Detroit parents and kids join teachers who staged a sick-out over pay threats. The district has been taken over by state government via an emergency management dictatorship which stripped the elected school board of its authority, closing schools, and essentially dismantling the public school system.

HOW WE CAN FIGHT THE CORPORATE DICTATORSHIP

Read story on page 3
The elections and a vision of a new society

**EDITORIAL**

McDonalds has announced they will open 25,000 robot-run restaurants. Amazon is replacing human stock pickers in its massive warehouses with robots. We’re living in revolutionary times. As robotics and computerization transform all existing industries, human labor is being permanently eliminated.

We already see the social consequences. People are banding together, trying to survive in makeshift tent cities, in the streets, even in swamps. The homeless, along with the immigrants who are declared “illegal,” the jobless youth who police shoot down like dogs, and all others deemed a threat to private interests, are the target of a new fascist corporate dictatorship.

A true class war is shaping up. On one side is the ruling class: the billionaires and their corporations, their twin corporate parties, and corps of highly paid, privileged media pundits, intellectuals, and so-called labor and community leaders.

On the other side is a new class of workers who are becoming destitute, forced out of their jobs by electronic robotic production. This new class is in urgent need of a government that will provide the shelter, healthcare, education, water and other necessities they need—whether they have money to pay for it or not. Yet, as Flint shows, this new class has zero value to the corporate-government. Its labor is no longer needed for profit-making. Even the democratic right to elect its own representatives is stripped away. The ruling class needs a dictatorship to contain their fight for life itself.

Who will speak for the poorest among us? The ruling class cannot and will not. This is because the new class, if united politically, has the potential to lead all who can be united to a new society that overthrows the rule of the billionaires. This new revolutionary social force must speak for itself.

The rulers see the handwriting on the wall.

As the various sectors of the ruling class battle over the presidency, they are utilizing this election to deepen the historic divisions within this new class. They understand that, regardless of color or nationality, this new class will eventually be forced to unite around a common demand for a society where everyone’s needs are met. Call it socialist, or whatever—such a society will be based on government ownership of the giant corporate entities that are today producing—but not distribution to the people—the world of plenty the new technology is creating.

This is why this election is so important. It is an opportunity to get the vision of this new society out. It is a means to help unite the new revolutionary class around its common interests. The Sanders campaign offers a huge opportunity to do this. The campaign’s demand that government serve the people, not the billionaires, opens the door to educating people about the kind of society we could have if the people could control it.

Revolutionaries must use this election to help build a powerful movement that forces the government to provide for people’s needs. Having such a government necessitates that the giant corporations be taken out of the hands of private interests and put under government control. The real question is: which class will rule society?

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According to a famous story, car manufacturer Henry Ford and labor leader Walter Reuther toured a new automated engine production plant during the mid-1950s. Ford reportedly commented that all the machines in the plant didn’t pay union dues, to which Walter Reuther replied that they don’t buy cars either.

If you find the logic of this story funny, keep in mind that the corporate dictatorship that is sweeping across Michigan today is no laughing matter. Also keep in mind that when capitalists replace workers with machines to ensure higher profits for themselves, it’s just a matter of time before producing more and more things with less and less people becomes producing everything with no one. If no one has a job, how are people supposed to buy the things they need to survive?

Obviously, long before that point is reached people are going to rebel. It is under these circumstances that the ruling class is imposing a corporate dictatorship spearheaded by the emergency manager laws of Michigan. Emergency Managers, appointed by the governor, come to your city and replace democratically elected officials like mayor and city council, void union contracts, dismantle public school systems, and sell off public city assets to corporations for pennies on the dollar.

These emergency manager laws, dubbed the “dictator laws” by the people of Michigan, were overwhelmingly voted out in a statewide referendum, only to have the corporate owned legislature reinstate a new version that is referendum proof in “democracy be damned” fashion.

The whole world is now finding out that it is these same Emergency Managers, who receive their orders directly from corporate Governor Rick Snyder, who made the decision that poisoned the entire population of Flint with polluted water. In spite of that fact, the emergency manager system continues and the people of Flint continue to get polluted water along with a water bill each and every month, adding insult to injury.

Flint resident Antonio Nelson summed up the situation when he said, “Politicians have made their decisions that got us here. Now, it’s our time. The people with less income will make more of an impact and guide the discussion to make change for the better.” Truck driver Jimmie Stephen added, “The Environmental Protection Agency (E.P.A.) had a job to do, and they ignored it. None of the politicians have helped us. I think the community is just going to have to band together to resolve our problems.”

In fact, it is the American people, many of them the least among us, and not government on any level, that has mostly come to the aid of the people of Flint with bottled water and caravans and whatever else they can spare.

This nascent unity is spontaneous and will be short-lived if not expanded upon, but it is unity none-the-less. Without this unity, we stand no chance against the fascist corporate dictatorship that is coming to all of America.

Imagine for one moment what could be done if the machines that are replacing your job were owned, not by the capitalists in order to enrich them, but were owned by we, the people, in order to enrich us all.

The People’s Tribune strives to bring clarity and to unite 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.

One-time donations are welcome. If you can spare $20 a month or more, you’ll be a hero. Make donations payable to People’s Tribune and send to P.O. Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654. You can also donate via Paypal at www.peoplestribune.org.

— People’s Tribune Editorial Board
**Hunger strikers speak out against police murders**

By Sarah Menefee

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — On April 21, five individuals known as “The Frisco Five” began a hunger strike at the Mission Police Station in San Francisco. They were protesting the string of police killings and the ongoing police brutality in the city, calling for the resignation of Police Chief Greg Suhr. The names were read at a rally and repeated for the number of bullets pumped into their mostly young, Latino and Black bodies—four in the last two years, and many before. The last straw has been the execution-style killing of Mario Woods and the gunning down in a rain of bullets of recently-evicted homeless worker Luis Gongora outside his tent in the Mission District, only seconds after the police arrived on the scene.

Initiated by Maria Cristina Gutierrez, owner of a local day care center, along with her son Ilyich Sato, who is an activist and a rap artist under the name Equipto, the hunger strikers also include Edwin Lindo, Sellasie Blackwell, and Ike Pinkston.

Maria Cristina told me about her decision to start the hunger strike: “I was talking to young people about the importance of radical actions. When they murdered Luis Gongora, I told my son, ‘Mijo, I’m gonna go on a hunger strike’. We have to fight for our rights. There is nothing else to do, because they don’t listen to us.”

“We can no longer watch our community be targeted, murdered. We can no longer support a department that is wrought with corruption, criminal behavior, racial profiling and murder,” Equipto wrote in a Facebook post.

On May 3 about a thousand people, led by the hunger strikers, marched on City Hall, demanding to meet with Mayor Lee, who wasn’t there. On day 17 the weakened hunger strikers were hospitalized, and their supporters asked them to start eating again, so they could continue to lead this movement for justice.

On that day the police raided the encampment, barricading it off and spraying the area with “green death” disinfectant. That night, supporters marched to City Hall and occupied it for five hours, until brutally attacked and evicted by the police, who arrested 33 people. On May 9, an all-day spirited gathering at City Hall continued to up the pressure.

These police killings have taken place in rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods, in the most expensive, high-rent city in the U.S., where evictions and displacements are reaching crisis proportions. The police have become the armed wing of these removals. These attacks, increasingly on anyone no longer exploitable by the corporate ruling class for its own profit, are symptoms of a system that is dying and needs to be replaced.

This movement, galvanized by the hunger strike and beyond, is bringing together people of all ages, backgrounds, and colors. Their demands are that the police be held accountable, and that government respond. Their cry is Enough is Enough! Their cause and vision is of a new way of living and being, based on economic and social justice. They are showing what can happen when people come together around that vision—something unstoppable.

**Update: On May 19, the day police shot and killed unarmed Jessica Williams, 29, in her car in the San Francisco’s Bayview district, the firing of Police Chief Suhr was announced.**

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**Homelessness and the new world we could have**

*From the Editors*

This society is dying right before our eyes. Capitalism has advanced to the stage where human labor is becoming obsolescent. The micro-chip processor, introduced into production in the 1970s and ‘80s, has caused permanent unemployment in the once labor-intensive industries of the Rust Belt and beyond. Scores of formerly productive human beings continue to be tossed out into an abyss—the cold, heartless streets—where the government terrorizes the encampments of the now homeless workers.

It is testimony to this immoral, dying system, that one million people have experienced homelessness at some point in L.A. since 2009. Local laws are passed in many cities outlawing the survival activities of these throw-away workers. Police give citations for sitting and lying down in public. In Los Angeles, it is now against the law for the homeless to have more belongings than what can fit in a garbage can! And in “progressive” Seattle, a private company is paid $240 an hour for a three-man crew to remove homeless encampments.

The homeless are approximately 40% white, 40% Black, 11% Latino, 35% in families, 20% children, 72% urban, 21% suburban, and 7% rural. Their common condition ties them together across formerly divisive lines of color, religion, and region.

These homeless workers are members of a class that no longer is needed by the billionaire owners of our economy. This new class (which includes more than the homeless) increasingly has no place in a society that uses less and less labor every year.

While labor-less production with robots creates an abundance of the necessities we need to survive, this society is based on private ownership of the means of producing these necessities, and the assumption that people have jobs. The ruling class will not feed, house, clothe and care for workers they no longer need at the workplace.

It is possible to end homelessness today. There is plenty of empty housing and everything we need to live a decent, cultured existence. What stands in our way is a system of private property that makes housing, and indeed all the necessities we need to survive, “commodities” to be sold in the market only to those who can pay.

We need a new society that ensures housing as a human right. We need unity as a working class around the demands of the destitute if we are to overcome the growing fascist assault on our rights as human beings to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!”

With unity and cooperation, workers could create a world of peace and plenty. We could govern ourselves, distribute the necessities of life to all, and ensure the survival of our fellow human beings! The first step toward that new society is to unify our struggle by demanding that the government provide for the needs of the growing class of destitute workers—not for the billionaires.

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*The Magnificent Mile*


— Eric Allen Yankee
Hundreds of homeless forced from encampment in Eureka

Editor’s note: On May 2, an estimated 50 officers from the Eureka, CA Police Department tore down a homeless encampment of around 200 people who were living in a cold, wet marsh, destroying their community. People driven out were seen lining the streets of Eureka, crying, carrying everything they owned, pushing bicycles and carts. The Eureka police chief vowed to arrest anyone who returned to the campground. In the following article, Kathy Srabian writes on the website “Redheaded Blackbelt,” in December, 2015, about the immoral conditions under which people were forced to live.

By Kathy Srabian

EUREKA, CA — I need to break people’s hearts. I need to share with them the cruel horror of the marsh. It is the coldest, windiest, wettest place around here and yet this is where our homeless are pushed into. Well, EPD [Eureka Police Department] does not tell them to go there exactly, but they do say it is the one place they will not enforce the no camping laws.

I have walked through there offering to take people out to the shelter or the rescue mission. No takers. They will not leave behind their dogs. They will not be separated from their partners as the Rescue Mission requires. Some have had very bad experiences with shelters. One woman said she was raped. Even though it did not happen up here, she protects herself by never entering another “shelter.” And so they stay in the marsh where trails have become rivers and grassy areas are lakes.

The… water does go down but tents are left damaged by the winds. Repaired tents usually do not stand up to the next storm.

Many are women. Many are older. Many are tired, broken in spirit by strings of bad luck and poor choices. Yes, there are drugs. Yes, there is mental illness presenting the chicken and the egg effect. Which came first? When the storm hits does it matter? Human beings cold and wet, cold and wetter, then colder, then getting sick, then sick and cold and wet because they are in the worst place. The Marsh.

Dry socks are brought down, blankets, tarps, warm jackets but as long as they stay there these offerings are just the smallest short term patch jobs.

In order to leave the homeless campground, residents often require rubber boots or even waders, according to homeless advocates.

Why don’t they leave? Why don’t they go somewhere else? Because there is nowhere else they can go to. Would you leave your dog behind? Would you risk the sum of the possessions you had to leave to a place you did not know? Would you in the cruellest of conditions leave your partner?

Eureka City Hall has been reluctant to declare a Shelter Emergency but it will be up for discussion at the next meeting. Discussion does not keep one dry in a storm but it is a step in the right direction. Many neighbors and citizens are asking the City to help these people, to provide them a safe, a better place to be. We have parking lots more sheltered and better drained than the marsh.

It’s a heartbreaking situation.

‘We have the right to rest,’ says homeless woman

By Gena Mercer

MERCED, CA — I got a chance to do something last month that made me want to tell everyone about it. There was a bill brought forth to a Senate committee, SB 876, the Right to Rest bill. That was the first time I had ever been to our State Capitol, which is in Sacramento, California.

I was amazed that the building was so beautiful. I got to go to the Senate Hearing Room and watch government live. The Right to Rest bill was turned down. What I learned was that without more voices and more support from everywhere, next year the same could happen for all of the homeless. Your voice does matter. I’m homeless. I come across a lot of homeless every day and I tell everyone this: If you don’t stand up for yourself, the police will always harass you if they know that you don’t know your rights. This can lead to an easy ticket. Stop letting them.

The Right to Rest bill would stop the harassment and the tickets. Then the homeless would stop getting run off public places. We have the right to rest. I know from experience. I go into a store to buy something to eat or drink, then I go outside and find a spot to sit to consume what I purchased, only to have a store worker call the cops. Most store workers just call the cops; not many will come out and tell me to leave. They are afraid of me.

In California, 83 cities opposed the Right to Rest bill. We must take a little time to get some information. Write your congressman, the governor, your senators and make your voice be heard. And for you non-houseless persons, do the same.

Get information. Write letters. Let our government know that we’re not going to take it anymore. I for one have had enough. Most of us are not houseless because we want to be, and we are not all bad.

And we need support to help provide public restrooms. These things would not just be for the houseless. It would help everybody in the community. So stand up. Thank you.

The People’s Tribune brings solutions and vision. Help get it out in the homeless communities!

The People’s Tribune devotes much of its coverage to homelessness, its cause, the solution, and a vision of the new society where every single person can thrive. As automation takes over the jobs, more and more people are permanently cast aside. Driven into homelessness, people band together, building whatever community they can, in tent cities, forests, and even swamps, only to be arrested and driven out again.

Somewhere, we have to come together and build a powerful united movement that demands that the government provide for our people rather than for the billionaires and their corporations. The true purpose of government is to provide for the needs of the people. This battle for the government to be the people’s government is key to the fight for a new cooperative society — where food, housing, education, healthcare and other necessities are provided to all simply because we are human beings.

— The Editors

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The People’s Tribune welcomes your comments on our articles, especially on our covers and editorials. Your feedback helps us stay on course as a paper that points the way forward to a new cooperative society. Email info@peoplestribune.org or call 800-691-6888 toll free.

— The Editors
Emergency manager law dismantles democracy

The dismantling of democracy is wreaking havoc on the citizens of Flint, Michigan. This law passed in 2011 authorizes the governor to appoint an emergency manager of any city that defaults on state-issued bonds, wields unprecedented power to restructure the local economy, and has been used to dismantling public school systems and the perception of a lack of concern. For example, in Flint, the state-appointed emergency manager, Kevyn Orr, has made it clear that he is more concerned with repaying the state’s investment in Flint’s water system than he is with the health and safety of the city’s residents. The state has been using this law to privatize public services and to impose austerity measures on local communities, resulting in the loss of jobs, the closure of schools, and the reduction of basic services for residents. This is a clear violation of the democratic process and a threat to the well-being of all Americans.

Mothers, women of Flint ‘die in at city’s water plant’

‘They’re not helping me,’ Angeles organizations, organized

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Lives Matter: Long Beach, in

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Healthcare and Democracy: A political public health emergency

By Rita Valenti

ATLANTA, GA – “As registered nurses, we are compelled to advocate for all our patients, whether at the bedside or in our neighborhoods and communities. To that end, we, the National Nurses United, on behalf of the nurses of America, declare a public health emergency in Detroit… And we demand the guarantee United declares the city of Detroit a Public Health Emergency Zone, July 2014.

Over 91,000 Detroit homes had been disconnected from life essential water. Today, a new round of cut-offs is underway targeting another 20,000 homes.

Meanwhile, Flint residents (except pregnant women and young children) are still being asked to drink filtered water that’s running through lead contaminat-ed and corroding pipes. Just two months before the nurses righteously declared a public health emergency in Detroit, Flint’s dictatorial Emergency Manager switched the city’s water supply to the highly polluted Flint River.

Both Detroit and Flint were subject to Emergency Managers who, under Michigan Public Act 436 have complete power to void union contracts, seize public assets from parks to pension funds and eliminate the authority of any elected body. The kind of austerity imposed on the cities of Flint and Detroit requires the destruction of even limited democracy.

To willfully shut off water to Detroiters and to arrogantly dismiss the complaints, illnesses and even deaths of Flint residents demands a sustained and unlimited public health response. No half measures, no untrust-worthy promises, and no failure to hold accountable the corporate state structures and Governor Snyder responsible for these unconscionable acts will be accepted.

Though they were disen-franchised, the people of Detroit and Flint are not deterred. They have brought these criminal acts to light nationally and internationally, through their independent and collective actions. An inadequate Medicaid expansion has been promised but what of the lasting effects of this kind of trauma? Thousands of children have been put at risk from lead laced water, a potent neurotoxin. Families are suffering unimaginable stress that’s taking a physical, mental and spiritual toll. As the public health crisis in Flint unfolded, it has exposed the political crisis at its heart. The working class of these cities was essential to stretching America’s industrial democracy rooted in militant history like the Flint sits down strikes. Their fight to stop the water shut-offs, replace all the pipes in Flint and immediately, expand Medicare for All is a fight for working class democracy for all! The crisis is nationwide and so must be the response.

New Orleans taught us that assaults on democracy and healthcare multiply after the cameras and posturing subsides. Michigan is a harbinger of the future. We cannot “go back” to an industrial democracy in this era of labor replacing digital technologies. The democratic vision today is one that guarantees free universal access to clean water and all life’s necessities, especially healthcare through public ownership and administration of life sustaining resources.

Flint mom, Lee Ann Walters, was lauded by Pen America in New York for her courageous stand in exposing the Flint water crisis.

By Al Galdyck

DETROIT, MI — Underneath the growing division of society into the super rich and the super poor is an ideology that goes by a lot of names—“lean” or “agile” to name two. That ideology is meant to express the drive for profits in reaction to the development of electronic production (robotics) that is making human labor superfluous in the production of our human needs. Our lives are becoming “waste”—unnecessary to the functioning of production and in society.

Public Healthcare is “waste” in the eyes of the super rich. Public Healthcare is being dismantled and privatized. Medicaid is being completely privatized. The state has hired private for profit insurance companies to completely manage the publicly financed healthcare of the growing “super poor.”

The publicly owned Veter-ans Administration healthcare system is being dismantled and turned over to private healthcare. Thirty-five percent of Medicare is now controlled by private insurance companies. Seventy percent of Medicaid is controlled by private insurance companies. In rural areas and inner cities across the country public hospitals and clinics are closing down. Our tax money is being turned over to the private for profit insurance companies, hospitals and clinics.

They are trying to make healthcare more profitable. This means eliminating healthcare for workers they don’t need. How are we to survive? We cannot look backward. There is no return to the “good old days” of going to the job every day. The jobs aren’t coming back. The robots are taking them. We have to find a way to distribute the abundance that robots, science and new technologies makes possible without people having jobs.

As robots replace human labor, the struggle over wages is step by step giving way to the struggle over how to meet human needs without a “job”. We must look forward to the future and solve this antagonism.

While the call of the “super rich” is the private ownership of public healthcare, our call must be the public ownership of private healthcare.

This will not happen overnight. We must organize ourselves to eliminate the conditions of poverty since the rulers are organizing to eliminate the people falling into poverty. We, the people, have a right to the necessities of life, including healthcare.

This is a political struggle over which class will control society, and will the robots be under the people’s control and used to make life better, or under capitalist control and make life worse. We have to fight forward to a new society. Public Healthcare for All must become our call. The alternative is unthinkable.

Public healthcare is ‘waste’ in the eyes of the super rich

By Al Galdyck

DETROIT, MI — Underneath the growing division of society into the super rich and the super poor is an ideology that goes by a lot of names—“lean” or “agile” to name two. That ideology is meant to express the drive for profits in reaction to the development of electronic production (robotics) that is making human labor superfluous in the production of our human needs. Our lives are becoming “waste”—unnecessary to the functioning of production and in society.

Public Healthcare is “waste” in the eyes of the super rich. Public Healthcare is being dismantled and privatized. Medicaid is being completely privatized. The state has
The revolutionary Prince

By Danny Alexander

KANSAS CITY, KS — Just four days after Prince’s death, journalist Kevin Gosztola wrote an article called “The Protest Songs of Prince.” He began by summing up the grief in the social media. “A portrait has emerged of a humanitarian artist... who sought to find ways to uplift people who were struggling.” It then detailed various actions Prince took to working for virtually nothing. He taught young musicians how to fight. In a recent radio interview, Toronto rapper k-os recalled how Prince pushed him to understand his business dealings. Ultimately, the star wanted the up and coming musician to think of the bigger picture. “You can’t depend on a record label in these days and times. It’s gonna change, man. He’s like ‘It’s right around the corner. Everything’s going to change.’”

Despite the tragedy surrounding Prince’s death, he should be remembered as an artist who reached out to others and fought the system. He dreamed of an “Uptown” world where all races would be free and united; he called for a new breed of leaders to “Stand up, organize!” He rejected old ideas that lead to war and embraced a new world of love and music. When he presented the Grammy for best album last year, he famously stated “Like books and Black lives, albums still matter.” In the middle of a party, he never stopped pushing us to think.

Danny Alexander is a Kansas City area teacher and journalist who writes about music and politics. In March, his new book, “Real Love, No Drama: The Music of Mary J. Blige,” was published.

Juneteenth 2016 and the possibility of class unity

By Chris Mahin

Born out of the Civil War struggles against slavery, “Juneteenth” (June 19th), has always been a time to celebrate what’s been won and to soberly assess what’s ahead for all workers.

The United States is vastly different today than it was at the end of the Civil War. After the defeat of the confederacy, the ruling class needed a way to keep most Blacks on the plantations working for virtually nothing. From this came the vicious system of Jim Crow, which subjected all African Americans, regardless of education or wealth, to the same oppression, segregation and discrimination. This created a distinct people with common interests.

Today, we live in a country where President Barack Obama, speaking recently at the commencement of Howard University’s Class of 2016, could say of African Americans: “We’re no longer entertainers, we’re producers, studio executives. No longer small-business owners, we’re CEOs. We’re mayors, representatives, presidents of the United States.”

While President Obama’s comments accurately portrayed the integration of the African American elite into the top of society, the reality is starkly different for the vast majority of African Americans, who are workers.

In the past, the brutal, legal discrimination against all African Americans reinforced the isolation of the Black masses and created a common bond between the Black impoverished and the African American elite. At the same time, racial ideology, backed up by social privileges granted to white workers over Black workers, kept Black and white workers apart. Unequally oppressed and exploited, they could not unite. Those circumstances made the unity of the working class across color lines impossible.

Today, a new impoverished class of workers, of all colors, has been created by labor-replacing electronics. African Americans are at the heart of it. This new class consists of employed and unemployed sectors. Today, more than one third of the work force consists of part-time workers, contingent workers, and those working either at the minimum wage or for less than it. Today, a unity of the new class created by electronics is possible. The class is fighting for a new society that will meet its needs.

This Juneteenth, the urgent task of revolutionaries is to spread a message far and wide, to propagandize the new class about the importance of uniting around a common, class program: to create the new society electronics makes possible—a cooperative society without poverty and racism!

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Live Community Culture

By Angelina Llongueras and Adam Gottlieb

CHICAGO, IL — A spectre haunts the Americas, a spectre composed of millions of activists who have united to rescue communities from the attacks of the corporative dictatorship that destroys us with its death doctrine. Neo-liberalism (call it neo-fascism) has been imposed by the mafias who unlawfully hold power by means of the brute force of their armies and police corps, by means of their corruption and secrecy, and backed up by the U.S. military and trade agreements like NAFTA.

The activists resist this doctrine of engineered wars to sell weapons publicized by genocides; of design wars to colonize lands and turn them into golf courses for the rich; of bombings to steal oil and natural resources, drown children, and destroy the sea, the rivers, the subterranean water, the water we drink, we bathe in, we are healed with. We must resist the terrorism-implanting wars that frighten people into docility, when corporations and banks want to uproot their rights to home and livelihood, to healthy food, to drinking water, to free education, to labor with justice, i.e., with rules, to live in peace, to retire with dignity. The Live Community Culture movement (LCC) is a response to this in Latin America, and it is now beginning in the U.S.

Already organizations and individual cultural workers throughout Chicago are engaged in the effort. LCC is about recovering collective memory, remembering who we are and how we have survived in spite of efforts of a corporate dictatorship to suppress us. Even in the Midwest thousands of years ago, before banks or states existed, central places arose where peoples could converge, share and exchange cultures. In this fashion our peoples circulated, met, rested, and created music, dance, poetry, theatre, art, joy and collective wisdom.

Today that spirit lives on in countless disparate groups and grassroots organizations. What unites each of these groups is the descent into the hell of poverty that corporatism enforces. As an antidote to this, Live Community Culture proposes an encounter of the communities with themselves. Bringing the communities together transcends isolation and builds on our commonality, because we are not isolated beings but community beings.

Live Community Culture began in Latin America and has held two Intercontinental Congresses. It has begun in Chicago and is connecting some of the local groups of artists and activists. Artistic expression that comes from the people reflects the joys and struggles of the people in their battle for survival. LCC brings cultural workers together in a way to bring the people together.

The art of the revolution is growing. It is bringing a certain consciousness to the people, a social consciousness, an understanding of what our society is and the relationship between people and classes. This is the responsibility of any serious human being, especially those of us who are the cultural workers today.

The first Day of Action for LCC in Chicago is June 11th in Rogers Park. For inquiries and to get involved, check out livecommunityculturerp.com/

What will new financial austerity law impose on Puerto Rico?

Editor’s note: The draconian new law this article discusses is being debated in the legislature.

By Pedro A. Rivera

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO — Financial crisis and an un-payable debt have become the ideological media propaganda regarding the social and economic problems that cage Puerto Ricans within our colonial archipelago.

According to recent news reports, the notorious International Monetary Fund, a financial henchman of indebted countries throughout the world, Puerto Rico should look at itself in the mirror and see a future of “diminishing jobs and increasing migration.”

Facing a panorama of decreasing economic growth for the next five years, following a steady economic recession since 2006, local economist Vicente Feliciano, a hired gun at the service of financial capital, has shamelessly declared that, “It is best to face a horrific end than to choose an endless horror.”

What could economist Feliciano and the rest of the hired guns like him possibly mean when parroting such an apocalyptic commentary? Feliciano and other servants like him are referring to the economic prescriptions announced by the Puerto Rico Oversight Emergency Management and Finance Rehabilitation Act, ironically known as P.R.O.M.E.S.A., which means, “promise” in Spanish.

P.R.O.M.E.S.A. “promises” a scenario that is even more horrific than the one already caused by venture finance vultures in cities like Detroit and Flint. Puerto Ricans are desperately migrating to the U.S. mainland in search of better opportunities, trying to escape the economic hurricane unleashed by the mortgage bubble burst which left millions of families homeless eight years ago. Eight years, the same age of a child whose school will be closed by P.R.O.M.E.S.A. as soon as it begins to deliver it’s financial prescription for Puerto Rico.

P.R.O.M.E.S.A. intends to abolish the federal minimum wage for workers under 25 years old; government workers’ right to strike and collective bargaining, along with massive lay-offs. Cuts in health, education and public transportation services are also in store. Furthermore, P.R.O.M.E.S.A. has also pledged to eliminate “costly” environmental protection laws.

Finally, this infamous emergency financial control board will require complete control over the budget decision making process, leaving the colonial government of the island with only the ceremonial power to implement austerity plans outlined by the U.S. plutocratic dictatorship and its Puerto Rican junior partners, which means even less political autonomy than the one obtained by the Puerto Rican government in 1952. Hence, P.R.O.M.E.S.A. vows to formalize the plutocratic financial dictatorship over all vital aspects of Puerto Rican life since the U.S. Federal government sent its army to invade us in 1898.

Facing such a naked political disenfranchisement leaves the Puerto Rican people on the island with very little, if any, power within the current governmental system. A growing number of Puerto Ricans are beginning to ask, why should we vote for a government incapable of making the most basic policy decisions? How are we going to fight corporate Fiscal Control Boards like P.R.O.M.E.S.A. who demolish national, state and ethnic borders, destroying whatever formal democratic powers we still had in places like Detroit, Flint and Puerto Rico? What are we going to do to fight and organize against this growing neo-fascist plot that makes our lives increasingly unbearable?

May Day March in Puerto Rico against the country’s emergency managers’ policies. The banner in the photo says, “Indebtedness is our future.”

PHOTO/PEDR0 ANGEL RIVERA
We were conned: Big business funded California’s shift to “top-two” primaries

By Dave Ransom

SACRAMENTO, CA — If the Republicans field enough candidates in the June primary to severely split their vote, Green Party gubernatorial candidate Luis Rodriguez could place second and face a run-off with Governor Jerry Brown.

That would be an important step in the battle for a political party of, by, and for the 99 percent—as the one percent changes the rules.

When Californians adopted the state’s “top-two” primary system in the 2010 election, they were confident it would strengthen democracy. That’s what they’d been told.

What they hadn’t been told was that the measure had been bankrolled by some of the state’s biggest corporations, among them Chevron, Walmart, Oracle, Intel, and PG&E.

They probably had not realized that they were voting to ban write-in candidates in the general election.

And only veteran Sacramento observers were aware that the corporations were covertly funneling their contributions through a political finance committee put together by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, his “California Dream Team.”

In fact, the people of California were being conned into undermining their own democracy and remaking their electoral system to best serve the interests of the richest one percent, the capitalist ruling class.

Under the new system, every candidate of whatever party runs in an “open” primary in June. The top-two vote getters go on the November ballot.

Publicly, supporters of the “top-two” system told voters it would give independent voters a voice in the primaries and give non-traditional parties a better chance to win.

Privately, they sang a different tune: the system would assure that only “moderate” candidates would appear on the November ballot.

“Moderate” means pro-business—pro-corporate, pro-capitalist—the candidates of, by, and for the one percent.

In fact, the top-two primary that the one percent has crafted is eerily similar to the “cross-over” primaries in the South, where voters can vote in either the Republican or Democratic primaries.

In the “Super Tuesday” primary of the 1988 presidential campaign, Republican George H.W. Bush faced Democrat Jesse Jackson in the South, winning racist cross-over votes—and then he used the notoriously racist “Willie Horton” ads to defeat Michael Dukakis in November.

California is more and more taking on aspects of the South. When the cost of living is taken into account, for instance, it has the highest level of poverty in the country, nearly 25 percent—and the 99 percent is restless.

Historically, Californians look first to the ballot box to make change. Now corporate California is using sleight-of-hand to erode that possibility. Now the same forces that engineered the top-two system are talking about ending California’s ballot initiatives.

The one percenters deeply fear that in a true democracy, candidates of, by, and for the 99 percent would win—and that such a government might well expand political democracy into economic democracy and run the economy for the good of the 99 percent.

All that can still happen. But, as a first step, it will take building a true, active party of the working class and turning out California’s millions in primary elections—starting this year.

New book on homelessness: Dispatches from the War Zone

By Eduardo Castro

Merced, CA — Independent journalist Mike Rhodes has been involved in homeless issues in Fresno, California since 2002. His tenacity as an investigative reporter has made it possible to gain insight into why homelessness has not disappeared. By coming into direct contact with the homeless, public officials, and through probing into the Freedom of Information Act, he has been able to write a new book that speaks to the reality of being homeless in America. In the book he talks about the manifestations of a political and economic system that is not meeting the needs of the people. He indicates that organizing is an integral component in making changes.

The book provides insight into how city government policies have had a negative impact on the homeless population, revealing the inner workings and motives of the Fresno city government.

Social service providers such as Fresno Rescue Mission and the Poverello House, get millions of dollars to “manage” homelessness, but have no intention of ever ending it. The homeless receive the short end on how the monies are used. Through a 10 year plan to end homelessness, the service providers and City Hall dazzle the public as to how they are addressing the problem. Yet, homelessness continues to grow.

During the term of Mayor Alan Autry, a homeless radio marathon hosted by Jeremy Alderson included the Fresno County Supervisor, two Fresno City Council members and the Mayor. The program allowed local homeless residents to voice their concerns that the 10-year plan to get rid of homelessness was not working. It attracted national attention.

The book does a great job of outlining the policies used in dismantling the main encampments in downtown Fresno. It started with the city council approving several anti-homeless ordinances. These made it harder for the homeless to live and survive out in the street. With the Mayor’s approval the Fresno Police Department and others were given the authority to destroy the encampments.

Before 2007, a class action lawsuit was filed in federal court over the destruction of property of the homeless. The homeless were able to win a victory by settling their claims for $2.3 million, as financial reimbursement for personal items destroyed. While being a significant victory in itself, it did not stop the city from the continual destruction of homeless encampments.

Housing First, a pet project of the subsequent Mayor Swearingin, was supposed to provide a voucher program to provide the chronically homeless with apartments and social services—but this never happened.

In the book, the author seeks to open the minds of the general public as to what homeless people have to face on a daily basis, and to see them as human beings. More than that, it seeks to empower them and to develop a broad movement to end homelessness. The author wrote in the book I purchased, “Together we can end homelessness where another world is possible.”
**The system is rigged,** says Rev. Pinkney from prison

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

MARQUETTE, MI — You will never ever see me associating with Michael Jordan or Lebron James: they believe in the system, the establishment. They’re rich. I’m poor. But I am here to tell you the system is rigged and corrupt.

Anytime an economic system doesn’t feed, clothe, or house its people, it must be and will be overturned and replaced with a system that meets the needs of the people. We must stand up and demand the government serve the people’s interest and not those of the corporations.

I was charged with five counts of forgery on a recall petition and then convicted by an all white jury that was motivated by something other than the truth. But the problem here is bigger. I was convicted with no evidence, no eyewitness, no confession. The only thing the jury had was the rigged jury system, the government, and Whirlpool, the corporate giant calling the shots.

I was convicted by this rigged system, which feeds its listeners the stale bread of hatred to keep everyone divided and spoiled of racism. It is a system that won’t protect the lives of its own citizens seeking justice if you are poor—whether black, white, brown, red, or yellow. It’s me today. It’s you tomorrow. It’s not one thing, it’s everything. The poor—black white, brown, red, or yellow—cannot passively accept this evil and stand on the sidelines of the struggle for justice. It is a fight for us all.

I was one of the first to speak out about the emergency manager law, which allowed non-elected people to take over cities and school districts, replacing local officials, selling public assets, privatizing public services, dismantling collective bargaining agreements, and more. They are dictators in the service of the corporations. Between 2010 and 2014, Benton Harbor had two different Emergency Managers. They stripped the elected city officials of their power and locked them out of their office.

The emergency managers went from city to city throughout Michigan taking control. This includes Flint, where residents accuse Gov. Snyder, the Emergency Manager, and other state officials of poisoning a city of 100,000 with contaminated water and then requiring payment. The city, under a state-appointed manager, switched from Detroit water sources to the Flint River water, but did not add corrosion control, causing lead to leach from old plumbing.

It is imperative that the atrocity unfolding in Flint sharpen our understanding of the true nature of the corrupt corporate power structure in this country. This includes the whole damn criminal justice system which is corrupt from top to bottom, and which is designed to destroy the poor—blacks, whites, brown, red, yellow and all others.

The attack on democracy in Benton Harbor and, around the country, shows that the corporate power structure is determined to crush anyone who stands in its way.

We must confront the rigged system in its entirety and expose their hypocrisy, which has no limits. We must confront them with a movement united around justice for all.

**Activist for the people jailed — Governor poisons city, remains free**

From the Editors

On May 11, Rev. Pinkney’s appeal was heard before a three-judge panel of the Michigan Court of Appeals. The courtroom was packed with supporters. Each lawyer’s arguments were immediately followed by questions and comments from the judges on the panel. Rev. Pinkney’s lawyer, Tim Holloway, as well as Mark Fancher of the ACLU, presented arguments in support of Rev. Pinkney. The prosecutor presented arguments against.

The prosecution would very much like this case to be about forgery on a recall election petition (to oust a corporate mayor) even though there is no real evidence of this. The prosecution would have people believe that Rev. Pinkney’s free speech and activism are evidence of a crime. This is nothing but a legal slight of hand, meant to shift everyone’s attention away from the political nature of this case.

But, it also opens the door to asking, wouldn’t Mayor Hightower and his friends at the Whirlpool Corporation desire to keep Hightower in office as his popularity was slipping? And, if so, did any of these corporate forces ever get their hands on those recall petitions? If this has no merit, then why was the jury instructed that they could convict without evidence?

This couldn’t work on just any jury. It had to be a special jury. An all white jury for an all black town. In addition to this, there had to be the less visible class differences. That jury was from affluent areas with incomes many times greater than Benton Harbor, which is the poorest municipality in the state. Lastly, no one on that jury has had to have two different Emergencies, one to oust the mayor of Benton Harbor and the other in Flint, where residents accuse Gov. Snyder, the Emergency Manager, and other state officials of poisoning a city.

Our local government has a little more voting power now. But [the state of Michigan] still has us under Emergency Managers. There’s some kind of group that oversees things. They already got a woman. Some will try to put you down when you try to rally for justice. Because of what they did to Rev. Pinkney, they got everyone afraid. I ask, “What are you afraid of? Pinkney is paving the way for a lot of other people. He will reap the good.” Thy have thieves in government here that steal millions and get no time when caught. They put Rev. Pinkney away for nothing. It’s all political.

— Emma Kinnard, Benton Harbor

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