

The fight against national oppression and the struggle for socialism



Interview with FRSO leader Masao Suzuki

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Interview with FRSO leader Masao Suzuki: The fight against national oppression and the struggle for socialism

Fight Back! News service interviews the chair of the Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO) Joint Nationalities Commission Masao Suzuki.

Fight Back!: FRSO says that the U.S. is a jailhouse for oppressed nationalities. What is meant by this?

Masao Suzuki: The FRSO describes the United States as a “jailhouse for oppressed nationalities” for three reasons. First, the United States was founded on the genocide and land theft of Native Americans, and the chattel slavery of Africans. From its very beginning, U.S. capitalism was based on both national oppression and the exploitation of U.S. workers. Thus, in FRSO we see the core of the united front against imperialism as the strategic alliance between the working class and oppressed nationalities.

Second, inside the United States, three oppressed nations have developed: the African American Nation in the South, the Chicano Nation in the Southwest, and the Hawaiian Nation in Hawaii. FRSO supports the right to self-determination, up to and including the right to form their own countries, for these oppressed nations

Third, FRSO supports the right to national development, including the return of land, to the indigenous peoples of the United States. Native peoples are the worst off all the oppressed nationalities: the most poverty, the shortest lifespans, the least educational opportunities.

consistent democracy here in the United States.

The Freedom Road Socialist Organization believes that the fight for socialism requires a broad united front of many classes led by the party of the working class, a communist party. At the core of this united front is the strategic alliance between the workers’ movement and the movements of oppressed nationalities in the United States. Thus, most of our comrades are engaged in these two struggles.

But we are also involved in other struggles - in the anti-war and international solidarity movement, the student movement, for reproductive rights and the women’s movement, the LGBTQ movement, and the environmental movement. Through these movements we fight for democracy and to defend the lives of working people from many walks of life. These movements are also important to build the broadest possible united front against monopoly capitalism and for socialism.

We fight for socialism because we recognize that U.S. society is a democracy for the 1%, for the monopoly capitalists that own the wealth of this country. Both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party are parties of the ruling class, of the monopoly capitalists. National elections in this country give people a choice of different capitalist-backed politicians - not a real choice.

But for the vast majority of people, and for workers and oppressed nationalities, this facade of bourgeois democracy hides a steel fist of force and violence against any and all who would threaten the rule of the capitalist class.

movement has a particular ability to move Americans of all nationalities and all walks of life. Like the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s, the George Floyd rebellion with African Americans at its core, inspired other oppressed nationalities to action. Less than a year later, after the killings at an Atlanta spa where most the victims were Asian women, the largest wave of Asian American protests ever happened across the country. Many of the organizers had never organized a protest, but they had marched before - in protest of the murder of George Floyd.

In terms of police crimes, for the first time, the most egregious police killers are being arrested, tried and convicted. But despite a handful of killer cops going to jail there has been no fundamental change in racist violence by police. In 2021, the year after the George Floyd uprising, police killed more than 1000 people, one of the highest numbers in recent years. Of those killed who were unarmed most were African Americans and Chicanos and Latino.

One advance for the struggle is that the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, which was refounded in 2019, was able to lead many of the protest and advance the demand for community control of the police. This demand, first raised by the Black Panther Party in 1970, has become a leading demand to actually change policing by putting it under the control of the community through elected civilian accountability councils.

Fight Back!: What is the relationship between the struggle for consistent democracy and the fight for socialism?

Suzuki: The fights - against police crimes and for community control of police, the fight against deportations and militarization of the border and for legalization of the undocumented, the struggle for full equality for African Americans, Chicanos and Latinos, and other oppressed nationalities, the fight for reproductive rights and for full equality for women, and fight for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer rights - are all a part of the struggle for

Fourth, the United States still has colonies: Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in the Caribbean, Belau (Palau), Guam, the Marshall Islands, and the Northern Mariana in the Pacific. These colonies have long been exploited by the U.S. military and U.S. corporations. FRSO supports independence of all U.S. colonies.

Fifth, there are large numbers of oppressed nationalities such as Arab Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos who face racist violence, language discrimination, residential segregation, and religious persecution. While not oppressed nations with a national territory with the borders of the U.S., FRSO supports full equality for oppressed nationalities.

In the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, tsarist Russia is referred to as a “prison of nations.” Much like the United States today, the Russian empire oppressed whole nations, such as Poland, as well as oppressed nationalities without their own national territory such as Russian Jews.

Fight Back!: A lot of people say the problem in the U.S. is one of racism. What do you think?

Suzuki: Racism, that is the conscious or unconscious bias against oppressed nationalities, is certainly a problem in the United States. For example, African Americans routinely stopped, harassed, arrested, and even beaten and killed by killer cops - what is called “driving while Black.” But in my view, it is not the root problem faced by oppressed nationalities. National oppression - that is the economic, political and social inequality between white Americans on one hand and oppressed nationalities on the other - is in fact the basis for racism, not the other way around.

There are at least two problems with seeing racism as the problem. The first is that if the problem is racism, then the solution is changing people’s thoughts. This can be done by diversity trainings, “unconscious bias” testing, bringing people together for food and festivals, etc. Electing Barack Obama as president was a victory over

racists and white supremacists. But his election did not help solve police violence against African Americans or aid the legalization of undocumented immigrants, 85% of who were Mexicano and Central American at the time.

A second problem, especially for progressives and revolutionaries, is that viewing national oppression as a matter of race separates the national and democratic struggle of oppressed nationalities here in the United States from the world struggle for national liberation of oppressed nations and nationalities around the world. The struggle for national liberation of the people Ireland against British imperialism was not a matter of “race.” Neither were the struggles of Koreans, Chinese, Filipinos, Vietnamese and others against the vicious and genocidal Japanese imperialism, which killed millions of East and Southeast Asians during World War II.

Capitalism in the United States was founded on the genocide of indigenous people and the chattel slavery of Africans. Racism arose as a justification for the seizure of land from Native Americans and the profits from slave labor. So, I see the elimination of capitalism, that is a socialist society, as a necessary starting point for the elimination of national oppression and to bring about full equality.

Fight Back!: Given that the U.S. has established an empire that extends across the globe, how are developments in the international situation impacting inequality and discrimination here at home?

Suzuki: There is a long history of the international situation having an impact on national oppression here in the United States. Twenty years ago, the Bush administration declared the so-called “War on Terror” to justify the invasion and occupation of first Afghanistan, and then Iraq. A number of measures, including the special registration of foreign-born Muslims in the United States, infiltration of Islamic centers and charity organizations targeted American Muslims, in particular Palestinian Americans.

Recently, the growing tensions between the United States and

China, and in particular, President Trump blaming China for the pandemic, ignited a wave of harassment, assault and murder of Asian Americans, culminating in the mass killing at a spa in Atlanta, where six Asian American women and two others were shot and killed. Trump said that foreign students from China are all potential spies, and the FBI carried out a campaign against Chinese American professors in the United States.

But the struggle for decolonization and national liberation in the Third World after World War II also put pressure on U.S. to distance itself from its colonial empire and racist practices here in the United States. While the massive struggle of African Americans in the Civil Rights movement was the main force in ending Jim Crow segregation, the U.S. imperialists knew that reforms ending explicitly racist policies would help the image of the United States.

The liberation struggles in Africa, Asia and Latin America provided inspiration to African American leaders from Luther King Jr. to Malcolm X and helped the rise of the Civil Rights movement and the Black Power struggle of the 1950s and 1960s. Leaders of liberation movements in the Third World were very conscious of this, with Fidel Castro staying in NYC’s Harlem on his first visit to the United Nations.

Fight Back!: How has the George Floyd rebellion changed the political landscape of the U.S?

Suzuki: Following the murder of George Floyd in May of 2020, an uprising took place in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and millions of people poured into the streets across the country. This was the single largest protest in U.S. history, with more than 25 million people taking part. These protests were also the most multi-national as compared to other large protests where the vast majority were white Americans or African American or Chicano/Latino.

The George Floyd rebellion demonstrated again, much as the Civil Rights movement did in the early 1960s, that the African American