INDEPENDENCE DAY:
BREAK WITH THE PARTIES OF CORPORATE AMERICA

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We can prevent the coming world war

EDITORIAL

World War III is beginning. It is starting in the Middle East. The war being waged against Syria by the US and its allies is in fact a proxy war between the US on the one hand and Russia and China on the other. If we don’t act, the world war that is developing could well destroy humanity and the earth. The American people have the key role to play in stopping this war.

War is politics by other means. War is inevitable under capitalism because of the competition among capitalists. The world war now getting under way is about the competition between the US, Russia and China for markets and resources, and it is a struggle for survival among the world’s major capitalist classes.

The competition among capitalist countries, and thus the drive toward war, is even more pronounced today than in the past because the world market continues to shrink as a result of advancing technology eliminating jobs.

The various wars and interventions by the US and its allies across North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, and the repositioning of US forces in the Pacific, is about encircling Russia and especially China militarily. It’s about disrupting markets for Russian and Chinese goods and controlling China’s energy supply. It’s about capturing markets for US corporations.

If the Middle East struggle continues to escalate, it will eventually lead to a nuclear war that will kill hundreds of millions and perhaps destroy the world.

This is not a question of which country to side with. No country is the “good guy” in this process. We must take the side of humanity against capitalism, against the greed and lust for power that would destroy humanity and the world.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, in 2011—the most recent year available—the United States led the world in military spending at $711 billion, or 41 percent of the world total and more than the next 12 nations combined. The US investment in military spending not only helps fuel the drive toward war, it consumes resources we need for feeding people, ending poverty, providing health care and educating our people.

The American people can stop the coming world war. We can take our country away from the corporations and build a cooperative society. This is not a choice for the people, but a necessity, given that technology is wiping out jobs and markets and thus wiping out the foundation of capitalism. If we try to continue with capitalism and private property, then growing poverty, fascism, and another world war are inevitable.

If we in America take the political power away from the corporations and turn their private property into public property, we can build a cooperative society. By doing this, we can not only guarantee that our economic needs are met, we could literally save the world. Our daily struggles should be guided by the understanding that we are fighting for a cooperative society, and we should demand that our country’s resources be diverted from war to meeting our people’s basic needs.

The future is up to us.
On July 4, 1776, during the American Revolution, the Second Continental Congress of the Thirteen Colonies approved the Declaration of Independence. While we are no longer the subjects of the British Empire, we are now the subjects of the corporations.

Today, the American people are governed by a corporate-government dictatorship that serves and protects only the private interests of the corporations and the wealthiest Americans. The democratic and civil-rights of the people have been eliminated. This is the 21st century definition of fascism. Our freedom requires we declare our independence from a system that is impoverishing the American people.

Recent reports from the Internal Revenue Service show that nearly 50% of the American people are living at or near the federal poverty level. One-third of working Americans earn less than $23,000 a year, not to mention the millions of unemployed. Youth unemployment is "officially" 16.1% and gets worse by the day.

While American poverty rapidly increases, it is also criminalized. A recent example is 44-year-old homeless Navy veteran James Kelly, who was looking in a garbage dumpster for something to eat. He was charged by the Houston police with breaking a city ordinance: "disturbing the contents of a garbage can in the business district." Kelly said, "I was just basically looking for something to eat."

Congress, state and city governments across the country continue to cut life-sustaining, public, government sponsored programs, while at the same time selling off all public property and resources to corporate privateers. In Detroit, the city-owned Detroit Institute of Art announced its intention to sell up to a billion dollars worth of precious paintings. In Chicago, 49 public schools will close to open the way for more corporate-owned and operated schools. Efforts are underway to privatize the federally owned Tennessee Valley Authority, the U.S. Post Office and the government controlled mortgage giants, Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae.

This July 4th is a time for all people of good will to politically unite to confront these dangerous conditions and go on the offensive to ensure our rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It requires a new declaration of political independence from the twin-parties of corporate America, and a struggle for a new cooperative society where everyone’s needs are met.

This past April 22, on Earth Day, Dr. Jill Stein and Cheri Honkala, the 2012 Green Party presidential and vice-presidential nominees, announced the formation of the new Green Shadow Cabinet that will serve as an independent voice in U.S. politics, putting the needs of people and protection of the planet ahead of profits for big corporations. The Cabinet will operate in the tradition of shadow cabinets in other countries, responding to actions of the government in office, and demonstrating that another government is possible. The People’s Tribune unites with this effort.

The world is undergoing a global, electronic-based, economic revolution. It is birthing a new epoch of human history. As such, it is ushering into American society the conditions for a political struggle. This requires that we recognize and fight for our commonly shared, basic economic and social interests that represent the public welfare and the common good.

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Editorial Board

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SCHOOL CLOSURES SHOW NEED FOR PEOPLE, NOT CORPORATIONS, TO CONTROL SOCIETY

By Lew Rosenbaum

The sledgehammer came down on the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) on May 22: the school board voted to close 49 schools, “turn around” another five, and “co-locate” 11 more schools. This largest school massacre in the country followed six months of mind-numbing hearings across the city, in which those threatened by potential school closures begged officials to stop them. Finally, from May 18-20 parents, teachers and students marched across the city, circled many of the schools to be closed, and converged on May 20 at city hall. Laying the blame at the feet of Mayor Emanuel, 26 protesters were arrested as they sat down, blocked elevators and refused to leave.

This phase is over, but the war goes on. The Chicago Teachers Union and its allied community organizations are beginning a legislative push to overturn Mayoral action in an effort to block CPS action against the school.

By James Fassinger and Daymon J. Hartley

DETROIT, MI — Students, parents, teachers and supporters have held several protests to stop the closing of Oakman Elementary Orthopedic School which specializes in teaching children with disabilities.

Last month, Detroit Public Schools Emergency Manager Roy Roberts announced he will shut Oakman Elementary Orthopedic School. One of four Detroit public schools listed to be closed, Oakman, offers special services and facilities for children with a wide range of disabilities that mainstream schools cannot provide.

Although Detroit Public Schools (DPS) spokesman Steven Wasko states attendance is down, according to parents, the school’s enrollment has actually increased over the past two years. Wasko also claims that the school needs an estimated $900,000 worth of improvements in order to operate properly, which has been disputed by staff, parents and other observers from outside of the school district.

Oakman elementary is the only school for the physically disabled students in Detroit. It specializes in educating physically disabled or otherwise health-impaired students from Head Start to fifth grade. It is a jewel of Detroit and a good example of the need to nationalize education.

In an apparent effort to quell dissent about the school’s closing, DPS informed parents, students and staff that the school building had been sold off, when in fact they had only just put it up for sale. The price tag: $46,000. After the protest, parents and supporters started taking up a collection to put a down payment on the school and avert the sale. They also plan to file an injunction in an effort to block DPS action against the school.

STOP THE CLOSING OF OAKMAN ELEMENTARY

Students, parents and supporters protest the planned closing of Oakman Elementary Orthopedic School which specializes in teaching children with disabilities, outside the headquarters of Detroit Public Schools.

PHOTO/JAMES FASSINGER
Healthcare and civility spiraling out of control

By Maureen D. Taylor, M.S.W., MI Welfare Rights Organization and Michael Berger, R.N.

Editor’s note: This is the first of a three part series on the Detroit crisis.

DETROIT, MI — As Detroit continues to be one of the “poster child” cities of corporate America’s exercise of total control, each day presents another challenge to basic rights. Democracy in Michigan was destroyed under the guise of repairing a broken economy. The right to vote was crushed under the concept that residents were too stupid to make critical budget cuts. The right to form unions was cancelled by suggesting that these justice organizations had outrighted their usefulness. Healthcare is next. The limited access to medical care is now disappearing under the notion that it costs too much. Pensioners at the age of retirement are denied this benefit as a part of the “sacrifice” retirees must make because the banks and lending industries must be compensated for legacy loans that go back almost sixty years. Nations around the world have debts forgiven routinely, but these corporate banks are “Shylocks and thieves to the bitter end.”

Almost every day we see stories plastered on the news about families trying desperately to raise funds to pay for hospital procedures. In the richest country in the world, Americans still do not have the right to visit healthcare centers if they don’t have healthcare coverage… sad. Among healthcare providers who bring services to those in private homes, conditions are equally as bad.

The role of corporate America in healthcare is becoming ever more aggressive in their desire to profit on the misery of those most in need of care. Medicaid, long the “last best hope” for the uninsured, has become a money-making machine through the denial and elimination of services. Who in their right mind would send a human being home from a hospital with wounds and not even a bandaid to cover the area? When the nurse was asked by a home-bound patient, “can I have a few 4x4 wound pads and some tape, the answer was, “no, your insurance does not cover that.” People confronted by an utter lack of compassion and reasoning will resort to whatever they can. Patients have wrapped up leg wounds with napkins from McDonalds and circulars left on the porch from the neighborhood market. These unsanitary treatments result in re-infection and re-hospitalization—the expected outcome of the drive to maximize profits in the health industry.

Corporate America continues to flex its unholy muscles. A recent suggestion that the blood alcohol limit, which defines a person as legally drunk, should be lowered from .08 to .05 was roundly challenged by the alcohol producing industry. Why? They shamelessly stated they would fight any concept that suggests they sell fewer alcoholic drinks, which might result in lowering profits. Conclusion? It is better to make profits by selling more alcohol than to consider the possibility of reducing the number of people maimed or killed in alcohol-related accidents. Horrible, uncivil, and unacceptable.

Progressives everywhere believe that “the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few.” We will continue the fight for democracy, the fight to make every vote count, the fight to protect workers, and the fight to have universal access to healthcare for every man, woman and child in this country. Why? Because it’s the right fight!!

500 homeowners storm Department of Justice

By Debra Savitt

WASHINGTON, D.C., AND LA QUINTA, CA — I was one of the many homeowners, now an x-homeowner, who has battled with Bank of America and Fannie Mae since 2005 when the housing market began to crash. Approximately four months after purchasing my home, the housing bubble started to burst. Within one year, its value was approximately one-half of what I owed. I spent approximately five years fighting with the banks and Fannie Mae. Angry, frustrated and mad that the banking industry blamed people for purchasing homes they couldn’t afford, trying to shame the middle class and people of color while they were stealing from us, I decided to go to Washington D.C. on a scholarship offered by the Home Defender’s League, Occupy Our Homes, and ACCE.

On May 17, I left for Washington, D.C. with 500 homeowners from all over the U.S., who were struggling to keep their homes. The plan was to march to the Department of Justice, and demand that Eric Holder, 82nd Attorney General of the United States, arrest the criminal bankers and reduce home principals. On May 20, we marched from Freedom Plaza after homeowners gave speeches and shared their stories. Then we blocked the front doors of the Department of Justice and the two parking lots, and were surrounded by every type of police officer—Home Land Security, D.C. police, and the federal building police. News teams were on the scene, police cars were parked up and down the streets, helicopters were hovering, all because grandmothers, mothers and families wanted an answer now.

Eric Holder never met with us, nor did he make a statement. He simply allowed homeowners who were peacefully protesting to be tasered and arrested. After the first 17 arrests, the protest continued for three more days.

Homeowners stayed and spent the night on the steps of the Department of Justice demanding that bankers be arrested not homeowners. The police continued to taser and arrest protesters. Some of the people who were arrested were told they “had no rights” in jail, and were not given water or toilet paper for almost two days.

The purpose of the protest and the arrests was to bring greater awareness that foreclosures are not down as you are hearing on the news. There are still 13 million people underwater. In addition, the news is stating that the housing market is going up again. The statistics are manipulated to make us think things are getting better. The bankers have not changed their practices, so we are at risk of another crash—while they get richer again! Guess who suffers from the crash, not the bankers, we do!

Homeowners who have lost or are losing their homes are planning on educating our communities and going back to the Department of Justice with thousands of people demanding the arrest of the true criminals and reduction of home principals. It is up to us to make the change, and it takes the people to make the change. If you wish to share your story you can contact me at debrareverend@gmail.com

See the People’s Tribune online edition for more on Debra’s struggle. www.peoplestribune.org
Why we need to end ‘corporate personhood’

By Abraham Entin

The need for the constitution- al amendment against ‘corporate personhood’ advocated by Move to Amend was demonstrated clearly by a recent vote in the U.S. Senate.

On the eve of the late-May worldwide protest against Monsanto, some 71 U.S. senators voted against guaranteeing states the right to enact laws requiring the labeling of foods containing GMOs (genetically modified organisms), part of this year’s farm bill.

They did this despite the fact that 90 percent of the public have made it clear they want labels on foods containing genetically engineered ingredients.

Why would so many senators disregard the desire of 90 percent of their constituents simply to know what’s in the food we eat? Why are they more responsive to the companies that create these Frankenfoods than to the people they were elected to represent?

We all know the answer—it’s money. It takes a ton of money to become a U.S. senator, and the best way to get it is from rich people and giant corporations.

Any successful strategy to end corporate control must address corporate constitutional rights and money as speech. The courts are constantly used to defy the will of the people when it is in conflict with the interests of corporations.

The 2012 debacle around California’s Prop. 37 (to label GMO food) is a prime example. Because the courts have ruled that “money is speech,” the corporations behind the “No on 37” campaign were able to pour $45 million into saturating the airwaves with false and misleading ads in the month before the election, creating enough confusion to narrowly defeat the proposition.

Move to Amend is the national coalition campaigning for the “We the People” Amendment that establishes that “corporations are not People” and “Money is not Speech.” A grassroots organization, Move to Amend will help you start an affiliate in your area if there is none already.

For more info, visit www.movetoamend.org.

Abraham Entin founded the Sonoma County affiliate of Move to Amend.

Photo/Daymon Hartley
**MARCH AGAINST MONSANTO:**
**END DICTATORSHIP OVER SEED, LIFE, AND FOOD**

By Valerie Jean & Tia Lebherz

DETROIT, MI — On Satur-
day May 25 2013, an estimated
two million people in over 52
countries peacefully took to the
streets to say NO to biotech gi-
ant Monsanto. When asked why
they marched, people expressed
outrage over the U.S. Congress
and the President for having
passed what is now called the
“Monsanto Protection Act.” It,
among other things, bans courts
from halting the sale of Mon-
santo’s genetically modified
crops. The act also protects
Monsanto from ever being legally
sued for health complications from
eating GMO foods.

In Detroit we intentionally
planned our march in Detroit’s
historical Eastern Market, where
regional farmers have always
gathered and to serve the com-
nunities of Detroit real food. It
was important to the organiz-
ers of the event that the farm-
ers could see the numbers stand-
ing in solidarity with them and
their
way
of
life
and
for
them to see the
strong demand for non-GMO
food. Increasingly, as companies
like Monsanto control more and
more aspects of our food system,
from seed to grocery store, our
small and mid-sized farmers are
struggling to survive. We wanted
to stand up for the very im-
portant role our Michigan farmers
play in our families’ lives. We
intended our march to be very
family-friendly because we be-
lieve this is an issue of food secu-
rit
y for future generations.

Around 600 people came out
to support the cause that day.
We had children dressed as bees,
adults as beekeepers and flow-
ers and we created the infamous
Monsanto Man. Our evil villain
was taken down by the bees in
a fun skit. We took action and
phoned Senator Debbie Stabe-
now, the Chair of the U.S. Senate
Agricultural Committee and long-
time bedfellow of companies like
Monsanto, during our rally to tell
her in mass to “break up with big
ag!”

The day left us all feeling em-
powered, ready for the next step,
with a real feeling of what is
possible in this fight. GMOs and
Round Up are devastating to our
environment, our public health
and to bee populations world-
wide. With countries all over the
world banning GMO corn crops
it has become clear that we must
stop this chemical company that
has already taken control of the
world’s food supply. As there
have been no long-term studies
on the health impacts of GMOs,
we are quite literally the lab rats
for this biotech giant’s danger-
ous experiment. This is going to
take a full food system revolution.
Regulations won’t fix anything as
the Federal Department of Agri-
culture (FDA), the agency tasked
with making sure our food is safe,
is indeed run by ex-Monsanto
executives. So we must go for-
ward, stand up, speak out and
demand our food is safe and sus-
tainably produced and our small
farmers protected for generations
to come.

“When Hitler came to power
and the Nazis came to power,
with their kind of genocide, peo-
ples resistance movements
everywhere. Today, this new fas-
cism is over itself, in all its
diversity. It’s not just control-
ing one religion, one race. It’s
wanting to outlaw all diversity
of all life on earth…This march
against Monsanto is a call to end
the dictatorship over seed, over
life, over our food, and over our
freedom.”—Dr. Vandana Shiva,
Navdanya

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**San Diego march against Monsanto**

By Jerry Malamud

SAN DIEGO, CA — On May
25—Stop Monsanto Day—as
worldwide actions were taking
place, those of us in San Diego
mounted one of our most succes-
sful actions since the First Occupy
Assembly in support of Occupy
Wall Street! Over 1000 people
(some reports put it at between
two and three thousand) assem-
bled at the Main Fountain in Bal-
boa Park! The action was spon-
sored by Food and Water Watch,
with the support of all of the pro-
gressive groups in San Diego,
including the Peace Resource Cen-
ter, the San Diego Occupiers, the
Green Party, PDA (Progressive
Democrats of America), Earth
First Movement, Labor Unions,
United for Peace and Justice, and
Occupelas (Women occupiers of
San Diego Choir). Our new pro-
gressive Mayor sent a very sup-
portive message!

After assembling in the park,
listening to rousing speeches
regarding the evils of GMO’s,
Monsanto, and “Round-Up”, and
some inspiring folk music, the
group headed out for a six-mile
march. Waving clever signs and
chanting and drumming through
the Hillcrest and Little It-
aly and then returning via the
Gaslamp area to the World Beat
Center at Balboa Park, additional
speakers engaged the demonstra-
tors who were also entertained by
more music including some very
original songs by the Occupelas!

The entire action was covered by
all of our local TV stations. Of
course—we were accompanied
by many police officers on foot,
motorcycles and paddy wagons—
all “to protect us.”

Why protest Monsanto? It is
the globe’s largest seed purvey-
or—and its dominant vendor of
genetically modified traits. How
dominant? Here’s National Public
Radio on the company’s mastery
over the US GMO market: “More
than nine out of ten soybean seeds
carry [Monsanto’s] Roundup
Ready trait. It’s about the same
for cotton and just a little lower
for corn.” It also sells nearly $1
billion worth of herbicides every
three months.

For all its clout, Monsanto
is a relatively new player in the
Big Ag game. As recently as the
late 1970s Monsanto was known
mostly as a chemical company;
herbicides were a relatively small
sideline, and genetically modified
seeds were just the gleam in the
eye of a few scientists in the R&D
department. Its flagship chemical
business had plunged into crisis.
In 1976, Congress banned the
highly toxic industrial coolant
PCB. To make matters worse, the
company was heavily invested in
the toxic pesticide DDT (banned
in 1972) and the infamous Viet-
nam War defoliant Agent Orange.
How did Monsanto pivot from
teetering, scandal-ridden chemi-
cal giant to mighty high-tech
(though still quite controversial)
agribiz firm?

A young consultant called
Mitt Romney helped push the
firm on its highly lucrative new
path—selling off big chunks of its
legacy chemical businesses and
reinventing itself as ag-biotech
firm. Of course, Monsanto 2.0 re-
maind quite ruthless in its pur-
suit of profit. The metamorphosis
merely meant trading one set of
environmental controversies for
another. Perhaps the agrichemi-
cal giant, too, will one day see its
regulatory fortunes turn.

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PHOTOS/DAYMONJ.HARTLEY.COM
Laura Garcia, editor of the Tribuno del Pueblo, had the privilege of talking with Father Alejandro Solalinde who headed a Caravan through the U.S. to denounce the brutality suffered by our migrant brothers and sisters from Central and South America. Thousands of migrant victims are killed and/or disappeared.

Photo/David Sandoval.

Below. In part two, he discusses strategy and building unity.

By Father Alejandro Solalinde

CHICAGO, IL — I bet on organization. I bet on developing consciousness. I bet on unity.

The Caravan Opening the Doors to Hope was well received.

By Peggy Elwell

SAN JOSE, CA — One of the largest May First immigrant- and labor-rights marches in the country was in San Jose, California this year. As many as 20,000 people marched the three miles from the East Side to San Jose City Hall downtown.

The march was a success because every organization in the May 1 coalition worked hard to turn out their constituencies, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and fellow church members. They were unified under one voice behind three demands: the protection of families, an immediate pathway to citizenship, and the end of deportations.

Marches represented a wide spectrum of people—day laborers, church groups, unions, community organizations, students and many members of the general public. There were Ayacate dancers, a children’s drumming class, girls wearing dresses and aprons with slogans. Water was handed out all along the way, from supportive organizations, stores, and individuals.

The marchers brought hundreds of banners—there was a huge banner with the signatures of thousands of people by Voluntarios de la Comunidad: a banner with handprints, carried by a youth group from Guadalupe Church; banners announcing the presence of the Laborers Union, Sacred Heart Community Services, Unite HERE, Somos Mayfair, the United Food and Commercial Workers, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the Plumbers and Pipefitters, the Low-Income Self-Help Center, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, and many more.

The United States has long been known as a country of immigrants. Currently immigrants make up about 13 percent of the population. One hundred years ago immigrants made up even more, 14 percent of the population.

California’s Santa Clara County, where San Jose is located, has one of the highest immigrant populations in the country. Indeed, San Jose’s population is estimated to be 10 percent undocumented. Two of every three residents are either immigrants or children of an immigrant.

However, there are many class differences among the immigrants—some are well educated and well off, coming to work in Silicon Valley as engineers from India, China, Taiwan, and Europe. Silicon Valley executives such as Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg are fighting to keep these “desirable” immigrants in the country as a plentiful supply of technical workers without having to shore up the U.S. educational system.

Other immigrants have come to escape persecution, aggression, war, destruction of their lands and their ability to survive, precipitated by our military industrial complex.

Still more immigrants are at the bottom of the economic ladder, mostly from Mexico and Central and South America, but also the Philippines and other Pacific Islands, Africa, and South Asia. Fleeing hunger in their homelands and often undocumented, many work for minimum wage or less.

These were the people taking to the streets in San Jose on May 1, fighting for the strongest possible immigrant reform.

The march was organized by the May 1 Coalition, including AFSCME, Anakbayan, Californians for Justice, MAIZ, NAFCON, PAWIS, Sacred Heart Community Service Agency, and many more.

As many as 20,000 people marched in one of the country’s largest May Day immigrant and labor-rights marches this year.

Photo/Joan Simon.

Father Alejandro Solalinde, a Mexican priest, headed a caravan through the U.S. to denounce the brutality suffered by our migrant brothers and sisters from Central and South America. Thousands of migrant victims are killed and/or disappeared.

Pedro, from Honduras, was part of the caravan. Due to violence and the economic situation, he decided to migrate. In Mexico, he climbed onto the bestia (train) and his leg was cut off.

Photo/Mary Kay Yarak.

As many as 20,000 people marched in one of the country’s largest May Day immigrant and labor-rights marches this year.

Photo/Joan Simon.
Why the Chicago Sun-Times fired its entire photo staff

By Daymon J. Hartley

CLARKSTON, MI — In late May 2013 the entire photo staff of the Chicago Sun-Times was fired.

The global economic crisis is evident in the newspaper industry. The up and coming generation “Z” is totally based in robotics and electronics and have been raised on pixels. They were born into laptops, iPads, smartphones, texting, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

They have no affinity for ink on paper. This is the market the corporations have to concentrate on to realize maximum profits.

In an earlier period in U.S. history, from the transition to industry from agriculture, U.S. capital needed a nation-state in the form of a democratic republic. Key features included free public education, the franchise and popularly elected legislative bodies, the separation of church and state, a somewhat independent press and the capacity to mobilize a standing citizen army.

Such innovations were necessary for the development and defense of the national market and to ensure for capital the existence of an indoctrinated working class capable of functioning in an increasingly complex industrial factory system.

Today, under conditions of global electronics based production, speculative capital and giant corporations, the days of the bourgeois republican form of government are numbered.

Without a need for democracy, there is no need for a free press. It is also dangerous to allow those who would expose what is really happening in society to do so.

With the robotic and electronic revolution in the economic base well under way, we are replacing manual/mental labor. We are also producing untold abundance, but robots cannot buy back what they produce. With an economic system requiring one to have a job to earn a wage to buy the necessities of life, you have an irreconcilable contradiction. The value, profits and market system can no longer function to meet the world’s needs.

Globalization and spreading technology brings about an evening up process. Rather than bringing the rest of the world’s workers up to the living standard many U.S. workers have enjoyed, our standard of living is being driven down to the level of the lowest paid worker anywhere.

The 1% have no control over this system as it implodes. The capitalists only response is an open fascist terrorist police state to contain the response to the destruction wrought by this implosion.

Democracy in this country has been reduced to merely casting a vote. Every four years they let us decide which of their leaders is going to mislead us for another four years. To enjoy the fruits of democracy the average person needs access to the tools of democracy: television, print, radio. The only folks who have that access are the billionaires.

Dr. Martin Luther King was right in demanding economic democracy: the democratic right to a job, house, food, healthcare and that elusive right to human happiness.

The only solution is another American revolution. This revolution has to take place in our minds first. An intellectual leap by the 99% and the working class is needed, as is a vision of a new society where all people’s needs are met.

Daymon J. Hartley is former staff photographer for the Detroit Free Press and is presently the photo editor for the People’s Tribune.

Laid off Chicago Sun-Times photojournalist speaks

By Rob Hart

CHICAGO, IL — When I heard Jim Kirk, Editor in chief of the Chicago Sun-Times, say the entire photography department was being eliminated I looked to my hero, my mentor, my friend John H. White, and my heart broke.

After 35 years and a Pulitzer Prize, he was out of a job without even a thank you.

I walked out of the conference room in the Holiday Inn. The carpet was a dizzying swirl of colors and I felt sucker punched. Did I just lose my job with 27 other extremely talented photojournalists? Did he really say our audience wants more video content and photos would be shot by reporters with iPhones? Why are the producers of visual journalism being shown the door? All these things would have been good questions but I didn’t do anything but what I do best. I started shooting photos with my iPhone, pictures that I felt needed to be made.

After 12 years of working in the company’s suburban Oak Park office, I was happy to be free. I shook hands with John and the other Sun-Times guys, grabbed my manila envelope with my separation agreement on it and headed for the BillyGoat, the world famous journalist hangout, at 9:30AM.

My co-worker, Curtis Lehmkuhl, and I sat there and just shook our heads. My phone started ringing and it wouldn’t stop for over a week. People from all over the globe were calling, texting and emailing. I was asked to testify on the future of newspapers and photojournalism.

My biggest fear was facing my students. I teach Photojournalism at the Medill School at Northwestern University and how could the person who is supposed to inspire them be the one who is out of a job? So that night we looked at two pictures. After giving an interview to Crain’s Chicago the reporter asked to take a cell phone picture. We all got the irony of the situation. The Chicago Tribune’s Pulitzer Prize winner John J. Kim showed up and was making photos of us. My wife walked through the door and in one of the greatest moments of my life she brought me a cell phone. I hugged her and cried.

John walked around us and made photos of us embracing, tears streaming down my face. I had been on the other side of that situation so many times.

That single situation sums up my entire argument that great visual journalism takes the viewer into the emotional center of the situation, draws them in, and delivers the gut punch.

By being let go with so many great photojournalists I hit the layoff jackpot. Had I not kept shooting and found a new way to tell my story this might have died. Had the union not had our backs and organized pickets and rallies we would have been deflated.

The photojournalism community rallied around us and picked us up. My friends have done everything possible to introduce me to new clients, new revenue streams, new ways of storytelling. I’m so blessed to have worked in a job and a community that I love.

http://laidofffromthesuntimes.tumblr.com/

http://www.facebook.com/Laidofffromthesuntimes

Fired Sun-Times photographers and their supporters picket in front of their offices to demand their jobs back. PHOTO/ROB HART
By Cathy Talbott

CARBONDALE, IL — Horiz onal hydraulic fracturing will now be allowed in Illinois as the much touted regulatory bill passed the legislature. This is despite the tireless efforts of health and community opposition groups such as S.A.F.E. Illinois Peoples Action, the testimony of Dr. Sandra Steingraber, and the challenge to Governor Quinn-D by Josh Fox (Gasland and Gasland II) to visit Pennsylvania frack sites and talk to those harmed by the process.

The regulatory bill was drafted with representatives of labor, industry, and national environmental groups. Because of the inclusion of the latter who benefited from corporate money, people are being misled.

According to Dr. Steingraber, an Illinois native and Distinguished Scholar in Residence in the Department of Environmental Studies and Science at Ithaca College, “The fracking emperor has no clothes. The regulatory bill was drafted, under the guidance of Illinois Attorney General (Lisa Madigan-D,) behind closed doors with no public hearings, no public comment period, no input from scientists or physicians, or public health officials, without environmental studies or a health impact assessment. These rules are arbitrary compromises based on negotiations with industry. They guarantee neither public health nor environmental integrity.”

After eighteen months of attempting to gain an audience with Governor Quinn, Tabitha Tripp and Dayna Conner of Southern Illinoisans Against Fracturing Our Environment, were granted an 11th hour meeting with an aide to the governor. “(He) confirmed there is no contingency plan for our children or their health and well being down the road in the land of Lincoln,” Tripp said. “When the jobs don’t pan out and the water is toxic, we will have traded away our children’s future for fossil fuels.”

Because Illinois Democrats have touted this as a jobs bill, labor groups have embraced it. As S.A.F.E member Richard Fedder points out, the Chamber of Commerce estimates 1,000-47,000 jobs will be created, however, empirical evidence from states such as Pennsylvania and West Virginia actually show few jobs created and many more lost. Both states have high unemployment and suffer from environmental destruction.

As the Koch funded organization, Americans for Prosperity, continue to show their pro-industry propaganda film “Fracknation” to local communities facing the fracking nightmare, opposition groups are regrouping and strategizing. As Dr. Steingraber declared, “The anti-fracking movement is growing into a nationwide citizen uprising. We will be escalating our actions in Illinois (with) plans for statewide education and outreach campaigns. We will remember and call out those who dismiss the moratorium bill as a pretty guest towel. It is not something to admire and walk away from. It is a basic human right.”

The Illinois legislature also passed a water privatization bill, which, like fracking, is part and parcel of the move to privatize all public resources for the private gain of the 1%.

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So Joe, the next time you have the urge to say warriors, say instead “I support Universal Single Payer Health Care For All because war is not healthy for children”. And shed a tear for your vote to go to war with Iraq and Afghanistan.
NEW YORK, NY — Most Americans already own way too much clothing, but when the department stores bring out their new styles for the next season we experience an irresistible urge to buy that shirt, that dress, that sweater or whatever makes us feel attractive. And when it comes to desiring the latest fashion trend, as families strive to live within their household budgets, it is hard to resist a “good bargain.” With that in mind, it is troubling to ponder why American consumers don’t seem to care about purchasing new clothing that comes covered with the blood of Third World workers.

The most recent tragedy at the Rana Plaza factory complex in Bangladesh where over 1100 workers died and thousands were injured in a horrific building collapse is once again an example of how cutthroat international capitalism puts the health and safety of workers behind an insatiable lust for profit. The Walton family, the owners of Walmart, whose combined wealth is greater than the bottom 42% of American families, surely has the blood of Third World workers on their assets. Yet Americans, whether by desire or habit, or lack of other options, continue to shop at Walmart. This fact begs the real question of why Americans, the beneficiaries of governmental regulations that insure their safety on the job, don’t care enough about their brother and sister workers half a world away to stop shopping for cheap clothing.

Perhaps Americans choose not to remember that during the early part of the 20th century in the USA, the cost of their immigrant great grandparents’ labor was ridiculously low and the profits of industrialists obscenely high. Or perhaps Americans have forgotten about sweatshops because capitalists have purposefully hid the story of labor’s struggles from the general public. In order to recognize their solidarity with overseas workers, Americans may need to be reminded of the sacrifices of earlier generations of US workers who perished in preventable factory fires like the Triangle shirtwaist factory fire of 1911. The Triangle fire is still credited with igniting social activism, inspiring unionism, and reaching the public to place pressure on politicians and government to regulate wages and working conditions in the United States, thereby creating safer workplaces and a prosperous middle class.

With each new overseas garment factory tragedy, the need grows for a way to remember our moral obligation to demand that the lives of workers have greater significance than a corporation’s bottom line. A permanent memorial soon to be erected at the site of the 1911 Triangle shirtwaist factory fire, America’s most horrific workplace disaster until the World Trade Center collapsed on September 11, 2001, will remind Americans that they too were once victims of capitalism’s insatiable desire for profits over people. The Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition mourns the loss of life at the Rana Plaza garment factories in Bangladesh, and hopes that the Triangle Memorial will inspire workers worldwide.

For more information visit http://rememberthetriangelfire.org.

Andi Sosin and Joel Sosinsky are with The Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition.

The Rana Plaza factory complex in Bangladesh where over 1100 workers died and thousands were injured in a horrific building collapse is once again an example of how cutthroat international capitalism puts the health and safety of workers behind an insatiable lust for profit.

**Remember the Triangle Fire to protect workers today**

By Andi Sosin & Joel Sosinsky

Editor’s note: This is part one of a four-part article.

By Raymond L. Smith

NORTH LITTLE ROCK, AR — Scipio, a child of a fifteen-year-old slave girl and her slave owner and master, was born before the abolishment of slavery in late 1863. While pursuing his education, according to some sources, Jones attended Walden Seminary in Little Rock, which is now Philander Smith College. He also attended Bethel Institute in North Little Rock, which later became Shorter College.

After many hardships, he became an educator, businessman and attorney. Although his accomplishments were many, none exceeded the role he played in the notorious Elaine, Arkansas race riot of 1919. This was a time in American history known as the “Red Summer.” This uprising started when a group of White men descended upon a Black church where a group of Blacks were gathered. The Blacks, who were mostly sharecroppers, were meeting to form a union to protest unfair wages. A massive fight resulted and many, mostly Black men, women and children, were killed. A White posses man was also killed. Hundreds of Blacks were arrested, including twelve Black men who were tried and sentenced to death within hours. During this history-changing case, Jones interacted with founders and other high-ranking officials of the NAACP, which intervened in this extremely unjust case.

At the beginning of this working relationship between Jones and the NAACP, a degree of friction existed. All of this worked out as each side realized the importance of the other. It was said that Mary White Ovington, one of the founders of the NAACP stated that while Jones worked on the case in Elaine, he had to spend each night in a different location because of the dangerous and threatening racial climate in the angry and hostile town.

This was a different era and America was a racially divided country. Lynchings and other mob violence were not uncommon. Although Jones was the mastermind in this case and the attorney from whom most of the legal strategies derived, he endured denial and humiliation. Arkansas law at the time prevented African American attorneys from appearing before the Court unless a Caucasian attorney was listed as lead counsel. A White man named George W. Murphy was hired by the NAACP. Murphy had significant political connections throughout the State. Ovington later wrote that Jones’ legal procedures and techniques demonstrated in the case had been “masterly.” Jones is credited with preparing the legal brief in this landmark case (Moore et al. V. Dempsey) which ended up in the U. S. Supreme Court.

Another founder of the NAACP, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, wrote in the “Crisis” magazine flattering statements about Jones’ legal performance. DuBois also urged citizens to donate to a legal defense fund set up for the men in this case.

Another representative of the NAACP, noted human rights activist and journalist, Ida B. Wells Barnett, also ventured to Arkansas to investigate this tumultuous event. In her report, Barnett was complimentary about Jones. In the end, this nightmarish ordeal concluded with the men saved from the death penalty. It was an early and very significant victory for Civil Rights.
Say no to corporate control of Benton Harbor

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

BENTON HARBOR, MI — We must say no to the dictator and slave master, Whirlpool. They are destroying the city of Benton Harbor by stealing land and by driving the people completely out of the city to build a Kingdom for the rich.

Many residents feel they have no control over the direction of the city because their vote doesn’t matter. They see the disappearance of a democracy that they thought was embedded in U.S. society. Many feel trapped by a lack of options because of Whirlpool’s control of their city. In addition, our elected officials are bought by corporate contributions and seem incapable of constructive action.

Through the city’s new governor-appointed Emergency Financial Manager, Tony Saunders, Whirlpool has absolute power to do whatever it wants. Saunders represents the Whirlpool Corporation, not the citizens of Benton Harbor. Saunders has now come up with a new scheme to steal still more land from the poor without their knowledge.

To carry out Whirlpool’s program, the Emergency Manager fired six of Benton Harbor’s top employees in the last two months. Saunders said more firings at City Hall are coming. There is nothing the residents can say or do about this.

The termination of Regina Sistrunk is an example. Her firing was political. The commissioners approved a motion during a special meeting on May 28 demanding her immediate reinstatement, but she remains fired.

Regina Sistrunk questioned the Emergency Manager, who wanted to use some Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to purchase Benton Harbor land. Regina refused to use the funds because it would have been illegal to do so. The (CDBG) money can only be used for specific purposes such as for subsidized housing, etc. The witchhunt was on.

Regina Sistrunk was replaced by Nicole Rodden Brown, who previously worked for Capital Access, a Philadelphia’s-based Company contracted by Michigan State Housing Development Authority. Brown was over the $13.8 million Neighborhood Stabilization Program 2 grant money which was divided up between the Land Bank and Cornerstone Alliance (Whirlpool Corporation). Cornerstone received $6.4 million. No resident from Benton Harbor was hired to do the community work that this grant made possible. The three-year contract ended in May.

This process shows that private corporations such as Whirlpool, financial interests and the Governor are all behind the effort to get complete corporate control of Benton Harbor. The Emergency Manager, Tony Saunders is just a flunky for the Whirlpool Corporation. He has betrayed and abandoned our community and our economic and educational needs for corporate money.

The Black Autonomy Network Community Organization protested at City Hall against the dictatorship of the Emergency Manager. The protest was a major success. The power of the people is more powerful than the people in power.

art

I have to break a coin and a tattered bill to squeeze some cheese from it and some bread that is my art form now: there’s no fooling it

a twenty dollar bill dropped mysteriously yesterday and today a ten: I am so distracted trying to squeeze it out ground down to the end of accounting

I can’t buy the Street Sheet from the street artist who says he’s been living outside for three weeks and it was hard and he has a place tomorrow in the Tenderloin: I’ve been going around the block to avoid him because I’m so broke not even a word to spare

I wonder if all his paintings have been lost I threw all mine away down the years: they’re fantasies now: out in the world with its radiance and space

and he with the least resources is the one who is still making it

— Sarah Menefee

Mama, I Can’t Sleep

In my dark and lonely fight, when all I have is just my right. Who knows the truth, and if they care, to take my burden or just share.

I am a warrior for truth, you taught me well, my skills to hone, The need is great and I am strong, this fight is constant and prolong. However short my time; every child is mine and I their shield for truth Looking to ease their reality from supposed, safe houses of abuse

Every child should have and know a place where love, safe care abounds Not just survive abuse, misuse, distain at hands of persons who confound I see their faces, feel their distress, but I grow weary and need rest. I come to you my source of life, to gain my strength, renew my quest. Cause Mama, I can’t sleep.

What if the world could stop and troubles freeze in space? We could feel ourselves surrender to the innocence misplaced.

Grab that solemn, scared ground and find that special moor; Where children flourish, their minds thrive, and their spirits soar. But Mama, I can’t sleep.

Hold me in your arms and let me feel the peace you trace Could I not, just take some time, engulfed in your embrace? May I, lay my head awhile against your tender cheek? Have you touch me on my brow and sing your song so sweet.

It’s what I want for every child, your love, your grace and safe, I feel myself surrendering, no will, no time, or pace. Cause in this majestic citadel, where truth and love reside, The words, “I Can’t” shall not endure or will abide. Cause Mama… I can sleep.

— Yetta Aikens