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Speak Out Now

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The Future Is In Our Hands!

Today millions of people across this country have joined together to say “No more violence in our schools.” and “No more violence in our communities.” We are all here because students at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida refused to remain silent after the murder of 17 people at their school.

If the students in Parkland hadn’t stood up, this shooting would have remained a local tragedy, like so many before, with the media and politicians conveying their regrets and condolences. But the students decided it wouldn’t end like that. Their lives were changed by this horrific event and they were going to do something about it.

They turned to the Florida legislators and governor, who turned their backs on them. They demanded that the Federal government respond. Some politicians promised to limit access to guns. Trump and others, called for the “hardening” of the schools by arming teachers and staff, bringing in more police and turning schools into virtual prisons.

The students at Parkland refused to accept this. They went to the media, and more importantly, they put out a call to students across the country to stand with them and demand an end to the violence. They called for a walkout on March 14, and a million students at 3000 schools walked out, speaking out about the murders in Parkland and others killed in their neighborhoods. They reached out to students everywhere and called for today’s “March For Our Lives” in Washington D.C. and across the country.

We, and millions of others, have responded, saying that we can’t tolerate living in a society where violence has become normalized. The time for change is now. No matter what the politicians say, they will not change this. The society they defend creates and perpetuates this violence. We cannot wait on them.

The changes people have demanded in the past didn’t come about by people waiting patiently. Women didn’t wait for someone to give them the right to vote. Segregation in the South was ended because people

mobilized and fought against a system of open racism. Workers had to fight for the 8-hour day, better conditions on the job and other rights. The right of gays and lesbians to be respected as full members of society came through struggle, not by waiting on the politicians and others in power. We need to rely on ourselves.

We cannot wait for the changes we need. The students of Parkland, Florida have raised national awareness of the problem of violence in our schools, much like the people of another small town, Ferguson, Missouri, raised national awareness of the problem of police violence in our streets.

Earlier this month, the teachers and staff in West Virginia said that they would no longer accept to live in poverty. The state legislature and the governor said there wasn’t enough money to give them wage increases and reduce the cost of their health care benefits. Despite the warnings of their union officials, they went on strike. Nine days later, they won a five percent wage increase for themselves and all state workers.

Teachers and staff in other states are looking at their example, and are beginning to organize themselves, just as we and hundreds of thousands have responded to the call by the students in Parkland to stand up.

Today, we confront a situation where poverty, desperation and war dominate the lives of billions of people around the world. The politicians and others who occupy positions of power and responsibility have aligned themselves with a system based on exploitation and violence.

We can decide that we refuse to live in a world dominated by exploitation and oppression. That will mean bringing about deep changes in this society, and putting an end to the inequalities and violence that surround us. Our collective activity has created an opening that can involve many others. We know we want and deserve a better world. We can stand together and begin to reclaim our lives. That world is possible. And with others we have the power and ability to help bring it into being.

Our future is in our hands. Our time is NOW!