



NC State AFL-CIO

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Monday, April 4, 2011

SILENT PROTEST HONORS DR. KING'S SACRIFICE FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS

Raleigh, NC – Forty-three years ago today, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had returned to Memphis, TN to stand once again in solidarity with 1,300 city sanitation workers who were engaged in a months-long struggle to win recognition of their union and the right to collectively bargain for a better life when he was assassinated.

On April 4, 2011 and the anniversary of Dr. King's death, working people in Raleigh will join hundreds of thousands of others across this country to commemorate the sacrifice he made to bring about economic justice, human rights, and human dignity for working men and women. We will remember the courage and determination of those 1,300 workers who endured assault and arrest as they walked a picket line to demand equal treatment under the law – equal treatment denied to public employees in North Carolina since 1959. At 12 Noon and for 15 minutes, we will mark the occasion by standing in total silence across from the state legislative building while holding signs similar to those carried by sanitation workers in 1968 to remind lawmakers that like them, we are men and women; we are taxpayers and citizens; we are one, and we have rights.

From Madison, Wis. to Raleigh, NC, workers in every economic sector are being told to sacrifice our wages, Social Security, and rights by corporate executives and right-wing politicians who are making no sacrifices themselves. Today, our state and nation is failing to live up to its creed that all men and women are created equal when only some are made to bear the burden of budget cuts and increased obstacles to voting.

Injustices like these are only tolerated when some people are viewed as less equal than others. During the Memphis Sanitation Strike of 1968, the workers carried signs which read, "I AM A MAN". This powerful yet simple message said it all—we are not less than you. Like you, we have rights.

We are one people, and we have rights. As Dr. King told us, the arc of history bends toward justice, and we will be there to see it through.

The 15-Minute Moment of Silence will begin Monday, April 4 at 12 Noon on the Bicentennial Mall and along West Jones Street across from the state legislative building.

North Carolina NAACP President, Rev. Dr. William Barber and NC State AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer, MaryBe McMillan will be available at 11:45am on the Bicentennial Mall to take any questions about the silent protest before it begins.

To request an interview with a worker or an officer of the NC State AFL-CIO, call 336-255-2711.

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