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# Speak Out Now

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## Workers Of The World Unite!

Karl Marx was born 200 years ago on May 5th, and his birthday was celebrated all over the world. Why is he still remembered? Why do politicians and journalists who defend the capitalist system continue to attack him? They are still trying to bury Marx, but his socialist ideas are as relevant today as ever.

Marx was born during a revolutionary time in Europe. Society was changing rapidly, as was people's understanding of the world. As Charles Darwin developed the theory of biological evolution. Marx, and his co-thinker Engels observed evolution in society – an evolution driven by the struggle of the oppressed against their oppressors. From ancient societies to capitalism, they traced the class struggle. They concluded that under capitalism, only the working class could lead society to a better future.

In 1847, Marx and Engels wrote their most famous pamphlet, the Communist Manifesto. This began their decades of political activity in the international workers movement. Their contributions had an impact around the world.

Marx and Engels argued that capitalism is based on private ownership of the means of production and the exploitation of the working class. A tiny elite – the capitalist class – owns the factories, mines, railways, and the banks. Those who do not own these things – the proletariat or working class – must sell their ability to work in return for a paycheck. The working class only gets a portion of the value it produces as wages. It is through this theft of the wealth that the workers create, that capitalists control the riches of society. The drive for greater profits creates a competition between the capitalists.

Marx and Engels argued that the working class could overthrow capitalism and reorganize society democratically to meet the needs of the majority. This society, a socialist society, would mean that there would be no more CEOs, bankers, or bureaucrats calling the shots. With working time greatly reduced, people would be free to explore and develop all their capacities – as athletes, as scientists, as artists. People would have time for their friends, their children, or as one socialist put it – the right to just be lazy sometimes. War and global

inequality, produced by the capitalist system, would disappear. For the first time since the dawn of civilization, the majority of human beings would work to live, not just live to work.

Marx and Engels argued that workers needed to be involved in all struggles against oppression. They supported national independence for the Irish from Britain and supported the North in the American Civil War because it would emancipate African American slaves. Marx and Engels demanded equality for women and their liberation from male domination – the first form of oppression. Socialists and communists have been at the forefront of every struggle of the oppressed ever since Marx and Engels wrote the Manifesto.

Because of the hope offered by a socialist future, a number of dictatorial regimes have claimed to be socialist while carrying out their programs of nationalist development. Without the working class in control, the first steps to build a socialist society cannot even be taken.

Marx's ideas continue to describe the realities we confront today. The majority of the world's population, the working class, has no property except its personal possessions and is forced to work for a boss to collect a wage to live. Wealth is concentrated in fewer hands than ever before. The world's eight richest capitalists own more than the poorest three and half billion people. In their competition to control the world's wealth, the capitalists tear the world apart through savage wars. And today capitalism threatens to cause global ecological collapse – a consequence of capitalism Marx and Engels never imagined.

This small class of people maintains its control over the majority dividing the working class by race, gender, and nationality, pitting us against each other in the struggle to survive. And to maintain their rule, they use their police, courts and prisons.

Marx and Engels were right "The proletarians of the world have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of all countries: Unite!"