

A CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF HOWARD KEYLOR



Longtime “Militant Longshoreman” and political activist Howard Keylor passed away in October 2024, two months before his 99th birthday. His friends, family and comrades invite you to attend a memorial meeting and educational in his honor on:

January 25, 2025, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

**Local 10, International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU)
Henry Schmidt Room
400 North Point Street, San Francisco (near Fisherman’s Wharf)**

Light Refreshments Will Be Provided

A veteran of the Battle of Okinawa - an experience that led him to become an anti-militarist, anti-racist and anti-imperialist revolutionary socialist - Howard opposed the atomic bombing of Japan. He quit college to support Filipino agricultural workers in the 1948 asparagus strike and became a labor organizer and activist during the McCarthy period, joining the longshore union in Stockton in 1953.

Like the core founders of the ILWU, Howard fought to replace capitalism with socialism. During his decades

on the waterfront, including twelve years on the Local 10 Executive Board, he initiated, organized and participated in countless picket lines and protests, most notably the historic 11-day strike in 1984 against unloading a South African container ship, the *Nedlloyd Kimberley*, and the 1986 community picket of South African cargo in support of the anti-Apartheid movement. (*See the back of this flyer for other actions Howard participated in or organized.*)

**Please Join Local 10 and Howard’s Friends, Family and Comrades in a
Celebration of Howard’s Life and Work.**

Howard Keylor

Born in rural Ohio, Howard Keylor attended a one-room country schoolhouse. He became a member of the National Honor Society when he graduated from Marietta High School.

After enlisting in the U.S. Army, Howard fought in the Pacific Theater in World War Two, during which he participated in the Battle of Okinawa as a Corporal. The 96th U.S. Army Division, which Howard trained with, had casualty rates above 50%. The incompetence and racism of the military command, the destruction of the capital city of Naha and the deliberate killings of tens of thousands of Okinawan civilians — a third of the population — made Howard a committed revolutionary communist, anti-imperialist, anti-militarist and anti-racist for the rest of his life.

Upon completing his military service, Howard enrolled in the College of the Pacific, but dropped out to support Filipino agricultural workers in the 1948 asparagus strike. During that strike, Howard began his lifelong association with labor leaders Ernesto Mangoang, Chris Mensalves and Larry Itliong. He became a longshore worker in Stockton in 1953. As members of the Communist Party, Howard and his wife, Evangeline, were attacked in the HUAC (McCarthy) hearings in San Francisco. Later, Howard transferred to ILWU Local 10. In 1971 he, along with Brothers Herb Mills, Leo Robinson and a majority of ILWU longshore workers, opposed the proposed 1971 contract which codified the 9.43 steadyman system. This led to the longshore strike of 1971-1972, which shut down 56 West Coast ports and lasted 130 days. It was the longest strike in the ILWU's history.

In Local 10 Brother Keylor was a founding member of the Militant Caucus, a class struggle rank-and-file opposition grouping supported by the Spartacist League (SL), which based its work on Trotsky's "Transitional Program" and published a regular newsletter, the "Longshore Militant". The Militant Caucus was involved in organizing protests and boycotts of military cargo bound for the bloody Chilean junta in 1974 and 1978, and a picket of a ship carrying South African cargo in 1977. In 1975, the Caucus spearheaded mass picketing during ILWU Local 6's strike at KNC Glass in Union City, during which picketers physically defeated police and scabs and won a contract for a workforce composed primarily of undocumented Mexican immigrants. Later, when the SL and the Caucus politically degenerated, Howard left the Spartacist League and the Caucus and published his own newsletter, the "Militant Longshoreman", which was aligned with the Bolshevik Tendency.

Brother Keylor advocated deliberate defiance of the "slave-labor" Taft-Hartley law through illegal secondary

boycotts and mass pickets. Running openly on the Transitional Program, calling for 30 hours' work for 40 hours' pay, breaking with the Democratic and Republican Parties, forming a worker's party to fight for a worker's government, expropriating the capitalists without compensation and creating a planned economy, Howard won election to the Executive Board of Local 10 for twelve years.

In 1984, Brother Keylor made the motion, amended by Brother Leo Robinson, which led to the eleven-day longshore boycott of South African cargo on the *Nedlloyd Kimberley*. Howard presented the motion to Local 10's Executive Board, where it passed unanimously. In 1986, Howard participated in the Campaign Against Apartheid's community picket line against the *Nedlloyd Kembla*. When Nelson Mandela spoke at the Oakland Coliseum in 1990 after his release from prison, he credited Local 10 with re-igniting the anti-Apartheid movement in the Bay Area.

Other actions that Brother Keylor initiated, organized or participated in included the successful mass picket by 1,000 union members which ran scabs off the docks at Levin Terminals in Richmond, in 1983; organizing a defense guard for the Oakland bookstore of the Socialist Workers' Party in 1985, which fought off several hundred ex-ARVN Vietnamese soldiers; the 1995-98 struggle of the Liverpool dockworkers; the 1999 coastwide shutdown and march of 25,000 in San Francisco to demand freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal; the 2000 Charleston longshore union campaign; the 2008 May Day anti-imperialist war shutdown of all West Coast ports; the shutdown of Northern California ports in protest of the murder of Oscar Grant; the blockades of Israeli ships to protest the war on Gaza in 2010 and 2014; the 2011 ILWU struggle against the grain monopolies in Longview; Occupy Oakland's march of 40,000 to the Port of Oakland, and countless other militant job actions and protests. Throughout his life, Brother Keylor always extended solidarity where it was needed. He was a revolutionary communist who fought racist police murders and fascist terror, defended abortion clinics, and fought for survivors of psychiatric abuse. Having grown up in Appalachia, he has always been an environmentalist, and helped shut down a Monsanto facility in Davis in 2012, as well as fighting pesticide use and deforestation in the East Bay.

Perhaps most importantly, Howard stood by and upheld the Ten Guiding Principles of the ILWU. They teach that workers should never cross or work behind a picket line, even if directed to do so by their union leadership. **"Every picket line must be respected as though it were our own."**