

5,000 march on White House on African Liberation Day

By **NORMAN OLIVER**

WASHINGTON, D. C. — The national African Liberation Day demonstration, which took place here May 25, drew between 4,000 to 5,000 Black people from around the country.

The more than five-mile march from Washington's Malcolm X Park to the White House and back was led by a contingent of Ethiopian and Eritrean students who sang songs and carried picket signs with slogans such as "Africa for Africans."

A large banner demanding "Independence for Portuguese colonies" and "U. S. out of Africa" was carried by members of the Young Socialist Alliance.

Following the march a rally was held. Speaking at the rally were Imamu Baraka, chairman of the Congress of African People; William Lucy, head of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) and secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; and Dawolu Gene Locke, chairman of the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), which organized the demonstration.

Speaking about the Portuguese attempts to negotiate less than full independence for its African colonies, Baraka said, "Neocolonialism is what they're going to try to run on the Portuguese colonies. But they won't go for that because they've been fighting for too long for independence to stop now."

William Lucy spoke briefly, pledging the support of the CBTU in the fight for human rights for Black people all over the world.

The May 25 action was the culmination of a month of activities. The ALSC had designated May as "African Liberation Month."

One of the focal points for the month's activities was local actions held on the weekend of Malcolm X's birthday, May 19. Demonstrations



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were held in Houston, Atlanta, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Diego, Minneapolis, and other cities. A number of these actions brought out 200 to 300 people.

Last year the African Liberation Day actions were held in more than 30 cities and drew some 30,000 Black people. The first large mobilization of Black people around support to African liberation movements in Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Angola, and in the apartheid regimes in southern Africa was on May 27, 1972. On that date 25,000 marched in Washington, D. C., and another 3,000 in San Francisco.

This year's demonstration differed markedly from previous ones. The ALSC, which organized the 1973 and 1974 actions, has in the last year been moving away from the concept of organizing protests around the central theme of demanding an end to Portuguese colonialism, the white-settler states in southern Africa, and U. S. complicity with them. Issues raised at this year's march, besides support

for African liberation movements, included demanding an end to the energy crisis, an end to police repression in the Black community, and the impeachment of Nixon.

The major slogans of the demonstration were "Dump the Chump [Nixon]," "Down with Imperialism," and "Black people must be free, Black workers take the lead." Sporadic chants against Portuguese colonialism's and U. S. imperialism's role in Africa were raised by sections of the march.

This shift on the part of the ALSC has evoked widespread discussion in the committee about its perspectives. Important questions about the strategy and tactics not only for the ALSC, but the Black liberation movement as a whole are being raised.

Some of these questions were discussed at an ALSC-sponsored conference on "Racism and Imperialism" held in Washington May 23 and 24. Three hundred activists attended the meeting.

Future issues of *The Militant* will discuss the key issues being debated.