

'MEDICAID CUTS WILL KILL MY KIDS'

See page 11



Demonstrators, many in wheelchairs, were carried off to jail while protesting debilitating cuts and changes that would dismantle Medicaid. They protested outside Sen. Mitch McConnell's office on Capitol Hill. PHOTO/HARVEY FINKLE

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As the world burns: Climate change in Trump's America

EDITORIAL

When President Trump recently walked away from the Paris climate agreement, the world was outraged and appalled, as are most of the people in the U.S. Increasingly people are understanding the peril we, and the planet, are in as corporations plunder and poison. People can't understand why the government refuses to switch to clean forms of energy freely supplied by nature. They want to see an end to the continued use of fossil fuels, and the dangerous and dirty forms of extraction it requires. They realize the urgency of the threat that looms above all the rest—the resulting climate change that threatens humanity and life itself.

The exit from the Paris Accords will accelerate the destruction already underway. But even with the Accords the problem would not be solved: fossil fuels would still be exploited as the main sources of energy, because the corporations that control the U.S. government make their killer profits there. And now the Trump administration is gutting the EPA and attacking the very science that could be used to solve the problem.

Scientists agree that a calamity is on its way, as polar ice melts and extreme weather becomes the abnormal norm, with floods, killer heat waves, hurricanes, sea rise, raging wildfires and mass extinctions. They warn us that unless drastic change is made immediately—meaning getting off our dependence on fossil fuels—the accelerating climate change could make the planet uninhabitable for humans and many other species.

We don't have to allow a small class of super-rich exploiters to imperil life on the planet for their profit! Whether the Paris Accords are adhered to or not, the nature of capitalism, to guarantee



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

corporate profits or go bankrupt, has come up against the survival of humanity and life itself. The corporations have many billions invested in these dirty sources of energy. In 2012, ecologist Bill McKibben noted the \$1 trillion profit made by the top five oil companies, as tens of billions of taxpayer subsidies are paid to the fossil fuel industries every year. There is little room in an economic system based on private ownership of society's resources for changing to clean technologies, no matter what is destroyed as a consequence. But we, the people, can decide what kind of world we want to live in.

We are in the streets in the millions worldwide demanding that we clean up the environment and switch to sustainable energy. We already know how to use renewable energy sources like wind and solar, which don't spew emissions into the atmosphere. The only thing standing in our way are these corporations—the

billionaire class—that own and control the technologies.

These new technologies could give us a clean, abundant world, if corporate rule were kicked off and society could act in the best interests of all. It is up to us to organize for such a world. A cooperative economic system would guarantee this, and put these decisions

into the hands of the people, who would own and benefit from the technologies that could create a safe, fulfilling, sustainable and abundant life. A first step toward such a new society would be the demand for the government to take over the energy technologies and run them in the people's interest, not the corporations.

People's Tribune subscription drive is coming up!

As a reader of the *People's Tribune*, you know our sole purpose is to give a voice and offer a vision of a just society to those who are in the forefront of the fight for everyone's survival today.

We are an independent paper, receive no corporate donations, and rely on our readers for our financial support. We are preparing for our annual October-November subscription drive, but by subscribing or donating today, you can help us to hit our goals and meet our financial needs early.

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— *People's Tribune*

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

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

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

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

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

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People's candidates challenge corporate parties

From the Editors

"I don't care if the [Democratic National Committee] backs me or not. This is a people-funded campaign," says Paula Swearingin, who's running against the coal industry's spokesperson, Senator Joe Manchin (D), in West Virginia's upcoming primary.

"They are not voting for the issues and do not have our health or prosperity in mind," she said, in reference to the Democratic Party leadership. "They can stand with us or get out of the way, because we are taking our state back."

This is one of many examples of grassroots candidates who are challenging the two corporate parties in electoral races all over the country. In Jackson, Mississippi, the new Mayor, Chokwe Antar Lumumba, came into office reminding voters that the point isn't merely to resist one bad president, it is "to change the order of the world."

Something new is happening. People who are fed up with corporate owned government run by corporate backed parties and incumbents aren't just staying home on election day, but are instead stepping forward and running for office. Their candidacies are the recognition of the fact that government that serves the corporations does so at the people's expense.

One expression of this incipient new independent political motion found a voice in the People's Summit held in Chicago



Crowds at the People's Summit in Chicago in June, 2017. Grassroots people who are fed up with corporate owned government and corporate parties are stepping forward and running for office.

PHOTO/NATIONAL NURSES UNITED

over the June 9 through June 11 weekend. At one point during the summit, as Bernie Sanders was giving a speech, he asked, "how many of you have run for office or are actively involved in local campaigns?" Literally hundreds stood up to the applause of the audience. At another point when chants of "Bernie, Bernie," arose he said, "no, it's not me it's you."

Clearly, the glue that brought the Summit together was not blind devotion to a personality or candidate, but a reaffirmation into the electoral arena of the life and death issues that we face as Americans. Free universal health-care for all, a guaranteed minimum wage that we can live on, access to clean affordable water, a pollution free environment, an

end to the racial divide, an end to police murder of citizens, affordable housing and an end to homelessness, and free quality education for all; these are just a few of those issues. People are beginning to separate themselves from both major parties precisely because the leadership of those

parties consider things like health-care, water, education, housing, etc., as sources for corporate capitalist profit rather than a starting point for rights that government should guarantee its people.

The widespread moral outrage at this has fueled the rapid growth of the movement. Ever larger numbers of new people are marching, protesting and entering into political activity, fighting for the people's demands both inside and outside of the corporate parties. The understanding is shifting from Democrat versus Republican to have versus have-nots.

We are four and a half decades into our economy transforming itself from industrial manufacturing to electronic automation. These changes are making themselves felt in the political life of the country. The billionaire ruling class is not willing to do anything for us, let alone respect the rights of workers or provide for those who can no longer feed, house or provide medical care for themselves. People, especially our young people, are becoming aware of this and are being set into motion.

The ruling class will attempt to do what they have always done: derail or push the movement off course from its final destination. But, the will of the people is to have an economy and government that are both finally of, for and by the people, and we will not be deterred.

Defending those with the least is key to victory

A homeless mother called a shelter hotline only to be told that if she and her kids had nowhere safe to sleep, she'd be reported to the city's Child and Family Services Agency for investigation into abuse and neglect. Alongside of this devastating situation which effects more and more homeless is the rise of a new section of homeless who are employed but living in shelters or Tent Cities.

"I'm working 12 hours a day, but can't afford the rent," says a woman who works two jobs and lives in a shelter.

The combination of soaring rents and the loss of good paying jobs has caused an astronomical growth of the working homeless in the country, with no end in sight. In the Silicon Valley region, the richest area in the U.S, and only a short distance from the headquarters of the high-tech giants Google, Facebook, and Oracle, activists say they have never seen so many newly hungry and homeless people; even engineers

are in food lines.

This new and dire situation is affecting millions of us. Underlying it is the new reality that robots can produce an abundance of goods more cheaply than humans. This could be beneficial for society, but under capitalism, a system where life itself is commodified for profits, we must work to eat. Yet, there is less and less work because technology is replacing our labor.

We are at war. The billionaire ruling class will stop at nothing to keep their wealth and privilege as the system crumbles. They aim to pick us off one by one, divide us by race, sex, religion or age, and use the power of their militarized police state to stop our movement for a just society.

Our movement can only grow. They do not intend to solve our problems. Let us build our movement's strength and unity by defending the least among us. We have a world to win.

— From the Editors

Grenfell fire sparks outrage and demands for safe housing

Those who are living are now dead

Those who were breathing are from the living earth fled.

If you want to see how the poor die, come see Grenfell Tower.

See the tower, and let a world-changing deed flower.

— Excerpted from a poem by Ben Okri

The fire that killed at least 79 of the poor housed in the Grenfell Tower Block in the UK was nothing short of murder by the owners of the luxury apartments that are near the Grenfell Tower. The flammable cladding on the outside of the building, costing \$10 million, was put up because the developers and rich in the area saw the building as an eyesore, lowering the value of their property. But the safety demands of the workers for sprinkler systems and other issues had been ignored for years.

The fire has united a broad section of workers demanding that government act in their interests and take over vacant luxury housing in the area to house survivors. The same class that is responsible for these 79 deaths is responsible for the growing poverty and homelessness everywhere. The poor of every nation are rising to demand that government serve them, and not corporate profits. Making decent, safe, affordable housing a "right" guaranteed by government is a first step to a new, cooperative society that benefits all.

— From the Editors



Bulldozer hits homeless man sleeping in tent

While asleep in his tent a man living under a freeway in West Oakland was hit and dragged by the city's heavy-equipment bulldozer (like the bulldozer pictured above). The city said it was "removing garbage" from homeless encampments. If the bulldozer had approached from the other side, the man's head would have been bulldozed, killing him (*East Bay Express*). A similar incident occurred in 2015, when a woman sleeping in a San Jose encampment was bulldozed, suffering a broken pelvis. These examples show that the poor have no value to a corporate profit driven economic system. Homelessness is spreading by leaps and bounds—particularly among the working homeless who are living in shelters, tents, or cars. What is in store for them? It is urgent that we demand that the government of the wealthiest country in the world provide housing for everyone as a right, simply because we are human beings.

Humans for hope

By Leslie Willis

CHICAGO, IL — Lindsay Gerhardt founded Humans For Hope in December of 2016. This organization sets up carts or tables full of donations to give away to homeless people living on the streets of Chicago. They set up anywhere they can, sometimes popping up on downtown corners where they know homeless people will be. They call these events Gives. But the giving that takes place is a lot more than useful items like food, clothes, and medical supplies. Relationships are formed and the volunteers and the people living on the street are building strong bonds and community together.



Humans for Hope volunteers gather as they prepare to build strong bonds with brother and sisters living on the streets of Chicago.

PHOTO/AMY DAVILA

giving what I could and exploring new perspectives as we both spoke of our stories. I have always seen that these individuals on the streets are just humans, like everyone else, not monsters or bothersome as society treats them. We are them. They are us. They are simply in a different situation than us, a situation that I have seen to be the hardest of them all."

"Gives allow us to see the truths and raw reality that society likes to cover up. The men and women I have met are some of the strongest, most genuine and giving souls who have some of the most traumatic, heart wrenching stories you would ever hear and yet they are made to be invisible from society. They are walked by and shut out for no reason but their status. Every person we meet and every story we hear on our Gives educates us and

reassures our thinking that homelessness can happen to everyone and anyone. We all should band together and help one another because these are someone's brothers, mothers, sisters, etc."

Lindsay and Humans for Hope have embraced the People's Tribune as a true voice of and advocate for the homeless. One thing that she said drew her to the People's Tribune was this sentence, "Whether we are renters, homeowners, or homeless—we all need to join together with one voice on this issue to demand that 'we the people' be guaranteed housing no matter what our income!"

You can donate to Humans For Hope at Gofundme.com/humansforhope, you can contact them at humansforhopechicago@gmail.com or through Facebook and Instagram.

Right to survive!

Editor's note: This article is excerpted from an interview done by Mic Crenshaw with Ibrahim Mubarik. Mubarik is a founding member of Pitch A Tent, a mass direct action of civil disobedience which takes place annually in June in Portland, Oregon.

By Ibrahim Mubarik, as interviewed by Mic Crenshaw

PORTLAND, OR — Pitch-A-Tent is a direct action by the houseless advocate organization Right 2 Survive (R2S). R2S became aware of an ordinance passed by the city officials that allows people to erect tents on public sidewalks a day before the Rose Festival parade, while the unhoused community cannot as a means of survival. We the houseless community, R2S and other human rights organizations, believe that this is a criminalization of our human rights. R2S have been doing this for seven years. Each year it has attracted more and more people to this important direct action.

Right 2 Survive came to the conclusion that we need to educate the unhoused and the housed about this. So we had some brainstorming meetings and came up with, "if they allow people to put up tents then we will be the first to put tents down and have a direct action, an educational/informational event about houselessness." We would invite keynote speakers, local and nationwide activists, entertainers, musicians, vocalists, have open mic, poetry reading, radical videos. We gave out hot and cold food, hygiene packages and, most important, we gave a houseless person a good safe and fun night of community and rest. First year we did this event we took over two and a half blocks, last year it was ten blocks, This year HUMMMM!

The impact of Pitch-A-Tent was astronomical. It gave the houseless community a sense of hope, that they could partake in a public affair without being banned or told to move along. More important was that we listened to the unhoused community on what their needs and wants were.

Pitch-A-Tent goals were to educate:

- 1) the houseless communities on how to fight for their rights
- 2) How to form safe peer-led communities of houseless people
- 3) That they should start going to city hall to speak to the decision makers about how they are being treated and criminalized for exercising their human rights (getting sleep, praying in public, need of showers, public restrooms, etc.etc)
- 4) To connect communities and build relationships.

The importance that the entertainment part brings to Pitch-A-Tent is that the unhoused people were something before they became houseless, it's a half and half thang where the unhoused get to showcase their talents along with the housed, and really you cannot, I reiterate you can not, tell who is housed or unhoused. The entertainment field leads me to believe that there is no social status criminalization in this business. It's free expression, and their message is in their music, art, and performance!!!

Mic Crenshaw is a cultural activist, emcee, and Political Director of Hip Hop Congress.

why?

why can't he sit inside who found a cup with a little coffee in it

and settled into the cafe armchair?

chairs are private if you are homeless and old

and need to take a little sip or nap

cuz sitting inside or out or lying down is still against the law here in St Francis town

— Sarah Menefee

Next steps in the battle for renters' rights

By Sandy Perry

A massive "Renter Power" movement is arising in California and elsewhere in response to skyrocketing rents for millions of Americans. It has won some spectacular gains, like the recent triumph of tenant protections and rent control in San Jose.

In the middle of these victories, however, comes the news that Los Angeles and Oakland just experienced 25% increases in homelessness last year even though both cities have tenant protections and rent control.

Tenants won the right to not be evicted when they pay the rent on time, which is important, but they are still losing ground. Limiting rent increases does not solve the problem when incomes fall or even disappear. The real right to housing means more than rent control. It means the right to stay in your home even when you cannot afford to pay rent at all. The real right to housing means a law guaranteeing that no one should ever have to pay more rent than is affordable, no matter how low the renter's income.

The People's Tribune reports from the front line of the movement for housing and against homelessness. Please help distribute this paper to get out the word. Donate and write your own articles for it. The PT is your voice, independent and entirely reader-supported.

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The People's Tribune reported in May, 2017, about Paul Mayer, a 92-year-old WWII veteran who is being evicted from the only home he's known for half a century in San Jose, CA. The scam that allows this is a federal program where low-rent tenants are moved out. Then homeless vets get a voucher that pays 30% of their income, but the landlord collects a market rate rent plus a bonus. So in this case, one vet is moved out and another is moved in. This is but another example pointing to the senselessness of a profit-driven economy that doesn't have at heart the interests of everyone who needs housing but cannot afford skyrocketing rents. Paul's family is fighting it as they don't want this to happen to other people.

Historic tenant victory in San Jose

By Liz González

SAN JOSE, CA — San Jose, CA has approved historic just-cause eviction and anti-displacement protections for renters after a two-year campaign to improve a decades-long unenforced rental ordinance.

This victory comes at a time when San Jose is pushing ahead with a version of itself that leaves behind the folks who are the backbone of the city.

The win sent a message to residents that the power imbalance that has existed between landlords and tenants could no longer be ignored and must be shifted. The council members who voted in favor of tenant protections sent a message that it is not only an obligation of the city but also well within their power to help assure that families live in a safe environment where they can exercise their rights.

Although San Jose has had a rental ordinance since 1980, landlords had taken advantage of its weak enforcement. This led to the especially fearful environment where tenants not only rarely complained about unsafe conditions, but even less did they fight an eviction in a city where the vacancy rate has hovered near 5% for several years.

Without brave tenants willing to share their stories about the shameful living conditions in one of the wealthiest regions of the nation, this outcome might not have been possible.

Years ago, Ruby Domínguez, 74, spent about five months living in a motel after being unjustly evicted from her home of 27 years and the memory of that

experience led her to join the fight to pass just-cause.

Domínguez was evicted without a reason, completely disrupting her life. "I had never missed a rent payment, never bothered anyone," recalled Domínguez and added that it was painful that her daughter had to stay with a friend because she could only afford to have her son stay with her at the motel.

"When you get people to stick together it works," Domínguez said of the campaign that escalated with a five-day fast leading up to the City Council vote. The larger community joined in solidarity to demonstrate that it went beyond a political issue, that it is a moral issue about protecting families and vulnerable populations.

"We didn't know if we were gonna win or not because we had a lot of opposition," Domínguez said. The landlord lobby had dragged out this process by appealing to a sense of fairness they did not share when it came to tenants getting a fighting chance to stay in their apartments. But the imbalance was undeniable and those who are charged with representing city residents had to move with the will of the people.

"We did something for the people. There is a future now for the kids and the people coming up now," Domínguez said, "and they will not fear being thrown out for reporting something wrong in their home."

As more cities around the San Francisco Bay Area take up the fight for tenant protections each victory reminds us that a powerful lobby is not unbeatable when people organize.

Report from Uptown Tent City

By Mark Saulys

CHICAGO, IL — In the Chicago neighborhood of Uptown, under the viaducts of Lake Shore Drive, there are encampments, "Tent City" or "Uptown Tent City", they are called. The homeless always deal with bigotry and bigoted hatred from the not homeless wherever they are, but in Uptown we are a symbol and political football, emblematic in a much larger struggle taking place in Uptown and many other neighborhoods in the city and in many cities in the U.S. That is the struggle of the poor and working classes to survive in the face of gentrification.

That struggle may be more intense and more charged with meaning in Uptown than anywhere else. Uptown has a long tradition of such struggles as previous mayors have seen the neighborhood as a repository for "undesirables" in their racist, bigoted view of the city and of the world, and declared war on it by various means, sometimes in the most literal sense.

Uptown offered defiant resistance in this war from City Hall and created a tradition for itself of tolerance and welcoming of all types of people and acceptance,



The Murray's have lived under a Chicago viaduct for a long time. They do not go to shelters because they cannot stay together as a married couple in a shelter. PHOTO/KATHY POWERS

accommodation and of aid and service to the poor.

There is, however, a growing element of residents in Uptown that is not native to the neighborhood but much more moneyed than the original residents and seeking to personally exploit and profit from the neighborhood by buying property extremely cheaply and driving those already living in the area out through the raising of property prices, and

thus all prices, in what is gentrification. This new element is not at all appreciative of the local traditions of tolerance, acceptance and service. They have, in fact, a great disdain for them and are extremely intolerant of anyone who is not of their privileged background and status and have not only a profit motive but a great personal animosity toward such persons in an almost blatant, bigoted hatred.

This newer, invasive, and would be successive, element puts tremendous pressure on the local alderman and mayor (both of whom are of similar ilk and whose sympathies are decidedly with this group and who actively and vigorously work to serve them and to the neglect and often willful harm of other groups of people not in this "in clique") to have us and all homeless and poorer people removed from the neighborhood in their frank "urban cleansing" campaigns.

Thus the pressure is always on and the almost Nazi like intolerance and wish to eradicate the less fortunate and less well off like so many insect pests in near

open class war is ever present always looking for an opportunity to advance its purpose and ultimate goals with one malicious act or other against its declared "enemies", the less fortunate who are only trying to make it and survive.

Intolerance, however, is only a symptom, a tool of the exploiters against the exploited. The real cause of homelessness is its profitability to real estate firms, developers and property owners in the economics of exclusivity. Until we as a society, through democratic government, genuinely address the problem and change the conditions that cause homelessness it will not go away but will ever increase.

The front porch leads to the truth

By Maureen Taylor,
state chairperson, Michigan
Welfare Rights Organization

DETROIT, MI — The 2nd International Gathering of Social Movements on Water has now passed into history. The Gathering was a great accomplishment and a tremendous success.

This event stretched over four days, brought together some of the best minds, the deepest thinkers, the clearest visionaries all in an effort to analyze and suggest steps to continue a national theme that *water is a human right* regardless of the capacity to pay for it.

Speakers from Mexico, Liberia, Canada, Puerto Rico, Brazil and from states across the nation, including indigenous peoples, convened in sites across Detroit.

Opening Day saw us at Wayne County Community College where the parameters of the issue were laid out. Day 2 was at the Hotel St. Regis main ballroom where our best attorneys and most assertive legislators shared the national details of pending litigation and legislation connected to water issues like making mass shutoffs illegal.

Day 3 was at the Local 58 union hall of the I.B.E.W. Grassroots speakers detailed their efforts, starting with a political analysis of why we are facing this crisis, followed by stories from across the country of water rights of millions of people being violated, often by the same corporate pirates.

The last day, attendees met near the Detroit River to plan strategies and next steps that highlight the Gathering theme.

One major subject that surfaced often was the discussion about the fight on the front porch! This is the place where many visionaries are unable to move past which is the battle of “race” being the only issue at

hand. Many of us have spent lifetimes on the porch, fighting that single but powerful fight only to learn that we can’t gain possession of the entire house if we only stop there. People of color can never escape the shadow of the plantation. The “race” struggle is always with us since it has historically been the most effective American tool yet to separate us from each other and to cloud the truth. True revolutionaries have to engage that battle by meeting fighters where they are then open the door to see what’s down the hall. The issue of “class” is what’s being hidden and what we have to conquer if we are to gain control over the entire house! The Gathering is the embodiment of the “low-hanging fruit” that has already galvanized the nation when the word spread that mass shutoffs were occurring at thousands of residents’ homes in Detroit followed by the scandal of the poisoning of Flint. The fight to maintain accessible water and sanitation is critical and serves as an entry point to a much larger and more detailed conflict that has eluded the American working class for decades.

Ours is a strategic battle, long-term but winnable, if we understand the rules of engagement and what we are fighting for! We want *ownership* of the whole house. We do battle at Point ‘A’ because we have to, but the fight has to expose the class nature of who the enemy is. The enemy is the 1% who would privatize public ownership of municipal water, pollute the air, destroy farms, build dams that threaten entire communities, poison entire cities, attack our quality of life and deliver death in many forms as they seek profit before people. The fight on the front porch has to lead us to the truth which lies down the hall. Let’s make that journey united as a class so we can stop this madness.

Powerful voices from participants at the 2nd International Gathering of Social Movements on water, June 9-11, 2017 in Detroit

On this page are excerpts from some of the speakers from the 2nd International Gathering of Social Movements on water on June 9-11, 2017 in Detroit, MI. More speakers will be included in our August, 2017 edition. — *People’s Tribune*

My water was cut off twice... My children were ashamed to go to school. It affected their education, not being able to launder your clothing, not being able to bathe properly... I got bacterial pneumonia and still have lasting effects... Water is a human right, it’s more than a right, it’s a life-giving necessity... I won’t stop fighting for myself, for the citizens of Detroit, the citizens of Flint, the citizens of Michigan and the people of this country... What’s going on is not about that people don’t or won’t pay their bills... it’s caused by a greedy capitalist system that values money and profit over people. Water is the new gold, water is a hot commodity, and if people have to die so they can make water a commodity, they’re prepared to do that. So we have to be prepared to not just fight for water but to fight for our lives... My motto has now become I can’t stop and won’t stop, and I implore all of you to do the same.

— Nicole Hill, Detroit, People’s Water Board Coalition

A long time ago you could drink water from every river. Now in California they say every river is contaminated... We have followed the water system in our state because of our salmon. We have a clear and present danger here and around the world. In this country, one of the richest in world, and in California, a state that is the 7th largest economy in world, all of their science and money can’t bring the salmon back again. We are still hopeful that this miracle fish is the climate changer. The salmon have not been studied in that light. These fish gave us voice.

— Chief Caleen Sisk, Chief and spiritual leader of the Winnemem Wintu Tribe, California

I want to tell you about our story to get the truth in the public eye. We met with the health officer responsible for protecting people’s health in Detroit. He said, ‘I understand there’s a health crisis but if I told anyone I’d be fired. I want you to gather information that I will take to the mayor.’ ... We partnered with Ford Hospital and got the information. Those patients who came from blocks that experienced water shutoffs were 1.55 times more likely to be diagnosed with water associated illnesses. Before we got him the information, he quit and got the mayor’s endorsement to run for governor. We said, ‘you have to stop the water shutoffs.’ As he left the room, he said the same person who is keeping me from speaking is keeping the information out of the newspapers.



PHOTO/VALERIE JEAN

This is the world we live in. We don’t have to accept that world... We are powerful. We are a people who can change anything we want to change. Our strength is not found in what billionaires can buy. We ask, what moral right they have to put the people of Detroit at risk?

— Reverend Ed Rowe



The choir sings, “Stop Shutting Water off...” PHOTO/MARY KAY YARAK



PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM



People’s Tribune Radio podcasts are available at peopletribune.org. Hear from people at the forefront of the struggles for a new America.



Atlantic City, NJ campaign launch event where volunteers were trained on how to gather petition signatures to force a referendum on whether the state can sell the public's water utility. PHOTO/LENA SMITH

By Bob Lee

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ — People in Atlantic City, NJ, are resisting efforts to privatize their water system.

Atlantic City (AC) saw its economy stumble with the general decline in the nation's economy in recent decades, and with the fall-off in the city's casino gambling industry since 2006. Casino jobs shrank, and little of

the billions in profits earned by the casinos had been put back into the community in a way that would help the local economy. AC's property tax base, once valued at \$20 billion, has shrunk to less than \$7 billion and the city is in debt.

Over the last seven years, the state has used the economic crisis as an excuse to begin taking over the city government. In January 2015, Gov. Chris Chris-

Atlantic City fighting for water and democracy

tie appointed two Michigan-style emergency managers, Kevin Lavin and Kevyn Orr, to oversee the operations and finances of AC and make recommendations. (Orr was the emergency manager in Detroit.) Lavin recommended in January 2016 that AC consider eventually privatizing certain city assets. In November 2016, the state took over AC, effectively stripping local elected officials of their power.

The AC Municipal Utilities Authority (MUA) supplies the city's water. A moratorium preventing the state from privatizing the MUA expired May 26, 2017. Activists organized as AC Citizens Against the State Takeover have been trying to force a public referendum on whether the MUA should be sold — a right that every other citizen in New Jersey has under state law. Linda Steele, a member of the AC NAACP, and Lena Smith, the South Jersey organizer with Food & Water Watch, are among the leaders of

the referendum effort.

The state is "absolutely" trying to privatize AC's water system, said Linda. "We are in fire sale mode. The water in AC is some of the best in the country. They have maintained their facilities, they have wonderful water ratings and good credit ratings. You can't really put a price on the value of our water. We have aquifers in the county that have years and years of life and quality there....After seeing what happened to Flint and other cities where privatization comes in, [I don't want it here]." She noted that water bills are low in AC, and are likely to rise, along with sewage rates, if the water is privatized.

"It's about the money, about big business, and the future they see in acquiring these utilities," said Linda.

Lena noted that the state takeover law prevents AC residents from voting on whether their water utility can be sold. As this story

was being written, the referendum campaign had gathered enough signatures to bring the matter before the AC City Council. Lena said she expected the council to pass an ordinance allowing the referendum, but said the state might block the ordinance. Even if there is a referendum, referendums are only advisory under the state takeover law, Lena said, so the state could ignore the results of the vote. However, she added, "The number of signatures that we gathered should be enough to show the governor and the city council that we won't go down without a fight."

"These state takeover laws are a way to push residents out and to implement very conservative and pro-corporate municipal models," said Lena. She added that both Democratic and Republican politicians have played a role in the AC takeover. "It's not one party or the other, but corporate control of our government that is impacting cities and communities," she said.

Three years of struggle: Charges against Detroit water protesters are dismissed



Charges against nine Detroit defendants known as the "Homrich 9" have been dismissed. Defendants protested at the Homrich gate three years ago, arguing that their act of civil disobedience was not a crime. The city had handed a lucrative contract (by Emergency Manager Kevin Orr) for the company to execute water shut-offs in Detroit.

What follows are comments from some of the defendants at a press conference celebrating the victory:

"It is a joy to be here today. We are free! The laws were being changed because of the dirty work of Detroit. They could have taken the money spent on this case and paid people's water bills and they could have taken that same money and implemented a water affordability plan. I'm grateful to be with this group of people—thanks to the People's Water board, We the People, Michigan Welfare Rights, and all of the people who are part of this fight. We are fighting for a better world where we don't face this kind of injustice. We are heading toward fascism. Water is a human right. The struggle has just begun."

— Marian Kramer

"Three years of prosecution on a misdemeanor is unconscionable. On the other hand, it has always been our desire to set this action on behalf of shut-off victims before a jury and to hear their verdict... Through this, we have been able to help keep water affordability and the violence of the shut-offs before the public. Among the best outcomes is

the community built between ourselves and with our movement attorneys, who have done incredible work. For myself, neither conviction nor acquittal, or now dismissal, can alter that commitment. This struggle is ongoing."

— Rev. Bill Wylie-Kellermann

"The day before this action the National Nurses United was here in Detroit. They raised the public health crisis: all living beings need water to live. We need clean water for drinking; the elderly and children are particularly vulnerable to dehydration from lack of access to water. We cannot privatize this precious resource..."

— Kim Redigan

"This is a spiritual war. They are trying to change our way of living and attach everything to money. We can't do it in small numbers. Everybody has to be part of this fight. It took three years. But it's not over. So stay tuned."

— Baxter Jones

Little Miss Flint got a rash from water on same day officials charged

On the same day Michigan Attorney General Schuette announced involuntary manslaughter charges against five officials for their alleged role in the Flint water crisis, 9-year-old Flint resident Amariyanna "Mari" Copeny — known to the world as Little Miss Flint — got a rash on her arm from taking a long shower.

"The water is still bad... It still smells like chemicals, and I still get rashes. It's still a lot, and bad, and worse," she said.

Asked what should happen to the people charged, Little Miss Flint said she thinks "they should go to jail." "And they need to fix the pipes... the state, the governor, the ones who caused it."

Editor's note: Excerpted from a story by Carla Javier originally published by fusion.kinja.com.



PHOTO/AJ+

A Tragedy in Appalachia: Oxycontin and opportunities or more simply: *'The story of my brother'*

Editor's note: The following are excerpts from a longer story by Tinia Creamer, reprinted here with permission.

By Tinia Creamer

SHOALS, WV — This could be your brother, your sister, your mother... I have relayed various tragic details of this life of mine over the years... All I have written before tells a story that has resolved. A triumph.

This story is ongoing. Nothing in this world has broken me, left me destroyed and devastated like addiction.

Wait, please know, I am the furthest thing from an addict... yet I've felt it so close, I might as well be one.

I have lost a father, 2 brothers, a sister and a grandfather in my short 34 years... to fires and exhaustion.

Addiction, though. I cannot even face it.

I said goodbye to my Daddy two years after my sisters and brothers. I have had miscarriages and have had a baby born so prematurely, he was unable to breathe on his own. I moved beyond molestation and rape.

But addiction... It gives me little peace, no rest. No hope. For 15 years... It is a Death simply dragged out year after year... In Appalachia. And elsewhere.

My brother was born two years after me. He was beautiful, even as a little child... When my brother's story became too sad, I ignored it... but I cannot forget it now.

West Virginia's hopelessness grabbed him... It began with something that led to Oxycontin, as it did for everyone in Lincoln County back then. Oxycontin eventually became impossible to acquire, so Opana and FENTANYL took their place. Methadone, Meth eventually turned to Heroin.

Most addicts tell me they want to die. Folks like to talk about choice. What choice? Do you believe these people said one day, "I want to be an addict when I grow up?" My brother's body is covered in track marks. I've found him scratching in corners unable to speak, 60 lbs. too thin for his 6'2" frame... and yet he was unable to say, "ENOUGH!" Addiction is tangled in an extreme lack of hope and no confidence in one's self at the roots.

Stop talking to me about choice when more than half of our population in some areas have become lost to Oxycontin then Meth and now Heroin. Stop telling me about choice when 1/2 of our babies are addicted in NICU. Let's talk about... letting humans become guinea pigs and cash cows for Big Pharma. Yesterday, 27 people overdosed in Huntington, WV... and the "Let them die" and "Their Choice" posts flooded my news feed...

The horror of what is taking place... is beyond the scope of words or vision.

Someone TALK. Say something. Do something of value. Get it right. Their lives matter. How about that?

Addicts' Lives Matter. Black Ones. Young Ones. White Ones.

The Hopeless culture here must end.

Someone must scream about it until the ceiling is shattered, until it stops... until we drag these human beings back from the brink and give them a vision...

"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Proverbs 29:18

Anti-union, pro-business Illinois governor reduces budget to nothing

By Kathy Powers

CHICAGO, IL — In 2014, corporate money bought Bruce Rauner the office of governor in the very troubled state of Illinois. Rauner's pro-business, anti-union agenda and his refusal to raise revenues from his corporate sponsors reduced the state budget reality into extinction.

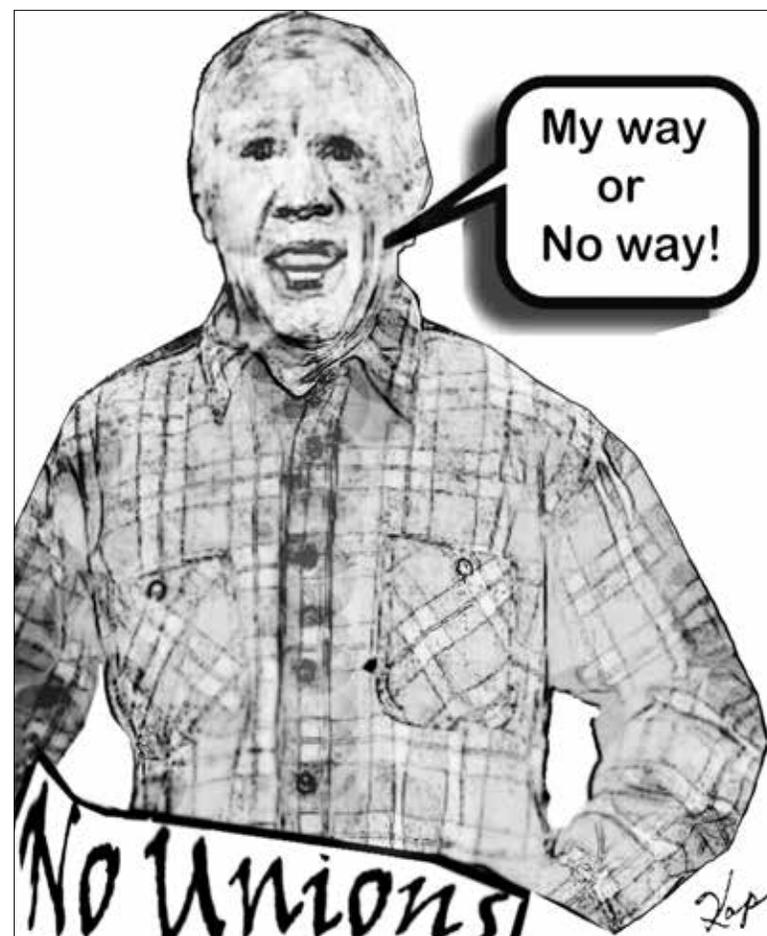
This is what has happened to the people of Illinois under Rauner:

Entitled people lost their benefits. The Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) cut food stamp benefits, Medicaid, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). DHS illegally and silently imposed weekly quotas for state workers to end or deny benefits to the poorest, at-risk populations. Upon appeal, most denied benefits become reinstated. "DHS operates with a fire extinguisher in one hand and a rosary bead in the other," DHS Secretary James T. Dimas stated.

The governor tried to circumvent the Department of Labor's new ruling that home service workers who work over 40-hours a week should be paid overtime. Rauner imposed several policies that capped the amount a home service worker may work to eliminate overtime pay. This policy infringes upon persons with disabilities to hire, fire and arrange a working schedule with personal assistants. Rauner erroneously suggested that this saves the state money. In fact, unnecessary emergency room trips, risk of permanent harm, and death to people who need home services negate the savings and inflate state fiscal obligations.

Community agencies permanently closed because the state did not pay its bills for human services. It also did not pay for education in the areas of special education costs, regular bus transportation, special education transportation and it cut funding for early childhood education.

Continued funding shortages affect state workers and their families who need medical care. "Many doctors and hospi-



Illinois governor Bruce Rauner wants to buy himself a second term in the 2018 elections. His campaign spot shows him in a tool shed wearing a plaid flannel shirt and promising again to "fix Illinois" by impoverishing the people. Rauner is rich and proud of it. He calls himself part of the 0.01 percent and owns fancy homes, condominiums and ranches all over the country. Rauner is a fixer all right—for the haves, not for the have-nots.

ART/KATHY POWERS

tals demand up-front payment or decline to accept new state-insured patients," the Chicago-based watchdog Civic Federation said, because of record delays in payments of state health insurance claims. State agencies usually receive partial funding for maintenance costs and day-to-day expenses like utilities.

Since community colleges now struggle under inadequate higher educational funding, some have pulled out of contracts to provide education in correctional facilities. Furthermore, some human service providers that worked in the criminal justice system have had to reduce or eliminate services. Some drug treatment facilities have had to discontinue treatment services for drug courts that closed due to the imposed budget crisis.

The governor and the execu-

tive branch can control the tone of discussions. Rauner's attitude in discussions with legislative opponents ranges from hostile to icy while state finances deteriorate without a budget. Advocates want Rauner to return to the bargaining table to work out a fair contract with AFSCME, or, as Rauner calls the union, "A scam me!"

Illegal actions resulting from policies designed to cut services, privatize the government, and break collective bargaining, place Illinois in great danger of litigious prosecution and further debt. Raising revenue from untapped corporate sources, closing corporate loopholes, and building community are possibilities that the governor and the Illinois General Assembly might seriously work toward. Unfortunately, neither have shown real interest in resolving this crisis.

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'Holler from the Hollers!' says woman running for WV legislature



Sandy Reid, for the People's Tribune, interviewed Lissa Lucas, a West Virginia native, who is among those Americans taking matters into their own hands by running for political office. Reid asked Lissa about her campaign for the West Virginia House of Delegates.

By Lissa Lucas, as interviewed by the People's Tribune

From both sides, politicians are representing their own interests. The rich and powerful have nearly complete influence over public policy. Money

buys power and outside funding is buying elections. I get fed up when every single representative of ours, including (U.S.) Senator (Joe) Manchin (D), spews nothing but a list of industry talking points. The concerns of regular people are not being heard.

I'm running in a rural, red district, but I've gotten a lot of support. We're all in this together out here. People don't want dirty water; they're concerned about having jobs to feed their families and I'm concerned about that, too. And no one is happy that companies can come in and put in a frack dump next door and transform your beautiful mountain view into an industrial zone—or just blow up your mountain and transform it into a smoking crater. The best way to fight that industrial aggression is to make sure we bring good jobs here, not just McDonald's or Wal-Mart. Most people would much rather work in a good job that doesn't hurt their neighbors or themselves, jobs that preserve West Virginia

for future generations.

Look, it's bad out here. It's not unusual not to even have potable water in the house; I don't. I get that there are places that are far more desperate for aid than we are, places you can't go to the grocery store for drinking water like we can. But nonetheless, in the richest country in the world, here we are. We're a part of this country, too, and it'd be nice if our representatives were fighting to make things better for us. From DuPont with C-8 to Freedom Industries with MCHM, we're being abused... and then abused again when politicians like Manchin and McKinley repeat industry talking points in exchange for political donations ad nauseum. And insult to injury, from the outside people believe our politicians—who serve as mouthpieces for Coal and Frack Barons—are accurately representing our views. They're not.

Here's what we want: West Virginia could be a state of vast hunting preserves and full of

clean water for fishing and white-water rafting. We could focus on renewable energy, but we need to get our priorities straight and stop subsidizing fossil fuels. Renewables create far more jobs per dollar invested. It will have to be a fast, radical change to our state economy, because we just can't allow our health to be sacrificed, and we can't allow people to lose their ability to provide for their families, either. But we can have good jobs and a clean environment, both. We all know what needs done, but our politicians are getting paid to make the rich even richer.

So I'm saying, let's get beyond the partisanship. Let's focus on issues that will actually help people. Holler from the Hollers is my slogan because I decided that if I run for office, then whether I win or lose, by God they're at least finally going to hear what we're saying out here!

'Blood on the Mountain': Truth on the screen



PHOTO/JORDAN FREEMAN

Film review:

By Chris Mahin

"Our union blood is on that mountain."

Those words were spoken at a contentious hearing in West Virginia to decide the fate of Blair Mountain, the scene of the bloodiest battle in U.S. labor history.

In 1921, some 10,000 miners fought a nine-day war on that mountain, battling thousands of company thugs, the state police, and—ultimately—the U.S. Army. Scores died. Over 1 million rounds of ammunition were fired.

Now, the energy industry wants to blast the top of Blair Mountain to find underlying coal

seams. This practice is known as "mountaintop removal." It has serious environment and health consequences.

A stunning film released late last year graphically depicts the intense debate over mountaintop removal, including the moves to blast Blair Mountain. It also brilliantly recounts West Virginia's past and the debate over its future.

"Blood on the Mountain" is a 93-minute documentary directed by Mari-Lynn Evans and Jordan Freeman. It uses recent

aerial photography and grainy old newsreel footage to convey both the breathtaking beauty of the Appalachian mountain range and the long, bitter struggle for economic and environmental justice there.

The film's interviews are as impressive as its imagery. We meet Chuck Nelson, who worked for 29 years in a union mine and then had to deal with the brutal practices of the anti-union Massey Energy Company. We watch as Maria Gunnoe

drives the back roads, distributing jugs of water after a chemical spill contaminated the water in nine West Virginia counties in 2014. We hear the anguish in her voice as she describes how difficult it is to decide who needs her limited supply the most.

Historians and retired miners talk on camera. Both groups agree: Today, more coal is being mined with fewer and fewer workers. Automation and mechanization are taking over the industry. The United Mine Workers of

America—once a powerful force with 500,000 members—now has only 14,000 members actually working in the mines. As mechanization increases and the old coal seams run out, it's cheaper to destroy a mountaintop than to dig for coal underneath it.

The last section of the film contains graphic scenes of ugly confrontations over mountaintop removal between some environmental activists and those working in the coal industry. The film shows how these conflicts have been spurred on by an expensive public relations campaign financed by an energy industry which has no compunction about blasting Blair Mountain despite its proud history.

Hopefully, this film will provoke viewers to do some hard thinking about tough questions: Why are guaranteeing jobs and protecting the environment always posed against each other by the powerful? Can't we save both West Virginia's environment and give its people work? After seeing this film's stark depiction of how the capitalists of West Virginia systematically destroyed so many lives and so much natural beauty, the viewer may be tempted to conclude: *Only with an entirely new system.*

"Blood on the Mountain" is available for viewing on Amazon and Netflix.

Texans demand democracy

By José and Manuel Torres

WESLACO, TX — On May 7, the Texas legislature and Governor Greg Abbott signed into law SB-4 which criminalizes law enforcement who do not comply with requests to hold detained immigrants for federal pick-up. It bans so-called sanctuary cities (that aim to protect immigrants) and empowers individual officers to ask about the immigration status of people they detain. SB-4 is called the “Show Me Your Papers” law.

Thousands have come out and protested this anti-immigrant law. In Austin, city council members were arrested and jailed. On May 1, state representative Victoria Neave went on a one-day hunger strike. Texas cities and towns are filing lawsuits against SB-4 based on the fact that it’s unconstitutional.

On May 29, more than 1,000 anti-SB-4 protesters filled the gallery at the end of the legislative session shouting, chanting and waving signs. They wanted to let lawmakers know what the community thinks about the bill. Some

signs read, “I am illegal, an immigrant, and I am here to stay.”

State Representative Matt Rinaldi from Irving, TX, told lawmakers that he called ICE on the protesters. Some Democratic lawmakers were offended and called Rinaldi on the floor and made counter-threats. Rinaldi threatened to shoot one of the Democrats.

This tension in the legislative session is about who will control state politics. The Republicans have been in control since 1994 and have isolated the Democrats. With today’s price of oil at \$45 a barrel, production has been shut down and the revenue from oil companies to the state is less than five years ago. There are also fewer jobs and repressive laws like SB-4 are the way to control the people of Texas. When people start questioning the legislature’s inability to provide jobs and basic needs, a repressive state government is necessary.

SB-4 specifically attacks the undocumented among us and aims to isolate and pit one section of society against the other. The



Texas’s new anti-immigrant law appears to be contrary to people’s wishes. Nearly three quarters of Texans are concerned about undocumented immigration. But more than three out of five think immigration is a plus and oppose building a wall. Even more don’t want to deport the state’s millions of undocumented residents, with 80 percent of the youth defending immigration and immigrants.

most vulnerable are first, but their attack will then extend to all workers. This is not the 1950s or 1960s. It is not a color question as in a previous period when we could fight individually. Today it is a struggle between a ruling class and a working class. We all need jobs,

healthcare and education today.

This small group of right-wingers wants to continue the old ways of “Black,” “White” and “Brown.” They can make their attempts to divide us, but because of automation in the workplaces, we are noticing that the capitalists

will get rid of workers regardless of their skin color, religion or sexual preference. The displacement of our jobs sets the basis for real unity among workers. We must strive for that unity and stand up together. An attack on one is an attack on all.

The American Dream Never Had a For Sale Sign

The American dream never had a “for sale” sign.

We dreamed of candles instead of pyres
Carillon instead of cannons
Bells ringing in every church and temple.

We dreamed of grape arbors and cornfields
Rivers full of salmon
Not mountains leveled for coal.

We dreamed of voting, all of us.
With no king or owner or patriarch
To beat us silent.

We never dreamed of a law
That made a corporation a person
Or homelessness a crime.

We wake like sleepwalkers
From nightmares of stolen gold
Bloody acres named for murdered tribes.

All here together now
Fighting the fire
Our dreams of freedom are never for sale.

— Jill Charles

‘We’re all under attack!’

By Steve Teixeira

LOS ANGELES, CA — Two recent cases in the Los Angeles area show that the government’s attack on “undocumented criminals” is a threat to the rights of immigrants, and even citizens. Unless a broad movement can stop these raids and police-state type actions against the most vulnerable workers, such attacks will spread out against more kinds of people.

Undocumented students and supporters are mobilizing to support Claudia Rueda, a 22-year-old undocumented activist at Cal State L.A. arrested by Border Patrol agents on May 18 and released on June 9. Some relatives had been arrested in a drug trafficking investigation, though she was not charged with being involved. But agents arrested her because she had not applied for federal DACA protection. The reason for not applying: she lacked the \$500 fee.

The next week, on May 25, U.S. citizen Guadalupe Plascencia filed papers to begin a lawsuit against the San Bernardino Sheriff’s department and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for illegally holding her in jail in March as an undocumented worker. She had gone to the Ontar-



Students and faculty stand up for Claudia Rueda at Cal State LA graduation. Claudia was arrested because she had not applied for the federal DACA program (because she lacked the \$500 fee).

io (CA) police station to retrieve property and was arrested over a warrant she obviously didn’t know was out on her. When she was to be released from jail by the sheriffs, she was handcuffed instead and driven to an ICE detention facility.

Police and ICE representatives frantically tried to explain this away as just a “mistake,” but Ms. Plascencia knew better. “I felt helpless, like I was no one,” she told the Los Angeles Times. “Here, they talk about rights ... I realized, we don’t have rights.”

The Coordinator of Cal State L.A.’s Dreamers Resource Center, Luz Borjon, agreed that when immigrants’ rights get attacked, citizens’ rights soon are also

attacked. When supporters wrote letters calling for Claudia to be released on bond, Borjon said, “Staff and faculty were asked for driver’s licenses as proof of identity in order for the letters to be used by her lawyer... We have to amplify the voices of undocumented students and make the choice to take a moral stand.”

Faculty and students did just that at Cal State L.A.’s graduation, holding up signs and banners calling for Claudia to be freed. They insist the campus raise funds to help immigrant students pay for lawyers, or for rent when parents are detained. Their struggle can become one step toward building a better society.

California: The fight for single-payer healthcare intensifies

Update as we go to print: Democratic Assembly Speaker Rendon has put SB 562 on hold, all but ensuring it will not pass the legislature this year. Rendon is one of many Democratic (and Republican) legislators who received large contributions from the health insurance industry, as has Governor Jerry Brown.

By Peggy Elwell

SAN JOSE, CA — A thousand people showed up on May 19 in Sacramento to spend the day rallying and lobbying state legislators on behalf of SB 562, the Healthy California Act, which would establish single-payer health care in California. By eliminating the role of insurance companies and setting up a single public fund to pay for health care, enough money would be saved to cover everyone with equal, quality and comprehensive health care, regardless of income, pre-existing conditions, employment or immigration status. A win for single-payer in California would inspire similar action in other states and on the national level, to benefit everyone.

An active grassroots movement has emerged as hundreds of community organizations, unions, small businesses and churches have endorsed the bill. Leading



Rally in Sacramento on behalf of SB 562, the Healthy California Act, which would establish single-payer health care in California. PHOTO/CALIFORNIA NURSES ASSOCIATION

the opposition is Kaiser Permanente, an insurance company and health care provider rolled into one, along with other insurers and corporate health interests.

In this bluest of blue states, with a supermajority of Democrats in both houses of the legislature and Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown, passage of SB 562 is far from being a shoo-in. Corporate power is manifesting itself as the bill comes under misleading attacks for being “too expensive” or, more insidiously,

“distracting from the fight to save Medi-Cal [Medicaid in California].” The Democratic Party is divided on the issue, with many post-Bernie Sanders formations flexing their muscle against centrist Democrats.

On June 1, SB 562 passed the state senate by a simple majority.

After the legislative visits, several hundred single-payer health care supporters, led by the California Nurses Association, entered the California

Democratic Convention chanting, “Hey hey, ho ho, corporate Dems have got to go!” Prior to that march Nina Turner, a Bernie supporter and former Ohio state senator, gave a tremendously rousing speech, drawing on her own experience growing up and the death of her mother at age 42 from a brain aneurysm for lack of adequate medical care. Nina quoted Nelson Mandela, who once said “it always seems impossible until it is done,” and exhorted the crowd to do as a

woman in labor would do, “give a big push and breathe.”

The People’s Tribune asked some who traveled from San Jose to Sacramento on behalf of SB 562 what motivated them to make the trip. Here are their answers:

Antonio Mora — “My kids. My son has Kaiser through work, but it is a bad plan. There’s a limit of \$200 a day for hospitalization, which is not enough. My daughter would have a similar problem if she were hospitalized. My grandson is on Medi-Cal and I’m worried about the future of that.”

Eulah Tate — “My son doesn’t have any insurance, even though he works, but it’s a minimum wage job. If this [bill] passes, maybe he will have access to health care. He doesn’t know if he has any conditions since it has been 10 years since he has been to a doctor.”

Concha Rodríguez — “The importance of having better medical coverage, and that people know that we have medical attention for everyone. Since I am sick, I need the support of the senators and assembly members, also as they hear the needs of others who came to talk to them—each one has their health problems.”

End ‘pauperization’ of healthcare!

By Retirees for Single Payer Healthcare

DETROIT, MI — Pauperization is an act of depriving someone of food or money or rights.

As human beings, we have always struggled to change the conditions under which we live. The result has always been the development of new more efficient means of production and new social relations of production to take advantage of those new means of production.

Electronic and robotic production is already here. It is the new means of production.

A recent article entitled “The American Dream is fading everywhere, but almost nowhere faster than Michigan”, published by the Bridge Magazine, describes the changes that electronics and robotics have brought to the lives of one Michigan family.

The article states, “In 1977, Bryan Kaminski walked out of high school and into an Ypsilanti factory. By 19, the General Motors employee, making what amounted to \$26 an hour in today’s dollars, had enough

money to buy a house.

In 2012, son Kyle Kaminski walked out of high school and onto the campus of Central Michigan University. Five years later, armed with a bachelor’s degree, he earns \$16 an hour as a reporter, the equivalent of 60 percent of what his father made straight out of high school. He rents a small Traverse City apartment he can only afford because his girlfriend splits the rent. He drives a 12-year-old car with 185,000 miles on it that he doesn’t know how he’ll ever be able to afford to replace.”

This father and son are not alone. This is where we all are today. This is the struggle for a new social relationship to take advantage of electronic and robotic production to benefit everyone.

Less than a week later another article entitled “Opinion: Pelosi’s ‘Medicare for All’ Problem”, published by Roll Call, describes Nancy Pelosi’s opposition to HR676 – The Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act.

The article says, “The documents help explain why and how Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi

is trying to squash her own party’s desire to fight for a health care system in which the government is the single payer for necessary medical expenses and the health insurance industry is all but eliminated as a middle man.”

There is plenty of healthcare access to be had. The problem is that if you cannot afford that access then you don’t get it.

The leadership of both the Democratic and Republican parties in Congress favor depriving us of access to healthcare.

HR 676 is the beginning of access to healthcare for everyone.

We stand with U.S. Rep. John Conyers Jr. and the 112 cosponsors of HR 676 against the “pauperization” of access to healthcare. Please stand with us.

Please tell your congressional representatives and senators that you want them to support HR 676 Medicare For All and run on this issue in 2018.

Our fight is to change how we gain access to healthcare in this new productive environment. Healthcare access is a right not a reward.

The plan to dismantle Medicaid

From the Editors

Disabled people and supporters gathered June 22 inside the U.S. Capitol to protest proposed cuts to Medicaid in the Senate healthcare bill. “My child is going to die and my family is going to die, and they don’t give a damn about it!” yelled one protester.

Medicaid covers 75 million Americans, including 10 million disabled people. It covers 40% of all children, 30% of adults with disabilities and 60% of all children with disabilities. It covers services for the disabled that most commercial health insurance doesn’t include.

Both the House and Senate bills essentially destroy Medicaid as we know it while giving tax cuts for the rich, although the Senate bill is worse. It would give almost \$800 billion in tax cuts, mostly for the wealthy, while slashing more than \$800 billion from Medicaid. The impact on the poor will be devastating.

What will they go after next?

Stopping these bad bills is not enough. We need healthcare for every person who lives in this country, regardless of ability to pay, and nothing less.

How I became a political prisoner

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

BENTON HARBOR, MI — I am Reverend Edward Pinkney, a national and community activist, who tragically, became a political prisoner in the state of Michigan on December 15, 2014. I was sent to prison with absolutely no evidence a crime was ever committed. The Berrien County trial court and Judge Sterling Schrock, along with prosecutor Mike Sepic, stole 30 months of my life.

On July 26, 2016 the Michigan Court of Appeals rejected my appeal. The three-judge panel, Kelly, O'Brien, and Hood, better known as the three blind mice, stated Rev. Edward Pinkney must have told somebody to change the dates on the recall petitions. This was ridiculous. There was absolutely no evidence to support their theory. I was convicted by an all white jury that was motivated by something other than the truth, but it is bigger than that. The powers that be will crush any-

body who stands up today. It's me today, and you tomorrow.

I have already completed the 30 months that was forced on me as the result of a Jim Crow trial that accused me of altering dates on a recall petition against the puppet Mayor James Hightower, who lost the last election by a landslide.

The prosecutor and judge formed a partnership and instructed the all white jury to convict me without any evidence. I am an innocent man tried, convicted and sentenced to die in an effort to isolate and silence me against the power of the land grabbing, job out sourcing, criminal Whirlpool Corporation, with its headquarters in Benton Harbor. This is a company who refuses to pay taxes or hire Benton Harbor Black residents. My unusually harsh sentence was imposed by Judge Schrock.

I appealed the judgment of the Michigan Court of Appeals to the Supreme Court on September 3, 2016. On May 17, 2017, the

Court asked two questions about the case, (but refused to ask about the insufficiency of evidence.) The questions are about whether the Berrien County trial court violated the Michigan Rules of evidence, the first amendment and due process for allowing "evidence" against me to be admitted under 404b based on the prosecutor's allegation that I was politically and socially motivated (indicated by my political and social activity, which was 100% legal). The allegation was that it was likely I committed the illegal act of forgery because it promoted my political goal of having the election recall go forward. This was nonsense.

Question number two was whether I was ever charged with a crime. The only statute that was the basis of the felony counts (168.937) set forth a penalty provision for forgery that is prohibited by other sections of the election code and does not set forth a substantive crime that



Rev. Pinkney and his wife Dorothy. Rev. Pinkney was held as a political prisoner for 2½ years because he led the community's challenge to a corporate backed mayor in Benton Harbor.

can be the basis of a prosecution.

The scale of Lady Justice is imbalanced, especially against people of color. We must continue to fight against this grave imbalance to ensure a humane, just future for people of color,

the homeless, the poverty stricken, and for the whole weary and beaten populace of America. All across our country, we must continue to speak truth to power. We must demand that justice be served for all people.

Give Us This Day

By Diana Berek

CHICAGO, IL — It's morning. June 10, 2017. I just learned that among the previous day's gun violence is the shooting death of Xavier Joy 23, a college graduate who returned to Chicago to work with young people and give back to his community.

I don't know for sure, but I think this young man might have been a chess coach for one of my grandsons. I am reluctant to ask my 15-year-old grandson because he's already had to process too many friends or family getting shot. Last weekend, his uncle was shot three times on the North Side. Within the past two months, a former classmate and a friend were shot to death.

Whether shootings are classified as "innocent bystander," "gang-related" or "justified/officer-related" is immaterial to me because they resulted in a death or injury at the point of a gun leaving a community and a family to process over and over again their grief, fear, anger, frustration.

It is not quite the middle of the year as I write this. Already 27,284 people have been the victims of gun-related incidents; 6,734 resulted in death; 13,177 injured. According to Gun Violence Archive, 1,699 of those gun-related incidents involved children under 17 years of age. One hundred forty-six were mass shootings. Nine hundred thirty-three were officer-involved incidents with 124 officers shot or killed.

I've been to vigils and marches. I've been to community meetings where the police commander advocated expanding Neighborhood Watch and promises greater police presence. I've sat in Peace Circles with neighbors who oppose Neighborhood Watch. They don't want neighbors watching each other; they want neighbors talking to each other, strengthening and healing

their community. I've sat with Abolition activists who want an end to the police. Often, I recall this poem:

Give Us This Day*

If I have a loaf of bread
And my brother and sister have none
Then I owe them half
Even if they do have a gun

I just might not realize
how much guns had to do
with my having the bread
in the first place

— John Sheehan

Until we see that violence comes first from the top; until we reorganize society to meet the survival needs of everyone, we will lose loved ones to the violence from the suites as well as the violence from the streets. Until then we will suffer the senselessness of a destructive social order that puts property above the right of every human being to have the food, shelter, healthcare and education necessary for survival. Until then, we will have to endure the senselessness that only makes sense to the corporate ruling class — the 1% — which is hoarding and protecting private property as they siphon off the social wealth derived from the labor of so many generations they have exploited for their profit and our poverty. This is the insane sense of senseless losses like Xavier Joy and every other loved one lost.

Dedicated to Corey Donzell Webster, fatally shot on June 24, 2017. R.I.P Little Corey

*from **Elsewhere Indiana**, by John Sheehan (Tia Chucha Press)

Grieving mother Valerie Castile hits back hard at Minnesota

Editor's note: Excerpts of remarks by Valerie Castile on June 16 after St. Paul, MN area police officer Jerónimo Yáñez was found not guilty in the killing of her son, Philando Castile, on July 6, 2016. In grief and anger, she condemns the officer's acquittal as not only a gross injustice against her son, but as a barbaric and immoral failure of justice in Minnesota. Transcribed from a video by Fusion.

By Valerie Castile

[M]y son (Philando Castile) was murdered and I will continue to say murdered because where in this planet do you tell the truth and you be honest and you still be murdered by the police of Minnesota. ... I am so very, very, very, very, very, very, very disappointed in the system here in the state of Minnesota. ... There has always been a systemic problem in the state of Minnesota. ... The system continues to fail Black people and they will continue to fail you all. ... When they get done with us, they coming for you. Y'all are next! And you'll be standing up here fighting for justice. My son loved this state. ... My son loved this city and this city killed my son and the murderer gets away!

[...] We're not evolving as a civilization, we're devolving! We have taken steps forward. People have died for us to have these rights. And now we're devolving! We're going back down to 1969! Damn! What is it going to take? I'm mad as hell right now! Yes, I am.

My first-born one son died here in Minnesota. Under the circumstances, just because (Jeronimo Yanez) was a police officer that makes it OK. Oh, now they got free rein. He's found innocent on all counts. He shot into a car with no regard to human life! And that's OK. Thank you, Minnesota. Thank you, Minnesota.