

Tributes to Helen Halyard

“Helen Halyard's patience and kindness have nurtured an entire generation of socialists”

22 December 2023

The following tribute to Helen Halyard from Reza Omar, a long-time political supporter of the International Committee of the Fourth International from South Africa, was one of several read out to an international memorial meeting for Helen held on December 3. Comrade Helen, a leading member of the Socialist Equality Party (US) and the ICFI for more than half a century, died suddenly at the age of 73 on November 28.

In 2011, my wife and I were fortunate to meet Helen at a seminar on “The Fight for Socialism Today” held in the US. Her principled stance and dedication to international socialism and the International Committee of the Fourth International immediately left an indelible impression. We were honoured to have her spend time with us.

In 2019, she embarked on a journey to Cape Town, South Africa, where we had the privilege of hosting her. Together, we traversed the city, experiencing the stark contrasts between affluence and poverty. Throughout our interactions, Helen’s insights helped illuminate complex political questions, offering invaluable guidance.

Helen was an exceptional teacher. Her ability to connect with others and impart knowledge was truly remarkable. Her patience and kindness have nurtured an entire generation of socialists.

Helen’s sudden departure leaves a profound void in the broader working class movement, and in my life, in particular. She will be deeply missed.

Helen’s legacy lives on in the ICFI and in our fight for socialist internationalism.

Fraternally,

Reza

“Helen had a huge impact on people and women like me. I learned a lot from her”

The following tribute to Helen Halyard from Mary Coleman, a retired Detroit school bus driver, was one of several read out to an international memorial meeting for Helen held on December 3.

In 1997, Coleman, a 17-year veteran school bus driver, was victimized and fired. Eleven months later, she was reinstated to her job and granted back pay as a result of her determined struggle and the fight taken up by the Socialist Equality Party against her politically motivated dismissal. Helen played a critical role in the campaign.

I was four months older than Helen. She stopped by for my 70th birthday party. I was so glad to see her because it brought back memories that we would laugh about each time we saw each other.

We went on a book tour to New York [in 1996 for the Nadedza Joffe book *Back in Time*] and she took me to meet her family. I told her I wanted to go see the Apollo Theater. She got me in the building and on stage because we told the cleaning crew that I was performing later that night!

It was so much fun! Helen had a huge impact on people and women like me. She would explain to me about racism, and I learned a lot from her. She will be missed throughout the entire universe.

R. I. P. HELEN HALYARD

“Dearest Helen, thank you for sparking the passion

for solidarity and revolution in humanity”

The following tribute to Helen Halyard from Simone White, the daughter of a member of the SEP (US) and a student at Wayne State University in Detroit, was one of several tributes read out to an international memorial meeting for Helen held on December 3.

Dearest Helen,

Thank you for being a force of nature in my life.

Thank you for being a breath of fresh air and perspective I deserved and so desperately needed when my world felt suffocating.

Thank you for watering my creativity and passion for history and music when I felt I had nothing to offer the world.

Thank you for being the ground that I could rely on when I felt like I couldn't stand tall.

Thank you for sparking the fiery passion for solidarity and revolution in humanity, so that I could feel confident in my future without you.

Love,

Simone



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