

# PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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Wearing riot gear, police and state troopers force protestors off Florissant Road in front of the Ferguson, Mo., Police Department following announcement that the officer that killed Michael Brown would not be indicted.

PHOTO/ADRIAN GARCIA

## *Special Coverage:*



Conviction without evidence  
of community leader in  
Benton Harbor sham trial.

**See page 12**

# STOP THE RISING AMERICAN POLICE STATE

**Read story on page 3**



# Poverty-wage workers energize the movement

## EDITORIAL

“As Walmart Workers, we are sick of struggling to put food on the table while our hard work makes the country’s wealthiest family, the Waltons, even richer.” That statement of one Walmart worker summed up the sentiment of *Black Friday Strikers* in their “Fight For 15” in more than 200 cities across the country. Indeed, this sentiment is evidenced by a sign over bins in a Cleveland Walmart store this holiday season that reads, “Please donate food items here so associates in need can enjoy Thanksgiving Dinner.”

Walmart is the single largest private employer worldwide. Super exploitation of their work force has grown the Walton family fortune to \$150 billion. That equals the wealth of the bottom 42% of Americans combined. Last year \$6.2 billion in federal dollars went to assist Walmart workers who couldn’t afford food, housing and medical care. At that same time, Walmart captured 18% of the food stamp market. All this amounts to tax subsidies for Walmart’s profits, hidden behind aid to workers it put in need.

These workers are part of a new, growing impoverished section of the working class for whom hunger, homelessness and absolute destitution are a constant threat. Gone forever are the better paying industrial manufacturing jobs of the past. The assembly line, powered by human muscle and brain, is being replaced by the computer and robot. This phenomenon continues to spread to industries everywhere.

Even in the service sector, fewer and fewer workers distribute more and more goods. The effect is that full-time work, once the norm, is becoming



**Protest against Walmart on Black Friday in Chicago. The owners of Walmart are worth \$150 billion; Walmart workers live in poverty.** PHOTO/UFCW INTERNATIONAL UNION FOLLOW/CHRISTOPHER DILTS

part time, contingent, and temporary. This is reflected in places like Walmart giving so few hours to workers that they can’t survive.

Add to the list the theft of wages by making people work through their breaks and unsafe working conditions like pregnant women forced to climb ladders with heavy boxes. Punishment for those who speak out against all the abuse clarifies why striking Walmart workers, who feel they have nothing to lose but their chains, are energizing the movement.

This is not simply about the greed of one family. The Walton family is one example of an entire class. That class grows its wealth and private property by exploiting human labor. Yet it is their thirst for maximum profit that is replacing human labor with less expensive, more pro-

ductive technology. The result is the polarization of society into extreme wealth and bone chilling poverty in the midst of plenty.

Historically, the ruling class has promoted charity to improve their image, but by their own admission, the Waltons’ don’t do charity. Instead, they manage an “Associates In Critical Need Trust,” which is completely funded by employees through payroll deductions. In other words, workers are sharing what little

they get so the least among them can survive without any contribution from their exploiter.

The imaginative one-day “Fight For 15” strikes are demanding from the exploiters more of the wealth the workers’ produce. The sharing and bold stance by these impoverished workers offers a glimpse of a possible future. Now imagine a world without exploiters altogether—where the entire wealth of society is shared among us all.

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## WHY THE MOVEMENT NEEDS A PRESS

From the Editors

We are sometimes asked “Why does the movement to build a new America need a press?” The answer has to do with this moment in history. People are struggling just to get the basic necessities of life. Historical forces beyond anyone’s control have set the stage for a new society to be built, but from this point on, how things turn out depends on what people think. This means that those of us who are seeking fundamental change are engaged in a battle of ideas, a struggle to win the hearts and minds of the people. If we don’t raise the consciousness of the people and unite them around a vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it, then we’ll fail in our effort to build a just and free society. To win the battle of ideas, we need a press.

Visit us on the web at [www.PeoplesTribune.org](http://www.PeoplesTribune.org)

## PEOPLE’S TRIBUNE

An economic system that doesn’t feed, clothe and house its people must be and will be overturned and replaced with a system that meets the needs of the people. To that end, this paper is a tribune of those struggling to create such a new economic system. It is a vehicle to bring the movement together, to create a vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it.

Labor-replacing electronic technology is permanently eliminating jobs and destroying the foundation of the capitalist system. The people’s needs can only be met by building a cooperative society where the socially necessary means of production are owned by society, not by the corporations.

We welcome articles and artwork from those who are engaged in the struggle to build a new society that is of, by and for the people. We rely on readers and contributors to fund and distribute this paper.

The People’s Tribune, formerly published by the League of Revolutionaries for a New America, is now an independent newspaper with an editorial board based in Chicago.

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**Deadlines for articles and art:** The deadline for articles, photographs and other art is the first of each month for the issue that comes out at the beginning of the following month. For example, the deadline for the June issue is May 1. Articles should be as short as possible, and no longer than 500 words. We reserve the right to edit articles to conform to space limitations.

**People’s Tribune Editor:** Bob Lee

**Editorial Staff:** Brett Jelinek, Sarah Meneff, Shamako Noble, Joseph Peery, Nelson Peery, Sandra Reid, Cathy Talbott

**Photo Editor:** Daymon Hartley

People’s Tribune, P.O. Box 3524  
Chicago, Illinois, 60654  
e-mail: [info@peopletribune.org](mailto:info@peopletribune.org)  
Phone: 773-486-3551  
Toll Free: 800-691-6888  
Fax: 773-486-3552  
Web: [www.peopletribune.org](http://www.peopletribune.org)

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**Reach us at:**  
Chicago 773-486-3551  
Ann Arbor, MI  
[zettir@gmail.com](mailto:zettir@gmail.com)  
Atlanta, GA  
[atlanta@peopletribune.org](mailto:atlanta@peopletribune.org)  
Carbondale, IL  
[carbondale@peopletribune.org](mailto:carbondale@peopletribune.org)  
Denver:  
[info@peopletribune.org](mailto:info@peopletribune.org)  
Detroit, MI  
313-438-6115  
Houston, TX  
P O Box 231281, Houston, TX 77223-1281  
Los Angeles, CA  
310-548-6491  
Oakland, CA  
[oakland@peopletribune.org](mailto:oakland@peopletribune.org)  
Washington, DC  
[pt\\_in\\_dmv@yahoo.com](mailto:pt_in_dmv@yahoo.com)



# Stop the rising American police state

## COVER STORY

At a time when poverty is spreading like wildfire and good-paying jobs are a thing of the past for most of us, regardless of color, America's wealthy rulers are trying to keep the working class from turning on them. We can see their strategy in the way the corporate media portrays the ongoing police murders of Black workers: The rulers plan to ensure our working class is divided along lines of color and culture, and get us fighting each other instead of them. In the process they will try to provoke a crisis as an excuse for imposing a full-blown fascist police state.

History offers examples. On February 27, 1933, someone burned down the German parliament (*Reichstag*). The Nazi government falsely portrayed the fire as part of a Communist plot to overthrow the state, and the government suspended constitutional rights and decreed its authority to jail political opponents without specific charges, dissolve political organizations, and suppress publications.

America's rulers are aiming for their own version of the Reichstag fire. First they launch an assault on the workers, focused on the Black workers. Given the legacy of slavery and the history of racism, at least a large section of society can be convinced that the assault is a "Black issue," and therefore not their problem. The ruling class, through its militarized police forces, carries out repeated provocations against the Black workers in particular. The goal is to spark a provocation that will then be used as an excuse for a crackdown. A police state will be imposed in the name of fighting "domestic terrorism." Workers will lose their rights.



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

The rulers need a police state because they have no solution to joblessness and poverty. The computer and the robot have wiped out jobs and created a new section of the working class that is permanently unemployed or marginally employed in low-wage jobs. Those of us who are in this new section of workers are of every color, nationality and age. We are united by our common conditions, and for us there is no resolution to the crisis except to overturn the existing economic system, which is based on the private property of the billionaires, and build a cooperative society where the

means of producing the food, education, healthcare and other necessities are publicly owned and everyone's needs are met. We, the workers who cannot survive under this system, are a threat to the ruling class, and so the rulers must guarantee we are divided, stripped of all rights, and unable to fight.

The protests are showing that we are one people and one class of workers, and an assault on any worker is an assault on every worker, and an attack on democracy. The workers of every color who are being discarded in post-industrial America face a common poverty, a common

oppression and a common enemy. Our enemy is an economic system based on private property and the ruling class that defends it. We can build a new society free of poverty, racism and police terror. The key step is to build a powerful movement that fights every instance of police terror and that is united around a program that our government guarantee the basic necessities of life to everyone. It is in this fight against our common poverty that we can find true unity, true justice and real democracy.

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The *People's Tribune* brings clarity to the growing movement. It unites the movement around a vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it. It has no paid staff and gets no corporate grants. We need your support to continue telling the truth.

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# Skid Row from a women's perspective

By Suzette Shaw  
Skid Row Resident, Poet,  
Feminist Activist



LOS ANGELES, CA — Walking “The Row” I see this brothasista, who is bent over in scanty clothing, consequently revealing

herself. He quickly snaps a photo of her exposed private backside, slinks away with a boyish grin on his face. It’s creepy... While this is happening the police roll by, yet say nothing. As far as I’m concerned... he violated her! Where is the “protect and serve”? If this is not a crime, it should be.

Yet, this is the pervasive sexism which goes on in our country, including here in Skid Row. DWAC (Downtown Women’s Action Coalition) released a report depicting the state of domestic violence done to women here in Skid Row called, “Violence Against Women” (page 16 of “2013 Downtown Women’s

Needs Assessment”). This report was also picked up by *The Huffington Post* entitled: “These Often-Invisible Women Experience Sexual Assault at an Alarming Rate” (written 8/11/14 by Robbie Couch). DWAC’s survey of women also highlighted the disproportionate number who are racial minorities, predominantly African-American.

Further, the report noted an alarming number of older women who dwell in this community. When raising the issue of “Exploitation of Women in Skid Row,” according to the DWAC Assessment, “over the course of their lives, a distressing 31.5% of women have felt the need to

perform a sexual favor in exchange for food, protection, cash and even housing.” So, this is the reality of many women living here in Skid Row.

The assessment goes on to say: “Exploitation of homeless women and extremely low-income women does exist.” Americans detest this plight in other countries yet turn heads to what surrounds us in our homeland... “For those who became homeless after fleeing from violence of sexual assault, re-victimization may compound the trauma from which they fled.” “It is crucial that service providers understand patterns of abuse and be aware of power dynam-

ics at play, as well as advocate to ensure those working with vulnerable populations be held accountable.” Additionally, holding males who perpetuate this “sexist” behavior is a must.

According to the World Health Organization, “Victims of sexual assault are six times more likely to suffer PTSD, 13 times more likely to abuse alcohol, 26 times more likely to abuse drugs.” As Whoopi Goldberg’s character says in the movie *The Color Purple*, “I may be poor, I may be Black. And I may even be ugly. But I’m here. I’m here.” Now, it’s time to do right and do better by the women of this community.

## LA group plans town hall talk fest

By Cathleen Williams

LOS ANGELES, CA — The Los Angeles Community Action Network, (LA CAN) gathers the forces of low income and homeless residents of L.A., and is based in downtown’s Skid Row, where over 13,000 people of all ages and ethnicities live in dire poverty, 3,000 to 5,000 of them sleeping on the streets, in emergency shelters, or in temporary housing.

As property values in the inner city rise, big land owners are pushing for expulsion of these long term residents—just last spring, developer Tom Gilmore, supported by L.A. County Supervisor Gloria Molina, blocked the conversion of the vacant Cecil Hotel into housing that would have served hundreds of homeless people as well as market rate tenants. Just a few months later, “anonymous stakeholders,” with the support of local council member Jose Huizar, along with other officials, published a

“Homeless Initiative” which incorporated a not-so-secret agenda to disperse low income residents and intensify arrests.

LA CAN is grounded on its mission to unify people and to build true power in our diverse communities.

With its community partners, LA CAN is planning a Town Hall meeting, currently scheduled for late January or early February 2015, to address the issues confronting people in poverty, including the demand for adequate housing and the preservation of public housing, such as L.A.’s Jordan Downs, which is scheduled for demolition at a time of acute need. “We have to do our own planning,” says General Dogon, LA CAN organizer. “It’s time to talk back, move forward. We plan to create a community collage of thoughts, questions, proposals—then follow up with work groups—in this time of crisis. Stay tuned through our website for more details.”



Veronica Mackenzie (left) collects her possessions on the sidewalk during her eviction from the nation’s largest homeless encampment, in San Jose, California December 4. The camp was bulldozed and its residents scattered to the streets of the city. PHOTO/ SANDY PERRY

## We can end homelessness in a new society

From the editors of the *People’s Tribune*

Silicon Valley is home to the greatest concentration of wealth and the largest homeless encampment in the country. The city of San Jose recently demolished the encampment and drove the homeless out.

While labor-replacing, computerized technology is creating the greatest abundance the world has ever known, it is creating desperate poverty by eliminating millions of jobs. The problem is that the means of life—the production of food, housing, healthcare, etc.—are privately owned by a handful of billionaires rather than by society as a whole.

The demands of the homeless and all those fighting for survival point the way forward. These demands are revolutionary because they can only be met by a new economic system organized around providing for all, ‘from each according to his ability, to each according to his need.’ We organize ourselves to build this new society.

## Speakers for a New America

Invite speakers to your city who fight for the right to water, homes, health care, against police terror, and for a new society where everyone’s needs are met. Call 800-691-6888. Email [info@speakersforanewamerica.com](mailto:info@speakersforanewamerica.com)

# Shutoffs and foreclosures threaten lives

By Sylvia Orduño, Michigan Welfare Rights Organizer

DETROIT, MI — It has been nearly two months since two United Nations Special Rapporteurs visited Detroit and heard dozens of testimonials and stories about human rights violations against poor and low income residents. In a firm public statement to Detroit and Michigan officials, the United Nations' visitors outlined the governmental responsibilities that municipalities have to their citizens, as stipulated in international agreements signed by the U.S. government. (See the U.N. statement at [ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15188](http://ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15188))

Among the indisputable re-

sponsibilities of government is ensuring that poor residents have access to running water in their homes, and at affordable rates. Without water human life is at risk, especially among the most vulnerable residents like babies, children, the infirmed and people with disabilities.

These reminders to local officials about international human rights treaties did not move them to act. In fact, they were indignant that "outsiders" dared to come to their town and tell them what should be done. Thousands of poor Detroiters are still living without water and many families are still apart as parents protect their children from forced separation by human service authorities.

Above and beyond this, over

100,000 low-income residents in Wayne County, Michigan have been issued tax foreclosure notices against their homes. The majority of these have been delivered to Detroit residents—many of whom have had disputed overdue water bills placed on their homes as tax liens.

Low temperatures have settled in to the region creating additional hardship for people who live in homes heated by radiator steam. And to make matters worse, DTE Energy has begun a massive number of shutoffs for customers with overdue bills on electricity and natural gas. *They are truly trying to kill us!*

There is no doubt we are witnessing unprecedented attacks on the working class, some of which we might have not be-

lieved would ever happen in this country. Corporations and politicians are denying people the basics of life as they collude to privatize and profit from public assets.

The Michigan Welfare Rights Organization's office is deluged daily by people desperately wanting to know where to find help on their utility and housing needs. The answers are always the same: there is almost no help as governments cut away at public assistance services; and non-profit agencies funded by corporations frequently limit assistance through restrictions.

It's incredible to see how much poor people can bear and manage with so little. Rarely are we asked what can be done to change the situation. Voting

is not the answer nor is simply marching on the streets. We need to reject outright this unjust economic system that benefits the few and build a new system that prioritizes the human rights of the many.

We begin this by refuting the denial of water, utilities and housing to local officials and demanding provisions that protect life. There are successful examples of this all around us that get magnified through storytelling and images shared around the world. We harness our power for change when we reject decisions that prioritize profits over people for the kind of world we want and deserve.



Protests against the cut off of water to thousands of residents in Detroit, MI. Water shutoffs show the capitalists care nothing for workers they can no longer exploit. PHOTOS/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

## The Untouchables return

By Maureen D. Taylor, State Chairperson, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization

DETROIT, MI — It must be clear that the current state of the union is "scary." From coast to coast, events are unfolding that are frightening every working class person without exception. The cost of living continues to go up, while the chances of living continues to go down, with no relief in sight. The "schizophrenic" Wall Street daily reports are a clear demonstration of how unpredictable the economy is. Even elite corporate managers answering directly to the private property ruling class can't stabilize profits from day to day. World-wide production

of necessities of life is increasing while consumption is shrinking in most markets. Unless we get a better grip on the reason for such events, we will keep hoping the enemy will help us escape our misery.

The American working class is experiencing "terror" everyday at work and deeply concerned if the next generation can survive. So many horrible events are confronting us—teenagers and others in low income communities murdered by rogue cops with no one held responsible over and over again... mass water shutoffs in urban cities again where low income families reside... city roads are in the worst shape since records were kept. Also, we see frequent

oil spills, non-stop strip-mining, the oil pipe-line discussion—all examples of the on-going destruction of Mother Earth. It is becoming clear these events are a direct effect of new policies or rules of operation in our society.

It is easy to recant the list of problems that we face because there are so many but something is DIFFERENT this time. The health of society is determined and managed by the ability to provide the basics—food, clothing, shelter, education, safety and health care. Access to these factors determining survival is determined by social policy, rules and laws that control how we interact between the classes. The American worker is not faring well these days in these six

critical areas. The twin political parties represent the interests of the richest 1%. The problem lies in the permanent loss of work for millions.

Technology used to enhance labor is now permanently replacing the working class in production. This major distinction must be studied and reckoned with if we are to survive the epochal changes in our world. How do we find a place in this new world unless we understand that the new policymakers and sheriffs in town don't care about democracy or humanity?

In the block-buster movie "The Untouchables," the Eliot Ness character suggested that his crime-fighting investigators were stumped, not know-

ing what else to do to stop the spread of organized crime. His usual tactics were not working and their efforts were ineffective. His chief lieutenant asked the question we should be asking today... "What are you prepared to do about this"? Our usual tactics don't work, and past efforts engaged to secure our standard of living are ineffective today.

Should we consider policies that can unite the new way of producing our necessities with the interests of the working class? Can we consider nationalization of productive assets (i.e. the transfer of private assets to state ownership) to harness them to serve all the workers? (To be continued.)



## This is not a 'moment.' This is a 'movement'

*Editor's Note: The People's Tribune's Cathy Talbott interviewed Cheyenne Green, one of the founding members of "Lost Voices," a grass roots organization that came together spontaneously during the Ferguson Missouri uprising.*

*People's Tribune: How did Lost Voices get started?*

**Cheyenne:** None of us knew each other before (Mike Brown's murder). It is a group of people who recognized each other's faces from marching. The first night we had the free assembly, we could stay twenty-four hours if we were peacefully protesting. We decided to stay outside. We stayed there on concrete, then we progressed to a cardboard box, then got a sheet for the box, then built it up to like a little home with tents. We've grown from ten of us originally, ages 13 to 47.

*PT: We understand the police destroyed your encampment.*

**Cheyenne:** They invaded us three times. After 47 days we stopped camping out. It was getting too dangerous. They were aggressive, trying to lock us up, taking our belongings. We had permission from the owners of each of the three sites we moved to. The last time two members got arrested; one for saying "give us more than 5 minutes to get our things" and another for recording the cops.

*PT: What kind of organizing are you doing?*

**Cheyenne:** We are really involved in the community. We're on the ground in the streets every day. We're definitely strategizing and coming up with plans. This is not a "moment." This is a "movement." We are going to continue with the "Mike Brown" campaign and we started a plat-

form for Kajieme Powell and Vonderrit Meyers to remember all these people from St. Louis killed after Mike Brown.

*PT: What is the mood after the failure to indict Wilson? Is there fear of the police?*

**Cheyenne:** It's calmer since most of the people from out of town have left. The night of the announcement Deandre Joshua was found shot in the head and burned in his car nearby. I believe that was KKK or a hit because he testified at the Grand Jury hearing (against Wilson). We're definitely investigating that ourselves. Something is not right about that. There is absolutely no fear. We're definitely standing our ground. If you (police) are not going to be for the community, then the community is going to police you back.

*PT: Do you have a vision for a new society?*

**Cheyenne:** We want to create a new system that's actually for the people. We're getting a community center together for GED and mentoring programs and counseling for those in Canfield who saw (Mike's) body lying there for 4 ½ hours. The big goal is to start getting some schools with new books and things you need in everyday life.

*PT: What else would you like to tell our readers?*

**Cheyenne:** Stay positive. Pray for Ferguson. Don't believe the media (like Fox2 News). They have people thinking that we're some crazy maniacs instead of the fact that we were peacefully protesting and the police started pouring tear gas everywhere. The media is false.

*For more information contact [www.thelostvoices.org](http://www.thelostvoices.org)*



**Cheyenne Green (left), one of the founding members of "Lost Voices," a grassroots group in Ferguson, MO.**

PHOTO/ADRIAN GARCIA

## From Detroit to Ferguson with love

**By Roshaun L. Harris**

DETROIT, MI — The month of October launched a series of organized protest, marches, lectures, and actions of civil disobedience in response to the murder of Mike Brown. "#Ferguson October" is more than just a twitter handle. It is the insignia of a burgeoning movement spawned by the response to the Mike Brown slaughter at the hands of the Police. The city of Shaw, Missouri recently witnessed the murder of one of their young African-American community members as well. The purpose of "#Ferguson October" was to educate people and resist the militarization of the police in the U.S., not just in Shaw and Ferguson, MO.

The new form of fascism that we see in this country has been a more recent phenomena based on changes in the economy which is eliminating workers from the point of production and placing them in situations where their livelihood is tenuous. In order to subdue any resistance to these macro-economic changes to the political infrastructure of this society, which is purely capitalist, they have dispatched the goons to keep the people in order. It takes form in many different realities, but the most evi-

dent currently is the relationship between the police and many working class African-American communities. The Mike Brown murder has often been discussed as an issue, solely, of blatant racism. History tells us that racism is one of the many byproducts of a fascist society.

There is no denying that racism is present on a systemic level with mass incarceration and police brutality the lynchpins of those arguments. The response by the police and society as a whole has its roots in the construct of our society's political economy and how that has changed so drastically. Why do the police need to be militarized? Why does the working class need to be divided into racial and ethnic categories?

Being involved in the "#Ferguson October" movement, and coming from Detroit where we've had our share of racist and fascist responses by the local, state, and federal government, it's clear why the movement building in Ferguson and beyond is vital. Bringing a delegation of activists from Detroit that included different sectors of the movement was a key learning apparatus. It spoke to the multi-dimensional aspect of the overall class struggle.

We all are involved in different struggles but it was apparent



**Protest in Ferguson, MO., following the announcement that the officer that killed Mike Brown would not be indicted.**

PHOTO/ADRIAN GARCIA

that this situation needed everyone's attention, energy, and effort. Not only does the Brown family deserve it, but the entire working class Black, Brown, and white deserves to know the true nature of the beast they are facing and start to build strategies on how to defeat it.

This is no longer a Black struggle, or a youth struggle, or

even a struggle between which struggle is the most prescient. This is about class struggle and for the first time, our society

is being put "on blast", as one young person from Ferguson remarked at a rally near their police station, for its problems.

**See Page 12 for more on the rising police state**



The underpinning of the rising police state is the changing economy and the mass poverty it produces. As the class aspects of the struggle become clear, the police more and more separate themselves from society and govern solely through force since the precedent has already been set by the attacks against the minorities.

## Voices from the movement

“We see hyper-policing at the same time we see people underemployed and underpaid. We have state-sanctioned violence at the same time we have the state refusing to expand the minimum wage so that people can feed their babies... These are the circumstances and conditions that bred the Ferguson uprising, and they are happening in Atlanta and in cities and towns and rural communities all over the United States.”

— Mary Hooks, organizer, *Southerners on New Ground (SONG)*, speaking to *Atlanta Progressive News*

“After the Ferguson verdict, night after night was wild. We went to West County Mall and started chanting. At first there wasn’t anyone trying to join, but then a group of Caucasian kids were the first ones to join. It surprised me. We said “No Justice.” They said “No peace.” I was happy but shocked. It sent a powerful message. A lot of people are waking up.”

— Derrick Givens, Ferguson area

“‘This is not a problem of black and white, but of right and wrong,’ said Tamir Rice’s uncle, Michael Petty, about the police killing in Cleveland of his 12-year old nephew.”

— From an article by Connie Schultz on *creators.com*



One of almost daily protests against police violence led by the Black Youth Forum in New Orleans.

PHOTO/TED QUANT

“Ferguson was not an isolated incident. It was a spark that has ignited people all across the country. We continue to stand at a critical junction. Meaning, will true revolution and revival be sparked in this country or is this another moment? In order to make this transformational, I believe we need more of the masses engaged and resisting the police. This movement needs to be connected to similar international struggles happening around the world. All the while, it must be supported and reinforced by strong historical and critical analysis.”

— Jayme Baker, *Hands Up United*, Ferguson

“About 400 marchers took to the Houston streets in the third ward after the Ferguson grand jury decided not to indict officer Darren Wilson. The march snaked through the third ward community and bystanders were successfully convinced to join in. The march included people from all walks of life, of all ages and nationality.”

— Paul Garner, Houston

“How can they expect us not to be angry when we are met with violence and militarization daily? While I’m tired and sickened, I know that’s what they want. They want us to feel broken, they want us to cower, and they want us to tear our communities apart. As the Mexican Proverb says, ‘They tried to bury us, but they didn’t know we were seeds.’ But we have to realize we are seeds, that we have strength in our DNA. We have to strategize.”

— Ife Sangode-Olaitan, student and community activist, Los Angeles

“I am so tired of hearing the phrase ‘Outside Agitators’ created by the police and hyped by the news media. Those people are supporters of the cause, not agitators. I am happy that the world has come together for a shared purpose. I personally welcome all the outside support we can get because we can’t do this alone.”

— Velma Robinson, St. Louis

## Police violence against the dispossessed: The new normal?



Family of baby Bounkham Phonesavah, who spent weeks in a burn unit after a SWAT team’s flash grenade exploded in his crib, near his face. There were no criminal charges against the police nor reimbursement to the family for medical expenses.

PHOTO/MARCUS COLEMAN

By John Slaughter

ATLANTA, GA — In the dead of night in the Appalachian hills in Habersham County, Georgia, a SWAT team executed a no-knock warrant on a home where drugs were suspected. They smashed in the door and tossed in a flash-bang grenade. The grenade landed in the crib of a 19-month old baby and exploded. The baby almost died, and is maimed for life. No drugs were found. After a lengthy investigation a grand jury found the cops involved not guilty of any crime.

Also in Georgia the family of Jack Lamar Roberson called 911 for medical help because the 43-year-old man was having an adverse reaction to medication he took for his diabetes. Instead of medical assistance, the police arrived and shot the man dead in front of his mother and his 8

year-old son.

In South Carolina a man standing by his truck at a convenience store was ordered by police to produce a drivers license, and when he reached into his truck to retrieve his license, he was shot. A woman walking away from a scene in Florida is tasered in the back. A couple with two children in the car is pulled over by police in Hammond, Indiana for not wearing their seat belts, and when out of fear the man, Jamal Jones, refuses to get out of the car, the cops smash in the window and taser the man in front of the mother and children.

These are only a few of a long line of incidents of police violence and terror that stretches all the way to Ferguson, and from there, across this country. Most of these cases are targeted against African Americans

or other minorities, but not all. Some are white. In just about every case, what they all have in common is that they come from the have-nots of society, those on the bottom who find themselves excluded, disposable.

In virtually every case, the police are found to be not guilty of any crime. They are routinely found to be following standard procedure or accepted protocols. And that is precisely the problem. Police force is exercised as a means of control over those who have no choice but to fight for their very survival. Police violence perpetrated against this impoverished and dispossessed section is the new normal.

Ferguson is a testament that the people, however, will not cower before tanks and armored personnel carriers, before tear gas and a militarized police force. If police violence and ter-

ror is the cutting edge of the destruction of our democracy, the people will rise to the challenge.

It is more than ironic that less than four miles from the place where Michael Brown was gunned down is the burial place of Dred Scott. Dred Scott was a slave who sued for his freedom in Missouri in 1857, and the Supreme Court denied him on the grounds that as a slave he had no rights that a white man was bound to respect. That decision made the Civil War inevitable.

Today Dred Scott is being revisited, but this time rewritten to state that the dispossessed impoverished and excluded class has no rights that the police are bound to respect. As before, this cannot be allowed to stand.



## Poets explore vision of a new world

By Sarah Menefee

*Editor's Note: The comments below, made by poet and organizer Sarah Menefee, wrapped up a powerful seven-hour event titled 'Overthrowing Capitalism.' Sponsored by the Revolutionary Poets Brigade, it had two forums of speakers and dozens of poets and musicians. It was held on November 15 at the Emerald Tablet in San Francisco.*

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — What an inspiring and uplifting chorus of voices we've heard today, each uniquely expressing something all of us share—the desire and determination to put an end

to the exploitation and suffering built into the capitalist economic system and the alienated death culture it creates. Our common vision is to replace it with one built on peace and cooperation, a world where all have everything they need to express themselves materially, culturally and spiritually.

We are heartened as we're reminded by these strong and dedicated thinkers and artists how many of us are about this work of evolution/revolution, each in her or his unique way, representing billions with the same dreams. Our desire today has

been to bring these practical visionaries together to inspire each other in our ongoing work for

***Our common vision is to replace [the capitalist system] with one built on peace and cooperation... where all have everything they need to express themselves materially, culturally and spiritually.***

social transformation. So many now are dedicating themselves to this epochal and joyous task,

expressed in passionate action, as reflected in the words of the organizers and activists, thinkers, poets, and musicians we heard today.

Out of the self-destruction of the unjust and unsustainable capitalist system and its widening cracks comes the zeitgeist of the new and the energies to change it once and for all. The new technologies that are making capitalism a dying dinosaur by eliminating jobs, and thus the wage-slavery that it depends on, would in the hands of our people set the conditions for the liberating of all and the sharing of the

abundance it creates.

There is no excuse for homelessness, hunger, want, crushing poverty, planetary destruction, war and the fascism that upholds this system of artificial scarcity, extreme obscene wealth for the few and crushing poverty and misery for billions. It is in the interest of the vast majority of the world's people, and the survival of all life, that we share our common vision with all its beautiful facets, and take it back out into our work and our lives, to be freely shared. "There is no force on earth stronger than an idea whose time has come."



(Left) Protest against education cuts in Chicago. (Right) Chicago children having fun.

PHOTOS/SARAH JANE RHEE

## What kind of world is possible?

*Editor's note: This article is excerpts from the book, "The Future is Up To Us," by Nelson Peery.*

We're talking about a world where the robots are cranking twenty-four hours a day. We're talking about a world where everybody becomes involved in the development of society, its spiritual development. We're talking about a world of happy people. We're talking about entering a stage of development that's no longer controlled by scarcity. We can talk in terms of abundance today as that abundance is here. All you have to do is look in the big box stores. There is plenty of

plenty. The problem is distribution. If the producing class does not own its production there will be shortages in the midst of plenty. This is the basis of social strife. When we do away with that, we can begin to build the positive thing, happiness. Happiness is an emotion that arises with contribution. This contribution can be in the form of raising a child, of painting a picture, of building an organization or a neighborhood. Happiness is a social thing. The idea is to have as full a life as humanly possible. This demands, first, that we struggle to create the conditions for a full life while we are here.

Up to this point all we've re-

ally been is animals. Reacting to scarcity, struggling to get food, struggling to get a house, struggling to get an education, struggling for all these things. If these necessities are in abundance then we can turn to the real matters of life, the intellectual, cultural and interactive wellbeing. So for the first time we will truly create our own history.

We create our history now, but under defined circumstances that limit our choices. We're talking today about an end to the struggle over allocation of scarcity. We're talking about no longer having to struggle about getting a house. They will be stamped out by a robot at a factory. We

will no longer worry about getting food, no longer worry about getting an education. Then, we can go ahead and create.

Some people say this heaven sounds a little dull. But if things were dull in heaven, so many people wouldn't spend so much time trying to get there. We are still going to be boogying and falling in love and raising our babies. We are going to do all the things that make us happy. The only dull thing that we'll get rid of is groping along for a living. Piling those bricks two on one, one on two. That's the dull part of my life. Dancing and reading books has never been dull to me.

What we are talking about is the ability of human beings to grab hold of themselves and their destiny and create a history of accomplishments. Accomplishments will be things that we choose to do, not that which we have to do. When we set about reconstructing the earth, for example, becoming part of the earth, again, I think that will be a real accomplishment. Happiness will arise in that process. What would you do with yourself if you no longer had to worry about your food, shelter, and healthcare? I know what I'd do.



# Chicago elections and the fight for necessities

By Lew Rosenbaum

CHICAGO, IL — Chicagoans are focused on one of the most contested, interesting elections in years. For four years, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and his corporate thieves have imposed their agenda, clearly seen in education. Following the historic closing of 50 schools two years ago, frustrated activist teachers and parents began building for the February, 2015 elections. They planned to win the seats of Rahm’s alderpuppets in city council. Democrats occupy all the aldermanic offices, so the campaigns can challenge the way the Democrats run Chicago and the Democratic Party itself.

The campaigns have become a battleground for the needs of those whom Chicago’s corporate elite have discarded. The “Fight for Fifteen” and the “Our Walmart” movements, which had nationwide strikes following Thanksgiving, forced attention to the minimum wage. To co-opt these movements, Rahm Emanuel pushed a minimum wage bill, approved with only four dissenting votes. His bill will increase the minimum wage to \$10 in June 2015 and up to \$13 in 2019.

Dianne Daleiden is running for alderman in the 40<sup>th</sup> ward,

challenging Rahm’s floor leader Pat O’Connor. She is a math teacher in the Chicago Public Schools and a member of the Caucus Of Rank-and-file Educators (CORE) in the teachers’ union. She responded by writing: “What passed today helps, but it is only an extra 98 cents an hour BEFORE TAXES each year for the next five years... I support \$15 an hour NOW for workers at corporations grossing over \$50 million a year...”

Zerlina Smith, running in Chicago’s West Side 29<sup>th</sup> ward, is an “independent grassroots activist” and also a member of CORE. She told us: “The minimum wage passed by the City Council is inadequate. We need \$15 an hour now. Not \$13 in 2019”

The Chicago Board of Education, appointed by the Mayor, is dominated by corporate leaders like investment banker David Vitale. Rahm’s alderpuppets tried to block a referendum on an elected board. With 66,000 signatures, petitioners got the referendum on the ballot in 38 of the 50 wards. Smith and Daleiden support the referendum. Further, Smith declared, “We need fully-funded neighborhood schools with rich curricula and full wrap-around services that stimulate students to think and create. The



Protest in Chicago over the cutbacks on public education. The Chicago Board of Education, appointed by the Mayor, is dominated by corporate leaders. PHOTO/SARAH JANE RHEE

practice of allocating resources by race has to stop, as does the testing abuse that is killing our children’s love of learning.”

The common program of many of the independent aldermanic campaigns represents an effort to move from scattered, isolated battles to raise the questions politically. Education no

longer guarantees a good job, as jobs are being automated. The minimum wage guarantees a life of poverty. Even the very lives of the poor are in jeopardy, as police run rampant and the justice system does not hold them accountable.

The campaigns for elections in February can mark a turning

point in bringing people together to fight not only for a change in the city council, but also strengthening the movement for food, housing, education, health care and an opportunity to contribute to society: the demand for a cooperative society.

## Pain...

I live in Detroit, a full time zone apart  
Why does this latest death so affect my heart?  
Little slices of Motown are choked off every day  
Bankruptcy, no water, too many tragedies to say.  
No work, less hope, police brutality now and then  
Something about Trayvon, Michael, and Eric create a frightening trend.  
It might look like the color thing is the over-riding theme  
It is the historical brush that paints over the American dream.  
A deeper look reveals that color is just the front door  
That takes us to protecting and serving the 1% for sure.  
The police are supposed to protect and serve, and these officers did not do.  
For these residents and others were murdered by a lawless crew.  
What these names and all the others share as each one died  
Is their working class connection to which each soul is forever tied.  
They come from communities of courage where working families strive  
The salt of the earth, the nation’s blood, now life forever denied.  
The legacy this country ignores, the haves and the have-nots exist  
We grasp this fact soon, or peace and tranquility will be constantly missed.  
I expect more pain, more tears until we unite on the basis of class  
When that moment arrives, we can stop being kicked in the ass.  
I live in Detroit, under attack, dictators in charge of my nights and days  
But the sleeping giant is awaking up as we enter the future’s next phase.  
All of this misery stops, the 1% is out of luck  
As we get smarter, we save the world, and force these corporate pirates to ask, WTF!!!  
It ain’t gonna stop unless we better understand the world  
So we must demand freedom and unity for every little boy and girl. We do!!!

— Maureen D Taylor, State Chairperson, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization



Maureen D. Taylor, state chair, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM



People’s Tribune Radio podcasts are available at [peopletribune.org](http://peopletribune.org). Hear from people at the forefront of the struggles for a new America.





**Chicago protest for jobs with justice. The fight for the rights of all begins with the fight for the rights of the poverty wage workers, regardless of nationality or color.** PHOTO CREDIT/ADRIAN GARCIA

# Unite as one class

**From the Editors of the People's Tribune**

The issue of immigration and immigration reform must be understood within the context of a global capitalist system and the transformation of an economy based on wage-labor to one based on electronic production. Workers, including the undocumented, cannot survive without jobs. Yet it is exactly that—"jobs"—which the global corporations continue to eliminate as they scramble to maximize profits.

As more goods and services are produced with less labor, driving down wages and eliminating jobs altogether, poorer workers migrate to richer countries in their quest for survival for themselves and their families. Today one in three workers worldwide are migrants.

In the U.S., the effect of technology at the workplace and globalization is unemployment and underemployment, and it is affecting more and more workers who once had stable employment and benefits. Over a third of the workforce consists of part-time, contingent, minimum-wage or

below minimum-wage workers. Structural unemployment is estimated to be around 40%. Today in the U.S. one in three children live in poverty and it is estimated that three million children are homeless. Fifty percent of all Americans live at or below poverty while a high percentage of seniors face their "golden years" living precariously.

The migrant workers are an integral part of this section of the U.S. working class. Their protests, civil disobedience and demands for immigration reform, decent housing, health care, education for their children, and jobs and a way out of poverty are pushing the struggle forward, and represent the demands of every worker.

To continue their rule in the face of a dying system, the ruling class cannot allow the working class to unite. They must use divide and conquer tactics to keep workers fighting each other for the crumbs. The immigration reforms, issued by executive order but not passed by Congress, must be viewed as one such tactic.

One of the effects of these executive orders will be to exclude

over six million of the undocumented living in the U.S. Many families will continue to be separated. Militarization of the border will increase. While some immigrant workers will likely benefit from work permits, they will not be eligible for such benefits as health care. Migrants will continue to be used as scapegoats to divide workers along color lines. The rulers will continue to proclaim that migrants are "taking the jobs" (that the system itself is eliminating.)

New electronic forms of production promise a world of abundance for all without the back-breaking toil of yesteryear. But left in the hands of the tiny class who own this "private property," workers become superfluous, increasingly faced with a violent police state when they present their demands.

Let us unite now around our common economic interests and fight forward to a new cooperative society; one in which we share equally in this abundance. To get there, we have to embrace the immigrant worker as part of our working class and defend their human rights.

## The global climate strike: Why we can't wait

**By Ben Manski & Dr. Jill Stein**

NEW YORK, NEW YORK — The world's capitals will not end the old economy or deliver the new one. We can't wait any longer because every day of waiting reduces our window for action. We need not wait because we already hold the knowledge needed for creating the new economy.

You may think that Wall Street or Washington D.C. will change course and lead our economy in a new, climate-neutral direction. If so, read no further.

But if you are unwilling to entrust your future to the money men and the political class, then consider this: Regardless of who you are, the person who holds the most power in the world to end the climate crisis may be you.

One way to guarantee an end to the climate crisis is to stop doing the things that are heating the planet. Stop fossil fuel production and use. Stop greenhouse gas emissions. Stop rainforest devastation. And since the corporate and political capitals of the world are unwilling to stop themselves, we must stop them ourselves.

We can stop them by refusing

our participation and cooperation. We can stop them by withholding our labor. By folding our arms we can halt the machine responsible for the climate crisis and in one fell swoop create the space for the new, green economy to take root. We should go on strike.

A global climate strike is a next step in the international uprising that insists that another world is possible. That uprising has taken to the streets in the tens of millions. It has even occupied capitol buildings and the halls of capital. Yet the street demonstrations have yet to work because most global elites are not listening and will not listen. And while the occupations and blockades have succeeded here and there, the bulldozers of profit keep moving everywhere else. It is time to shock the system with a global climate strike.

A global climate strike stops the economic and political systems responsible for the climate crisis. Workers and students stop their usual work. Machines and money stop moving. And in anticipation, communities step forward into the breach to build the new economy that puts people and planet over profit.



**Hundreds of thousands of New York City marchers participated in the Global People's Climate March in September, 2014.** PHOTO/ POOR PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

A global climate strike might last a few days, or weeks, or at some point, it might move forward without end. It will be a global strike because the climate crisis is not a national problem, it is a systems problem. The system of global capitalism dominates much of the world and it will take a worldwide movement to

stop this system. The strike may begin in 10 or 20 countries, and in particular economic sectors, but from there, it must spread.

*Dr. Jill Stein is the President of the Green Shadow Cabinet and the 2012 Green Party candidate for president of the United States. Ben Manski serves as*

*Special Advisor to the President on the Green Shadow Cabinet. To respond to this proposal please contact the Green Shadow Cabinet at [greenshadowcabinet.us/contact-green-shadow-cabinet](http://greenshadowcabinet.us/contact-green-shadow-cabinet)*



# We Charge Genocide: A historical moment

*Editor's Note: In November, the People's Tribune's Adam Gottlieb interviewed 19-year-old Ethan Viets-Vanlear, one of eight young delegates of "We Charge Genocide," (WCG) a grassroots effort in Chicago to empower the voices of young people targeted by police violence. That day, the delegates flew to Geneva, Switzerland, to present a Shadow Report to the United Nations Committee Against Torture (UNCAT).*

*Adam Gottlieb: What were your personal reasons for getting involved with WCG?*

**Ethan Viets-Vanlear:** After the murder of my friend Dominique Franklin by the Chicago Police Department I was really disempowered. I didn't feel like there was enough organizing around it. I wanted to go run to the police station, I was so angry. So then when this organization popped up, and all this stuff with Mike Brown started happening, and the energy really got under it, I joined We Charge Genocide, and joined the delegation when they asked me to. For Dominique, really, and the continued violence against young people in the city.

*AG: What are the goals of this delegation?*

**EV:** First of all, we want the U.N. to call what the Chicago Police Department has been doing torture, to classify it as torture. We also want a state program to go investigate the CPD because right now they just are not being held accountable. We also want reparations for the families that have been affected by police violence. And we have more demands in our Shadow Report. But the U.N. has no real control over what the U.S. does. We're not really expecting too much from the U.S. government, or from the state. But... the organizing we can do around us traveling to Geneva, and continuing this energy that has been built around us going out there is really where I see it.

*AG: Why does WCG focus so much on youth voices?*

**EV:** Our report and WCG focus on representing young people who have been affected by police violence. We didn't want to continue with the paternalistic model of organizing that is so pervasive in non-profits in this country of adults speaking on behalf of young people, or hosting



The "We Charge Genocide" delegates join hands in a silent protest at the United Nations Committee against Torture hearing in Geneva, Switzerland.

PHOTO/WE CHARGE GENOCIDE

young people's stories... being the catalyst to young people's stories getting attention, but really giving us young people the right to speak our own truth and tell our own story. Some people have been like, "Oh, it's so exciting that you young people are doing this." But really, no one but young people has led any

social movement in this country. It's always the young people who are the driving force, the heartbeat of the movement. So, while it gets displayed as surprising... it's not farfetched or out of the ordinary, really, when you're looking back at the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, or the Black Panther

Party, or all these organizations that really led movements.

*Follow We Charge Genocide. Read the Shadow Report to the U.N., donate, and get involved through their website: [wechargegenocide.org](http://wechargegenocide.org)*

## Pentagon supplies L.A. Unified School District with combat weapons

**By Nathalie Bonilla,  
Co-President, San Pedro  
High School Peace Club**

*"Due to public outcry, school districts nationwide are debating whether to keep their Pentagon issued assault rifles..."*

*Muckrock.com*

LOS ANGELES, CA — Much controversy has arisen over recent revelations about the distribution of military combat weapons to school districts and local law enforcement. These weapons have immense firepower and could ultimately pose a threat against the public's comfort and safety. Many Americans are frightened and feel threatened by having weapons of war in their community.

Events in Ferguson, Missouri, where the police department deployed tanks and military style weapons against residents peacefully protesting the police killing of an unarmed civilian brought the nation's attention to the issue of law enforcement's access to

more powerful deadly weapons such as: grenade launchers, armored vehicles, and m16 rifles. Why should we the people allow such threatening weapons into our neighborhoods?

Our Los Angeles School District agreed to return the grenade launchers obtained from the Pentagon, but refuses to relinquish the assault rifles and mine-resistant vehicle. Are assault rifles or tanks really necessary on our school campuses? A militarized environment would only cause more weariness and disillusionment amongst the students, skeptical about the claims that school districts need these weapons because of the number of mass shootings on school campuses—particularly in the light of the disturbingly high number of police shootings of unarmed civilians nationwide.

What does the distribution of lethal weapons to law enforcement and school officials look like? The government can give arbitrary explanations, but if we analyze this situation objectively

we can only assume the worst. It is almost as if the government wants to use these weapons in the future to control us.

Officials such as San Diego Unified School District Police Chief Rueben Littlejohn claim that such arms will be used for protection of the public and its students, citing the example of Sandy Hook Elementary School. But what exactly do we need protection from? Do we not spend billions of dollars already to keep warfare outside of our nation? These questions arise because of the excess militarization of first our local police departments, and now our school police departments! However, the underlying question is, what is the government preparing for? Is it protection from foreign emissaries or domestic uprisings?

With these troubling questions in mind, we should stand up and fight against the acquisition of deadly weapons within our communities. Let us educate the public about what is re-



More and more high school students (like these in Los Angeles) are becoming aware of the dangers of militarization on their campuses.

PHOTO/REBECA VILLEGAS

ally going on around them and why it is not acceptable. Then we can unite and protest so that the Los Angeles School District will agree to give up its extra assault rifles and ominous MRAP tank. For we are a nation that

stands united when certain situations contradict our democratic way of life; thus, we should strive to correct any inconsistencies no matter how daunting they may be.



# Community leader jailed for 2 1/2 to 10 years **THIS FIGHT WILL GO ON UNTIL WE WIN!**

## Rev. Edward Pinkney's statement to the Judge

*Editor's note: The following are excerpts from a statement that Rev. Pinkney made in the courtroom to the judge right before he was sentenced.*

"I've committed no crime. In fact, if I was anyone else, I would not be here. I can't say if anyone changed the dates on the petitions. The prosecutor knows I haven't committed any crime.

I minister to people in this courtroom. I've been fighting to bring about a change in our community.

Nowhere in the history of mankind can a person be convicted of a crime with no evidence. The jury was motivated by something other than the truth. I am very disappointed in the system itself. The jury took an oath that justice would be served. They failed the people of Benton Harbor and Berrien County. I know there was a ju-

rist who lied to be on the jury. Still, I'm standing here. I could not believe the jury would find me guilty if they followed the instructions.

We have to take a stand against some of the things that have happened in Benton Harbor. I can't say if someone changed the dates but the prosecutor knows I didn't do it. My wife and children are hurt.

I will continue to fight. Over

90% of the people of Benton Harbor stand with me and understand there's no evidence. I'm hurt. I can't see how something like this can happen."

— Rev. Edward Pinkney

***Pinkney may go on hunger strike for justice. The People's Tribune will publish more information as we get it.***



(Right) Rev. Pinkney and his wife Dorothy outside courthouse.

PHOTO/SANDY REID, PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

(Below, right) Benton Harbor residents express their outrage.

PHOTO/BOB LEE, PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

(Below, left) Supporters in the courtroom gather around Mrs. Pinkney.

PHOTO/DONATED



## Imprisoning leaders will not stop the movement

**From the Editors of the People's Tribune**

On December 15, Rev. Edward Pinkney of Benton Harbor, Mich. was sentenced to 2 1/2 to 10 years in prison on a trumped-up charge of changing dates on petitions to recall Benton Harbor's mayor. There was no evidence to prove he had done anything wrong. Everyone familiar with Rev. Pinkney and the struggle in Benton Harbor knows this was a political show trial, intended to remove a leader in the fight against the corporations and intimidate the people. But the people will not be intimidated.

This is the second time in seven years that Pinkney has been charged with so-called "election fraud," when his real crime has been to try and use the electoral process to represent the true interests of the people. At the sentencing, Judge Sterling Schrock had the nerve to say Pinkney had "disenfranchised" people by undermining their faith in the electoral process. Wasn't it really the State of Michigan, which the judge represents, that has disenfranchised people by imposing unelected emergency managers on a number of cities, including Benton Harbor? Hasn't the peo-

ple's faith in government actually been undermined by the government's refusal to provide justice in the numerous police killings, and by the government's denying even food, water and housing to those who need it?

The government at every level, from the president down to the street cop, is in the pocket of the corporations and their billionaire owners. We are living under a corporate dictatorship that is steadily moving toward open fascism. This is so because the billionaire-controlled economic system we have today is providing for fewer and fewer people. The computer and the robot offer the corporations more production with less labor, and so the jobs have been wiped out in Michigan and throughout the country. The result is growing permanent unemployment for many and poverty-wage jobs for those still working. Today, those demanding jobs and living wages are a threat to the system because they are demanding what the system can no longer provide. So the corporations make war on us. Democracy is wiped out to hobble our ability to resist, racism is used to keep us from uniting around our common class interests, and we are threatened with

police terror and prison cells.

What Whirlpool Corp. and their servants in Berrien County have done to Pinkney is a metaphor for what the corporations are doing to the whole country. The entire working class is under attack. This case makes clear, once again, that the people will never get justice from a government that is in the hands of the corporations.

Imagine the society we could have if the people controlled the government and owned the means of producing the wealth, instead of the corporations and billionaires. We could end poverty. We could guarantee democracy, justice and fairness. As we defend our leaders and confront every act of injustice, we, the people, should think about how we can build the consciousness and organization to wage the struggle for a new society. Uniting around the demand that the government guarantee the basic necessities of life for all is key. Such fighting unity will make us unstoppable.

*The People's Tribune has been in this struggle since the beginning in 2005 and will continue to publicize it until justice is served.*

## Voices from Benton Harbor

*Editor's Note: Cops banged on people's doors, intimidating the community, but people are still fighting. Here are voices of some Benton Harbor leaders.*

"They wrongfully convicted a man who did no crime. This is like a set up. They don't ship people off that fast to prison. They took him immediately. We have a lot of people, a lot of groups, and we need to come together.

— Marquette Coates, Benton Harbor

This is Berrien County, home of the KKK. They are hanging us like they did in the old days, but they do it in the court now. What they did to Rev. Pinkney was a shame. They have people in high places found guilty of theft who get no time. Even the Sheriff has violated laws and has been in court for about three weeks. He still gets paid and still runs this county. We need to get out here, stick together and fight.

— Emma Kinnard, Benton Harbor

"They say you have a right to the first amendment and a right to be a activist. But you have a brief in your hand that shows there was a plant on the jury. You have evidence that this juror knew law enforcement, knew the county clerk, that she is in with them. They chose not to discuss this. They are just buying time to decide how to handle this.

— Dorothy Pinkney, Benton Harbor

"The County Commissioners have been stealing money, hundreds of thousands of dollars, and they're not going to jail. Pinkney tries to speak the truth and they railroad him!"

— Pati Heinz, Benton Harbor

"The sentencing, the ruling by the jury reflects that this was a kangaroo court."

— Marcus Muhammad, Benton Harbor City Commissioner

***Free Pinkney! There will be an appeal. For information on future efforts, go to [peopletribune.org](http://peopletribune.org).***