

# **After Trump's election: Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union's Message to American Unions Following the Presidential Elections**

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On November 8, the whole of the KPTU watched the news anxiously as the electoral vote swung in Donald Trump's favor. Anxiety has now turned into widespread concern among KPTU members. We are very aware that a Trump presidency will have a deep impact not only on American workers and the communities they live in, but on workers and common people around the world.

We imagine that American labor movement is now engaged in an important process of evaluating why the elections turned out this way. In South Korea, we are also trying to understand why this could have happened and to learn lessons from it, which can help us in formulating our future political strategies and plan for the fight ahead.

We recognize that the United States has a long history of racism, sexism and homophobia and that this played a part in Trump's election. We also know, however, that the majority of American workers and community members (who did not vote for Trump) oppose the extreme hatred Trump represents. We have gained strength from the protests that continue to go on across America in a public rejection of Trump's leadership.

Further, we understand many working-class Americans are hurting deeply from the recent economic crisis and austerity measures on top of decades of neoliberal policies and deindustrialization. The fact that Trump spoke to their fears and hopes, while the Democratic Party did not, was one of the main reasons he was elected. Much of the same is true for the case of the Vote Leave campaign in the U.K., which resulted in many British workers choosing Brexit.

Like you, we are afraid about what will come next.

For all his talk about creating jobs we are concerned that Trump's presidency will be bad for the American working class. Tax cuts for businesses, the expansion of right to work, and conservative-dominated Supreme Court and NLRB will pose grave challenges to American unions in the near future. As we fight regressive labor reforms and trade union repression in our own country, we promise to stand with you in your struggle against pro-business policies and an attack on trade union rights in the U.S.

We are afraid that even before Trump's policies are implemented his elections is leading to a rise in xenophobia, racism and violence. We have already read reports of an increase of anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant, anti-people of color, anti-LGBTQ and anti-women violence on and offline since the elections.

As many in the U.S. labor movement have already stated, it is essential that American unions stand by and strengthen solidarity with women, people of color, immigrants and other vulnerable groups

at this time. KPTU has for a long time drawn inspiration from commitment to immigration reform, opposing anti-black racism, LGBTQ and women's rights by our counter parts in the US labor movement. We will continue to look to you for leadership in this area, which is needed more and ever at this time.

We fear that along with Brexit, Trumps election will provoke a retreat to nationalism and isolationism in the United States in other countries. History shows that what governments move in this direction in the service of national capital, national working classes often fall in step rather than reaching out to each other to build solidarity in our collective interests.

For this reason, we believe it is now essential that we strengthen the international exchange of opinions and solidarity between workers and unions.

Some unions in the U.S. have expressed willingness to work with Trump, particularly on issues such as the renegotiation of free trade agreements. We recognize and support the desire to use this moment as an opportunity to create jobs for American workers.

Driven by the interests of capital, neoliberal globalization has deprived workers in all countries of jobs and forced them into a race to the bottom. Like American unions, the Korean labor movement has fought fiercely against this trend.

At the same time we are concerned that Trump's administration will pursue a trade and foreign policy direction in the interest of businesses and the elite only, to the detriment of workers everywhere.

In East Asia, some of the policies that Trump has suggested he will pursue, including the renegotiation of the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement and a renegotiation of the terms of the U.S.-Korea military alliance, will have a direct impact on Korea workers' lives. As the Trump administration's policies in these areas becomes more clear, we hope to communicate closely with our counterparts in the American labor movement to develop common positions and strategies towards achieving our collective goals of fair trade, decent work and demilitarization.

Just as you face a political crisis in the United States we are also facing one here in Korea. A massive corruption scandal involving President Park Geun-hye has led to the eruption of a people's movement calling for her resignation, which is growing in strength as it combines with the struggle of Korean worker' against the Park administration's anti-worker policies. We clearly understand this struggle of Korean workers as part of a global working class struggle already underway in the United States and many countries in Europe against regressive labor reforms.

Right now, Korean unions are seeking to organize public rage at the Park Geun-hye government's corruption into a movement to change a social system based on collusion between government and corporations into one that is based on equality and democratic social and political rights.

Let us work together to make this period of crisis into an opportunity for workers around the world. Let's make a bold commit to cooperate to working together across racial, and national differences to realize our shared values of fairness, equality, trade union rights, real democracy in each of our countries and on a global scale.

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\* [http://kptu.net/Mboard.asp?Action=view&strBoardID=KPTU\\_PDSENG&intSeq=19971](http://kptu.net/Mboard.asp?Action=view&strBoardID=KPTU_PDSENG&intSeq=19971)