Special Coverage:

Minister imprisoned for speaking out against corporate power

See page 12

COMMON POVERTY: BASIS FOR CLASS UNITY

Read story on page 3
Every day we hear of a new police killing of an unarmed person, usually someone poor, young, of color or disabled. The police murdered 176 people in January and February 2015. Revelations emerged about a detention center in Chicago where people are held, tortured CIA-style, outside any legal proceedings—many for political dissent—and one man was found dead in his cell. A homeless man with the street name ‘Africa’ is gunned down in downtown Los Angeles, while his friends shout their horrified protests. Most recently, the police murder of a teenager student in his Madison, Wisconsin home is sparking mass outrage. Militarized police forces break into terrified people’s homes like in New York, and so many others, are the beginning of a mass social response against this terror, and the corrupt system of laws that uphold it.

For the homeless, those this crumbling economy has driven into the streets, every aspect of their lives is criminalized. Towns and cities across the country are passing legislation against necessary survival activities: sleeping, sitting down, ‘lodging’, squatting empty buildings, asking for money for food. It is now illegal in 33 cities and towns to share food with homeless people. Shut-down prisons and detention centers are proposed as ‘housing’ for the homeless, as laws are passed to criminalize people and sweep them out of sight, to hide this human evidence of a mean and failing social order. Jails are becoming the homeless shelters of today.

The introduction of computer-ized and robotized production is replacing a rapidly growing section of workers from all levels of society. These insecure, contingency, part-time and thrown-out workers are of all backgrounds, nationalities and colors. They are one layoff, sickness or eviction from the streets, or already there. They have in common that they must fight for what they need to survive. The capitalist system can’t and won’t support workers, it doesn’t need to exploit. It can only meet their demands with terror and violence. This rising police-state fascism protects the interests of the corporations, which hold what people need as private property. The demands of workers for what they need are bringing them up against a system which has thrown them out. This can only be resolved under a new society—one that provides for all.

Whether in their struggles for the necessities of life or against police brutality and murder, people are organizing to demand what is rightfully and humanly theirs, in a world free of violence, war and want. Their demands for justice, and for what they need to survive and thrive, are in reality a cry for a transformed economic and political system where the abundance the new technology creates is distributed according to need. A powerful movement is arising that can fight for this new society.

From a reader:
Dear People’s Tribune, I’m in prison in Pelican Bay SHU in long-term solitary confinement. Can I receive a subscription to your newspaper? It’s very enlightening and inspiring. I’m hoping I can be added as a prisoner donation.

Editor’s note: Please donate for Prisoner subscriptions! Send to PT, PO Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654-3524 or donate via PayPal at peoplestribune.org

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Common poverty: Basis for class unity

Imagine you’re in a good job with good pay and benefits. One day you fall on the job. The injuries are so severe you are in a coma and lose your shinbone, which is replaced by a metal rod. You require continued medical care and other benefits to maintain your home and family. Then imagine that the insurance company refuses to pay for your medical treatments and other benefits. When you apply for Social Security Disability, you are refused. You end up on the street, disabled, homeless and sleeping in below zero temperatures.

“I’m out here because I got hurt on the job fixing police and fire communication systems. Now I get abused, beaten, robbed and harassed by Philadelphia police on a constant basis. I’ve had water thrown on me in freezing cold weathers by the cops. My blankets and sleeping bag were taken by the cops. That’s what they do to us out here. They’ve sent me out here to die. I’m cheaper dead than alive.” This is the story of John. (See link to video on this page.)

When one man’s tragedy becomes the fate of millions, aren’t we really talking about class oppression? The cheapening of human life to the extreme of needless death on the street is becoming an all too common experience. The electronic economic revolution under capitalist society is the root cause. All sectors of the economy are transforming into industries in need of little or no human labor. The system will not support labor it does not need.

This process is creating a new section of workers, a new class, employed and unemployed, ranging from minimum wage, part-time, temporary workers to the dispossessed, destitute and homeless. While the ruling class reports record profits, these workers, one-sixth of the population, live below the poverty line and are getting poorer. Nearly half of the American population is just above the poverty line and sinking. Under such conditions, the ruling class can no longer continue to hide the reality of class.

The American ruling class has been masters of divide and conquer for centuries. Billionaire Warren Buffett has called it “class war” and proclaims that his “side is winning.” The strategy in class war, as in any other kind of war, is to weaken the enemy, dividing and isolating them. Their division of the working class into white, Black, Latino, undocumented and countless other identities serves that purpose.

In spite of this, the conditions for class unity are maturing. Automation is economically pushing society toward an irrepressible conflict. Commonly shared poverty and the permanent denial of the necessities of life by the owning class are giving rise to common demands. Whether you are Black and protesting in Ferguson or white, on welfare in Appalachia, the demand is the same for food, housing, health care, etc. None of these demands can be met without a cooperative society where social production is owned publicly and distributed according to need. The next step in that direction is for the new section of workers to become conscious of themselves as members of a class and unite on that basis.

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— People’s Tribune
Editorial Board
Water is a human right, not a ‘commodity’

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

Editor’s note: In Detroit, Michigan, up to 30,000 homes have had their water shut off for inability to pay, and the shutoffs continue.

DETROIT, MI — The Michigan Welfare Rights Organization (MWRO) is organizing an event in Detroit, MI with a gathering of social movements. We are reaching out to all the Water Warriors we know of in the US, those in Canada, those in Mexico, and those in South America, asking that they arrive or be prepared to engage SKYPE in an effort to share best practices, and so they can see up front the attacks low income families in Detroit face with continuing mass water shutoffs. The purpose will be to expose this practice, and to raise the message that water is a human right and can never be defined as a “commodity,” which implies access is tied to payment.

We are looking at a small gathering, with representatives from the Council of Canadians, the Indigenous Water Warriors, Women’s Economic Agenda Project, the Black Mesa Collective, plus we are asking these groups and others to share details about this event so that groups we are not aware of might know about this and connect to it. YOU HAVE TO COME!!

The event will be Saturday and Sunday—May 30 - 31. The event will be similar to this scenario:

1) Some may arrive Friday evening, so we are securing hotel accommodations.

2) Our City tour bus will start around 10am on Saturday to addresses in Detroit where water had been off, is off, or the residents are facing eviction. Residents at these addresses will board the bus to tell us what happened, plus answer any questions the riders may have. We will then have lunch and gather in the hotel conference room where we will hear about the work of our national and international guests. They will tell us what challenges they face in water and housing wars, and what are the best practices they are using to arrive at successful results. There will be a presentation from our local legal team who will share information about litigation efforts.

In the last segment, visitors will hear from the community advocates in Detroit, including the Homrich 9. We will then dine and any cultural events can take place at that time.

3) If there is a desire, we can have a public event Sunday morning, where residents everywhere who have had water and housing challenges would be invited to come and share their experiences. We will end before 1pm on Sunday, and folks can start returning home.

Contact the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization for more information at: (313) 964-0618.

Poor denied healthcare while healthcare industry profits

By Katherine Bock

SAN JOSE, CA — Six Daughters of Charity Hospitals in California were poised for sale to a for-profit chain, Prime Healthcare. In California were poised for sale to a for-profit chain, Prime Healthcare declined those offers. The purpose will be to expose this practice, and to raise the message that water is a human right and can never be defined as a “commodity,” which implies access is tied to payment.

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Fighting for the demands of the people

‘Chuy’ Garcia vs. Mayor 1%

By Lew Rosenbaum and Allen Harris

CHICAGO, IL — In a startling accomplishment on February 24, Jesus “Chuy” Garcia forced incumbent mayor Rahm Emanuel to run as a candidate in the runoff election. Emanuel was endorsed by all major media and nearly every major power source in the city. What does Emanuel really represent?

On December 1, 2014, World Business Chicago (WBC) held a fund-raiser to aid in bringing more corporate investment to the 14 county Chicago area. Six hundred attendees contributed $800,000 and heard an address by U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker, one of the wealthiest billionaires in the world. Emanuel chairs WBC. Last year he appointed as Vice Chair Michael Sacks, Chairman and CEO of Grosvenor Capital Management. Sacks’ corporation donated over a million dollars to Emanuel’s 2011 and 2015 election campaigns, more than any other contributor. Emanuel raised more than $15 million for this election. Millionaire Bruce Rauner, at that time Governor-elect, attended the fund-raiser. After leaving his position in the Clinton administration, Democrat Emanuel earned $17 million in the two years he worked for Republican Rauner. Governor Rauner has been reported as urging millionaire former mayoral candidate Willie Wilson to support Emanuel in the runoff. Mayor Emanuel is Mayor 1%.

Endorsed by the Chicago Teachers Union, the Garcia campaign presents an opportunity to draw a clear line about what are the demands of the people of Chicago. The Emanuel administration has repeatedly ignored those demands: he closed a record number of Chicago schools, expanded charter schools, blocked an elected, representative school board, closed mental health clinics, ignored the need for a trauma center on Chicago’s South side, pushed a deceptive minimum wage “increase,” attacked public worker pensions, hid historic examples of police brutality, privatized services and installed an automated traffic ticketing system that many believe is simply a revenue raising ploy. This list represents a definite corporate agenda: public services are no longer necessary for a public that is no longer necessary. Filling the demands of the people requires a society based on cooperation; a society where education, healthcare, and the abundant food, clothing and housing are available to all as needed.

In addition to the mayoral race, 19 of the 50 races for alderman will go to a runoff April 7. For example, in the South Side’s 10th Ward, environmental activist Susan Sadlowski Garza finished second behind pro-Emanuel alderman John Pope on February 24. She has campaigned against dumping pet coke (petroleum coke) in her community. “I believe in a complete ban on pet coke production and storage,” says her campaign website. Garza has lived all her life in the working-class area of the city, and raised families, are rebuilt to fit a plan for the city based on a tiny highly educated workforce. Those who don’t fit into this plan face foreclosures, evictions, layoffs, privatizing and even imprisonment.

Running for alderman, Tim Meegan represents hope to the entire city. He is willing to take on the corrupt political machine in one of its deepest strongholds—the 33rd ward. As a teacher in the public school system and leader of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), Meegan is at the forefront of the effort to save the public school system, while investors are busy trying to flip schools and everything else in the public sector into profitable financial instruments having nothing to do with guaranteeing education for the city’s kids. The very last children considered live in the poorest communities.

The 33rd ward is run by an old school machine boss, Dick Mell. In this ward, deals have kept a virtual fiefdom in power for 38 years. When Mell retired as alderman but got his daughter Deb Mell to replace him in the city council, she was welcomed by financial trader turned mayor, Rahm Emanuel. She is a faithful supporter of every move Emanuel makes. Those moves have made millions for some well-connected players, while devastating large areas already engulfed in poverty.

Those who don’t fit into this plan face foreclosures, evictions, layoffs, privatizing and even imprisonment. Tim Meegan has studied, documented, and been outspoken about the schemes of the rich and powerful. The implications of this aldermanic race in Chicago have national significance. Wall Street’s plans for Main Street don’t include millions of people who are no longer needed in production or service jobs, but these people are there and must be “dealt” with if the wealthy are to maintain their control over 80% of the private economy. The elite are bound and determined to keep voices for the dispossessed people of Chicago out of office and out of the way of their agenda.

Sounds ominous and it is, but the people of Chicago are responding by fighting and organizing, and in spite of stolen elections and the millions dumped into corrupting democracy, we will build the organization needed to lead our city and the country toward an equitable society, where the existing abundance can be available to everyone.

Meegan vs. Chicago Machine

By Andy Willis

CHICAGO, IL — Chicago is famous for many things—the skyline, deep-dish pizza, and Al Capone. But another thing the city is famous for (that her citizens are ashamed of) is that one of the most corrupt political machines in the country runs City government. That seems odd—if the people don’t like it, why don’t they just vote it out? Easier said than done; when big money is involved. The city has changed forever from its industrial past and money is playing a transformative role. Today Chicago’s fate is decided on Wall Street’s speculative market. Running for alderman, Tim Meegan represents hope to the entire city. He is willing to take on the corrupt political machine in one of its deepest strongholds—the 33rd ward. As a teacher in the public school system and leader of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), Meegan is at the forefront of the effort to save the public school system, while investors are busy trying to flip schools and everything else in the public sector into profitable financial instruments having nothing to do with guaranteeing education for the city’s kids. The very last children considered live in the poorest communities.

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Marchers protest police murder of homeless man in LA

By Chris Venn

LOS ANGELES, CA — On March 3, I participated in one of many marches and rallies protesting the police murder of a homeless man, who was known in the Skid Row community as Africa. On Sunday, March 1, the police came to Skid Row on a complaint of assault. They demanded that Africa come out of his tent. When he didn’t, they tasered him, dragged him out of his tent, and four officers beat him up and shot Africa five times, killing him.

Africa had spent the last 10 years in prison, eight of those years were spent in a mental ward. Africa was released just three to four months prior to his murder. The murder of Africa is a policy of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) not an aberration or a mistake. The city policy, backed up by the LAPD, is to force the homeless and poor from Skid Row, no matter what.

This represents a desperate defense of private property. The March 3 rally started on the corner of 6th and Main and proceeded to LAPD headquarters for a presentation to the Police Commission regarding the killing. The crowd was mixed and representative of the city with a strong representation of Skid Row residents. Many demonstrators carried large signs with pictures of loved ones who had been murdered by the police in Los Angeles and surrounding communities. It was a respectful, disciplined crowd speaking truth to power in front of the new 10-story, $437 million, state-of-the-art LAPD headquarters.

General Dogon, an organizer with the Los Angeles Community Action Network, made the comment that “people should be allowed to sleep wherever they want. What we face in this country is the ownership of the soil by the owning class.” Others commented about Amazon.com’s use of robots at distributions centers. With this development, Skid Row can only grow larger.

The protests on Skid Row are part of a growing national movement demanding that the government house people and for an end to police murders and violence. The thousands living on Skid Row facing police terror are a harbinger for America if we do not act.

Justice for Antonio! Justice for Jessica!

By Jose Garcia

CHICAGO, IL — Antonio Zambrano-Montes, 35, was killed by the Pasco, Washington police on February 10. He was killed after three officers chased him through a busy intersection with their guns drawn. As Antonio turned to face them, raising his arms, the police riddled his body with seven bullets. According to police reports, Mr. Zambrano-Montes had been throwing rocks at cars and officers deemed it necessary to shoot him.

Fabian Ebuy told the Tribuno del Pueblo, “I have never organized marches or rallies. I have never done something like this. But Antonio’s family asked me to help out. I did it because when I saw the video of Antonio running with his hands up, and the police shot him, I got mad. I’m going to do everything possible to help out.”

A couple of weeks earlier, on January 26, Jessica Hernandez, 17, was killed by the Denver, Colorado police. The police claim she and several teenage friends were driving a stolen car that struck and injured an officer. But a passenger says Jessica lost control of the car only after she was shot and became unconscious. A video captured by a neighbor shows police handcuffed Jessica and appeared to search her after she was shot. They rolled her on her back and stomach as she lay limp and motionless.

The police have to be reined in, and only “we the people” can do it.

Why is this happening? The underpinning of the 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 attacks against minorities.

Justice for Antonio Zambrano-Montes! Justice for Jessica Hernandez!

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Community outraged at police murder of teen

By the People’s Tribune

MADISON, WI — A community, led by young people, erupted in protest, as yet another teenager was murdered by police, this time in Madison, Wisconsin. Police say they received reports that Tony Terrell Robinson, Jr., 19, was involved in a disturbance in traffic and behaving erratically. After police entered Tony’s home in search of him, they say Tony punched an officer. Eighteen seconds after entering the home, an officer shot Tony in the torso, head and arm, killing him. The officer that killed Tony killed another person in 2007.

The powers that be, the billionaire owners of the corporations that have taken over this country in their search for greater profit, need a police state to control the developing mass movement against the growing poverty. Dropping the benign mask of “Serve and Protect,” the police stand exposed as the watchdogs of the private property of these billionaires. Militarized, divorced from society, striving to become a law unto themselves, their every brutal, illegal act shapes and concretizes an American police state. As we fight to end police brutality and killings, we must build a powerful movement that visualizes the world of peace and freedom that is possible and fight for that future.

The struggle against the rising police state. Order bundles of papers to share with others. Email info@peoplestribune.org of call 800-691-6888.

Jailed for fighting for Medicaid expansion

By Gloria Slaughter

ATLANTA, GA — Georgia Governor Nathan Deal vowed in January at the beginning of the legislative session that he would not accept federal funding for Medicaid Expansion that would add 650,000 people to the Medicaid rolls.

After protesting to fund Medicaid Expansion, twelve Moral Monday members decided they would go to jail to illuminate the situation in Georgia for those without healthcare. So, on Monday, March 2, protestors blocked the Capitol steps and refused to move.

The placards around their necks displayed what was happening in Georgia. Four hospitals are closed and eight are open day-to-day. Those who live in the rural areas of Georgia have a life and death situation since they may have to go sixty miles in order to get to a hospital.

Twelve hundred people died for lack of healthcare in Georgia in 2014. Georgia is #2 in the country with the death rate of those who don’t have access to medical care.

The whole jail experience was like a step backward in time. It took from 5 PM until 11 PM to check us in—answering questions, getting finger printed, and getting our pictures taken. We stayed in jail until 7:00 the next morning. I really think that they were trying to teach us a lesson for our civil disobedience.

When we were put into the holding cells, I was able to talk with some of the other people who were under arrest for minor offenses. These were the same people who are being denied health care. It was an eye opening experience to hear the reasons they were put in jail.

One young woman told me that she ran a red light that day and the police stopped and arrested her because they had information from the computer she had missed a court date. She was supposed to have been in court the Wednesday before Thanksgiving but she said she didn’t get the letter until the first week in December. Another young woman told me that she was arrested for buying a TV on Craigslist. It had been stolen. Others told me that they were arrested because they hadn’t paid the loan from the bonding company the last time they had been arrested.

The guards yelled down the hall at each other. There were no walkie talkies or any devices that should have been used. The guards screamed at the inmates and treated them inhumanely. We had to raise our hand in order to get up and go to the bathroom, go to the vending machines, or use the telephone. I think it was meant to set a very oppressive environment. One young African American woman analyzed the situation in the jail as one likened to the overseer on the plantation long ago. She stated that the overseer—the African American officer kept people obedient.

This jail was filled with people whose only “crime” was being poor and the majority of them were African American. Yes, I went back in time to a debtor’s prison.

The struggle for Medicaid Expansion is a step forward in bringing consciousness to people that we need a new society that cares and values human life and provides the necessities for all.
Give people a house so they are not homeless

By Judi Blueye

DETROIT, MI — Except for when I was rehabbing from breaking my right leg, twice, and when I traded my indifferent housekeeping for room and board (otherwise known as being a “stay at home mom”) I have worked continuously in allied health care since 1984. In those thirty-one years I have never seen any patients who lost body parts due to frostbite—until now.

This February, the coldest on record in 140 years, not one, but two patients who had to have both feet amputated due to frostbite were admitted where I work. Alarmed by this, I called Mayor Duggan’s office. They reassured me that “Respite Centers” were available to keep people out of the cold. A respite center is more commonly referred to as a warming center and this means that there is a place for people to warm up while sitting on a chair. No bed. A chair.

Michigan saw a 6.1% increase in the homeless population last year, whereas nationwide the numbers declined 2.6%. Currently, there are an estimated 20,000 homeless people in Detroit. There are only 1900 beds in homeless shelters in Detroit. Fifty percent of the homeless people are suffering from mental illness. Sixty percent are families with children. Only Cass Community Social Services and a Westland shelter have facilities that allow for youths between 12-17 to stay with their mothers and other siblings. All other shelters in Detroit require that boys thirteen and up have to be housed with the adult men! So a homeless male teen has a good chance of being housed with adult men who are suffering from mental illness rather than with his family.

The problem can only get worse in the current political climate. Corporate Welfare grows, but the safety net is shredded. Marathon got a huge tax break but failed to come through with the promised jobs for Detroiters. Lansing is considering bills to deny welfare to folks testing positive for drugs despite the dismal failure of such programs in other states. In Florida, drug testing welfare recipients only served to pad the governor’s pockets due to his ownership of the testing lab.

What is the solution? We are learning what should have been obvious: Housing First. If people are given a place to live, they are no longer homeless! Expecting people to fix what got them there first results in failure. Requiring a person to kick a drug, alcohol, or joblessness problem without the basics of a place to sleep, eat, bathe and wash clothes seems almost ludicrous. It costs thousands of dollars to rehabilitate someone who has lost both feet to frostbite. Even if money is the ONLY object, it is obvious we’re doing it wrong. We could have given these people each a HOUSE for far less than their rehabilitation and lifetime dis-

abilities will now cost our society. We are literally cutting off people’s feet to spite ourselves by our moralistic approach to homelessness!

Forum on Skid Row points the way forward

By Suzette Shaw

LOS ANGELES, CA — Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) held its first Town Hall Community Meeting in February at the James Woods Center in the heart of Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles.

The LA CAN Town Hall Community Forum invited community members, leaders and citizens who support the needs of the positive call to action movement here in Skid Row.

This Community Forum was inspired from the Town Hall Forum (a.k.a: “Plan for Hope,” as it’s been called) that District 14 City Councilman Jose Huizar and his supporters put on in 2014. I say “his supporters” because residents of Skid Row, such as myself, were not invited to the table. As a matter of fact, Jose Huizar would later tell me (when I asked him about this shameful oversight) that “Tom Gilmore, a developer, was asked to be part of this panel presentation to represent the needs of Skid Row residents.”

In the midst of a re-gentrification surge in downtown Los Angeles, where residents and homeless alike feel they are being pushed out… that statement alone shows the disconnect of humanity when it comes to those who have been elected to officiate and hired to various supportive services for this “recovery community.”

This two-hour forum talked about: Human Rights, Culture, Public Space and Housing. The event opened with an improvisational “theatre of the oppressed” piece depicted by Skid Row resident and trans-women activist, Chella Moore and community supporter, Cynthia Ruffin. I even spoke a few words regarding my journey here to Skid Row.

General Jeff (a.k.a: Jeff Page), considered by many as the “unofficial mayor of Skid Row,” made an impact statement regarding the need for Skid Row to have its own Neighborhood Council and going as far as to hold all accountable who are not in favor of this progressive action that many feel is vital to moving forward the residents here.

On the Housing panel there was a strong community support- ed ensemble: Downtown Women’s Action Coalition (DWAC), Skid Row Housing and Trust and AWARE (Alliance of White Anti-Racist Everywhere), spoke passionately about the need for more affordable housing for homeless and the poor, and how many in the community adjacent to Skid Row recognize that even the poor deserve human rights and housing. The need for a comfortable, safe space to live is not only vital for one to survive but is vital for one to thrive...

The Culture panelist, which consisted of many mainstay supporters from Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD), spoke about the history of Skid Row, its barriers, such as the criminalization of Black and Brown folks and how to broaden community through cultural engagement.

Ariana Alcaraz, moderator of the Human Rights panel, elo-

quently told me, “Because of the lack of resources and community input in city policies, the Skid Row community ends up suffering human rights violations. If our community was given the opportunity to be at the table when decisions are made about our community, there would be actual community-based solutions that could work!” Well said, Ariana Alcaraz… well said.

Help get the People’s Tribune out to homeless organizations and places where the homeless gather!

Order bundles of papers. Send stories and information about arrests for trying to assist the homeless or the criminalization of the homeless. The People’s Tribune opens its pages to this fight! Call 800-691-6888, email info@peoplestribune.org or write PO Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654-3524.
Editor’s note: The People’s Tribune’s Cathy Talbott interviewed Reverend Larry Rice, President of the New Life Evangelistic Center in St. Louis, MO. New Life runs a homeless shelter (the last major walk-in shelter in mid-America) that houses up to 300 persons on any given night. According to Rev. Rice, “On December 23, the St. Louis Board of Public Service issued an order that may prove to be not only a major assault on the homeless, but also one of the greatest local government attacks on the right of churches to practice their religious beliefs. The order declared that by May 12, 2015, New Life must provide documentation that it has reduced its occupancy to 32 persons (for the past 30 days), or else lose its right to provide any shelter at all. Such a travesty of justice comes as a result of neighborhood gentrification and its push to keep the homeless out of sight and out of mind.”

People’s Tribune: Tell us the history behind your lawsuit against the city of St. Louis.
Reverend Rice: We’ve been in this community since 1975. It was a run-down neighborhood and gradually they started turning around the downtown, taking some of the old buildings and making condominiums. Parking lot owners have discovered gold mines. Seventy million dollars was put into the library, catty-corner from us. As a result, they’ve started to see the properties they bought cheap become very valuable. Now they start to see the homeless as a nuisance.
So, 116 condominium owners under the direction of the parking lot owner next to us, signed a petition saying we were a nuisance, citing public urination by the homeless. We tried to put out a porta-potty, but the city wouldn’t give us a permit. We also put out additional lighting, doing everything we could to be good neighbors.

After having hearings since September of last year, the mayor-appointed board issued their decree, so we filed a federal lawsuit trying to get a permit extension from the judge. We’re basing it on New Life’s right to fulfill its mission under the Religious Land and Institutional Act, the first and 14th Amendments to the United States Constitution and the Missouri Religious Restoration Act.

PT: How do the police treat the homeless?
Reverend: In St. Louis, the word “homeless” has the same meaning, the same degradation that the “N” word had in the Deep South 50 years ago. Just as courageous people marched, bled and died for the right to vote, and as the people of Ferguson rose up to confront the racism resulting in Michael Brown’s death, we’re calling for the community to rise up against the racism in St. Louis that is going to leave the bodies of hundreds of homeless people in the streets without shelter. They’ll be left with only the lies of the mayor who said he’s going to open 225 beds when 70% of those calling the housing resource hotline last year were turned away.

We’re meeting with Ferguson activists, homeless and others, challenging people to stand up for justice for those who have only the streets to sleep on.

From ‘middle-class’ to homeless at 65

By Cathy Talbott

CARMEL, CA — Growing up in New York in a comfortable “middle-class” family, CeliaSue Hecht says they used to walk over homeless people on the sidewalks. She never imagined in her wildest dreams that she would be homeless at 65. College educated and a skilled journalist, she has traveled the world helping other people in need. She was a full-time public-relations specialist for a nonprofit assisting Native Americans in Nevada battling the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository Project when, burned out, she left the position in 2002. Since then, she has survived on part-time jobs and freelance writing work.

Forced to take early social security retirement benefits, she cannot afford rent in the beautiful and wealthy area of the Monterey Peninsula in California, where she and her dog live out of her aging car. With only $672 monthly, a room cannot be found for less than $600/month. She has been surprised to discover that government help is essentially nonexistent. The social service agencies have no answers and even the religious leaders tell her to move someplace else.

But where is she to go? And now that she is facing some serious health issues requiring major surgery, moving to an unfamiliar area could be deadly. Instead, she is trying to raise funds via crowd-sourcing to build a tiny house but that is proving to be more difficult than she first thought.

While seeking assistance, CeliaSue discovered there are at least 350 other homeless women in the area. She estimates that the number is actually 500 to 1000 because she has seen them. Most, she thinks, are over 50. They sleep on the ground or wherever they can find a place that’s safe. Other issues faced by homeless women, she has realized, include poor nutrition, stress and worry, financial upkeep of a vehicle, health concerns, weather, hygiene and loss of dignity.

CeliaSue’s case clearly exposes the lie told by our ruling class that blames the economic and social crisis on the workers of previous generations, such as the “Boomers.” As the economy continues to replace human labor with computers and robots, the value of all labor, including mental labor, is reduced. As Guy Standing states in his lecture on “The Precariat Class,” we are all potential members of the precariat class except the tiny few who own all the means of production, the banks, corporations, the land, etc. We must unite around the program of this growing class (for food, shelter, health care, etc.) who owns no private property and are being discarded by the new labor-less economy. In the words of CeliaSue, “We must find creative, humane and compassionate solutions.”

Editor’s note: CeliaSue can be contacted through her voice-mail at 702-225-8206, or via e-mail at celiasue.hecht@gmail.com.
The ghost of Dred Scott awakens

By Adam Gottlieb

CHICAGO, IL — Less than four miles from the intersection where Mike Brown was killed—a ten-minute drive down Florissant Ave—is the Calvary Cemetery in St. Louis, where Dred Scott is buried. Visitors have left pennies on his grave—Lincoln faces up—for good luck.

Dred Scott was a slave who sued for his freedom in 1846. Over the course of a decade his case made its way up from local Missouri courts to the Supreme Court, which ruled that Scott, as a slave, “had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” The court also moved to expand slavery throughout the nation, catalyzing the American Civil War.

History, it seems, is like a spiral, cycling but moving forward at the same time. (Perhaps this is the meaning of “revolution.”) Every socially necessary cause offers a vision of liberation for which people are willing to struggle, advancing society to a certain stage and setting conditions for the next climactic point, where history repeats itself on a higher level.

But past, present, and future are inseparably intertwined. Today, it seems, the ghost of Dred Scott is appealing his case, in Ferguson and across the nation.

His name has become synonymous with the names Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell, Dominique Franklin, Eric Garner, Oscar Grant, Roshad McIntosh, Ezell Ford, Rekia Boyd, Tanesha Williams, Desean Pittman, and countless others.

With those lost lives in mind, let us consider these words from Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address: “It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion… that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

If we are to take seriously Lincoln’s words, we must ask ourselves: are not the names mentioned above casualties of essentially the same war the slaves fought? And was not that war in a sense a continuation of the Revolutionary War—fought for a vision of “a new birth of freedom”?

The protests in the #BlackLivesMatter movement are in a very real sense suing for their freedom: asserting that all of our lives matter; that we have rights which the law ought to respect.

But the government acts otherwise. The militarization of the police and the bolstering of the prison industry show that the ruling class is not interested in addressing the systemic roots of the problem, but only in containing inevitable social upheaval, made more imminent by school and clinic closings, water-shutoffs, and mass-privatization of the public sector. It is clear: the people now have no rights which corporations are bound to respect.

The spiral of revolution has brought us here, and what was once our vision is now our cause: “Government of the people, by the people, for the people…”
By Suzette Shaw

LOS ANGELES, CA — On Saturday, February 21, 2015, I marched alongside hundreds of others in the March for Justice and Unity which began at the Los Angeles Police Department’s Southwest Division on Martin Luther King Blvd. in Los Angeles. How symbolic and purposeful of a start point. It was an honorable way of bridging Dr. King and the past movement as it relates to NOW, especially during the memorable celebration month of Dr. King’s birthday.

Although Dr. King was savagely taken from us decades ago, his legacy and the spirit of his message still lives in the heart of many. On Wednesday evening, February 18th, 2015, I attended the planning meeting of the Black and Brown King Legacy March, scheduled to take place on April 4, 2015 which will be the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s death, the day he was assassinated.

This planning meeting was the first of many which will take place over the course of the next several weeks. The meeting was hosted by Pastor Cue Jn-Marie of Church Without Walls, a street ministry in Skid Row. He is also an organizer for Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) which Dr. King founded and was president of at the time of his assassination. I was honored to meet at this meeting the current SCLC President, the Honorable Reverend Smart.

The assassination of Dr. King still resonates with us today as Black and Brown people continue to be brutally murdered far too many times at the hands of law enforcement where excessive force appears to be prevailing over protect and serve. In addition, there appears to be a systematic criminal justice bias of mass incarceration, unjust criminal justice policies and a society where income inequality is still a plight for many who are stuck in low wage jobs that does not allow an individual to be self-sustainable nor care for his family and even her family, given that many households are now run by single mothers. In a land of the “free and the brave,” third world living conditions appear to be more and more commonplace.

These are some of the topics which will be covered during this event. There is a diverse input of Black, Brown and White folks alike coming together for a common good; the well-being of those in our communities. We hope you will all get involved in this “call to action.”

Tea with Joe Hill

Joe Hill and I had tea
He let his biscuits soak
They say America is free
Man how they love to joke
Ask Sacco and Vanzetti
Ask Red Cloud and Crazy Horse
And the way I see
Is things are getting worse

I said “Joe why ain’t you dead?”
Righteousness is like Love my friend
Laughed Joe as he shook his head
Spirit never die and never end
A thousand tyrants and all their force
In truth could never compete
With the Love that is the source
Of one of my melodies sweet
You see death and life they coexist
Some never die and some never live
So songs of revolution will always persist
For unto themselves my songs give

So open your eyes and organize
Never give in to their lies and organize
Do not hate and despise but organize
Raise your voice in mighty cries and organize

Joe slurped the last of his tea
And bid me a final farewell
Above all fight to be free
You’ll get heaven when you give them hell

— John Kaniecki

Working Class Poem

I was born
Free and penniless
And just like you
They have been robbing me
Ever since

— Matt Sedillo
‘We can win this fight,’ says Rev. Pinkney from prison

Editor’s note: Reverend Edward Pinkney wrote this article from prison. He remains enthusiastic about winning this fight, despite the concentration camp-like conditions he and the other prisoners are living under. He says over 150 people use the same bath, about five people are living in a 9 x 12 cubicle, and he wouldn’t feed the food to a dog.

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

COLDWATER, MI — I, Michigan political prisoner, Rev. Edward Pinkney, am a victim of injustice. I was sentenced to 20 to 10 years for supposedly changing the date on five recall petitions to recall Benton Harbor Mayor James Hightower. No material nor circumstantial evidence, no eye witness, and no confession was presented at the trial that would implicate me in the five felonies. Many believe that I, an international activist and leader of the Black Autonomy Network Community Organization (BANCO), am being punished by the local authorities for opposing the corporate plan of the Whirlpool Corporation, headquartered in Benton Harbor, Michigan. I say this is an opportunity to expose the Benton Harbor courthouse criminal enterprise and let the world know there is corruption from the top to the bottom of the totem pole where a lynching mob mentality reigns.

The Benton Harbor corporate structure has used similar charges to stop past efforts to recall or vote out of office public officials. In a majority Black city, as many Christian ministers do, I have always quoted the scriptures. I was even convicted for quoting scriptures in the People’s Tribune newspaper. This outrageous conviction was overturned on appeal. We must do this again. Rev. Edward Pinkney has become the face of resistance to the change in Benton Harbor. The People’s Tribune newspaper. This outrageous conviction was overturned on appeal. We must do this again. Rev. Edward Pinkney has become the face of resistance to the change in Benton Harbor.

The mayor’s popularity is down to all of his elections. They had to buy him his term as mayor. Every Commissioner in there votes one way and he votes the opposite because he’s all for corporations, he’s been paid. Corruption is at the top. Large corporations are sucking the life out of the little people in Benton Harbor.”

— Emma Kinnard, Benton Harbor

“Benton Harbor Commissioner Robert Wooley has been charged with theft of over $150,000 from the North Berrien Senior Center and about $50,000 from the North Berrien County Fire Department. Sheriff Paul Bailey arrested him because they wanted to handle him nicely—no SWAT Team like they used for Rev. Pinkney. It was the same judge. Rev. Pinkney had, Judge Schrook. Wooley was released and let out on bond. There was no media coverage of this, at all. The media, every chance they got, tried to slaughter Rev. Pinkney. I am trying to get people to come up to the courthouse and assemble for these things because we have to speak out. There is too much unevenness of a balance in the justice here. There is no justice.”

— Patti Heinz, Benton Harbor

“It’s time to wake up. The world is in crisis. Our democracy is being smacked from under us. Our political prisoners are being attacked. Wake Up. Selma didn’t die. It’s still alive in Berrien County, Michigan.”

— Dorothy Pinkney, Benton Harbor

The quotes below from Benton Harbor residents, and those in previous editions of the People’s Tribune, show that, despite the spread of this model to the rest of Michigan and the nation. This is not black versus white, it is the haves against the have-nots, the rich against poor.

Any time you have an economic system that refuses to feed cloth and house it people, it must be overturned and replaced with a system that meets the needs of people.

We will win. God to me is knowing how and when to gather stones to fight for the truth. I believe that humans are not all evil, just misled. We will win this fight because humanity is greater than those that will destroy it. We will win because it has become clear to the people just who the enemy is and the solution is so simple. A mass movement demanding a changed economic system, one that meets the needs of the people, not the corporations, is needed. We can win.

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