate labor activism if we seize the moment to make unionism relevant again."

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, October 20, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Around the globe, workers are

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Sahra Ryklief

calling for an end to decades-long government policies that have deepened economic inequality and weakened the social contract between people and their governments. Here in the U.S., Liz Shuler, AFL-CIO President, speaking at the National Press Club says, “workers all across the country standing up, speaking out and taking risks. They see unions as the answer.” South Africa-based labor educator, [Sahra Ryklief](#), takes on the global dimensions of the call, noting that “the most pressing labor market and also social issues of our time are interconnected and global.” As a result, she calls on unions to advocate for

workers' rights and act in solidarity with broader struggles for equality and social justice. Ryklief is the General Secretary of the International Federation of Workers Education Associations (IFWEA).

In concert with the [US–Africa Bridge Building Project](#), General Secretary (GS) Ryklief has written a powerful essay affirming the importance of a “21st Century model of international solidarity” as “fundamental to...the labor movement.” She also acknowledges that the keystone to international solidarity is “crafting a concerted response to the power relationship which invariably underlies all acts of solidarity.”

The essay is entitled “Lessons Learned In Transnational Solidarity: Towards a Partnership of Equals.”

Confronting the need for truth-telling as one of the lessons she has learned, Ryklief says, “In recent years, we have witnessed the rise of new movements, such as #Rhodesmustfall, #BlackLivesMatter, #ClimateJustice,” and #MeToo,” that “continue to challenge the prevailing structures and narratives of the day in our countries.” Most importantly, they have breathed new

life into solidarity movements. "They have energized the youth and influenced debates on multiple issues...Our most important connection could be by bringing that which is relevant and refreshing from these movements into our [union] dialogue." "The new human rights and youth-based solidarity movements worldwide can regenerate labor activism if we seize the moment to make unionism relevant again."

Ryklief does not avoid sensitive points when she speaks about solidarity partners and declares that "one of the issues which has emerged, is a strong critique of the savior complex." She concludes that many social justice and human rights workers from developed countries have this affliction but has also witnessed South Africans portray a similar set of attitudes to Africans from other countries on the continent.

General Secretary Ryklief believes that recognizing the need for working in solidarity with the broader struggle for equality and linking with those struggling against the same barriers can uplift unions. "Solidarity is based on the premise that our world is changeable and that a better world is possible."

The union leader concludes in her essay on lessons learned, "There is something very powerful in believing that humanity is one." She says it is essential to embrace people's struggle for economic and democratic freedom, equality, and justice. "Until their battles are won, we cannot rest," says Ryklief.

A companion web page to the essay contains the foreword to a 2014 report on "[African Trade Unions and Africa's Future](#): Strategic Choices in a Changing World." The report was based on extensive interviews with trade unionists in nine African countries in 2013 and research by Solidarity Center Africa Region staff and consultants.

Sahra Ryklief has worked on information provision and education for trade unions since 1990, beginning with the Labour Research Service, before taking on her current position as the General Secretary of the International Federation of Workers Education Associations (IFWEA) (www.ifwea.org) in 2007. She holds an MA from Liverpool University, UK.

The US-Africa Bridge Building Project is an initiative to catalyze engagement between local struggles and global problems and promote mutual solidarity between Africans and Americans working to end corruption and tax injustice. The project works to build effective transnational alliances between those working to achieve a shared vision. (www.us-africabridgebuilding.org)

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