Mission of this poetry pull-out

The People’s Tribune has always opened its pages to the voices of the homeless. It’s a place for activist members of the homeless community to talk to each other and strategize. We hope with this poetry pull-out to show the creativity that can come from this community and to show how artists can envision and take part in building a cooperative America.

A large number of poets in this insert are homeless or formerly homeless individuals. There are also a number of homeless allies. For more poetry and bio information on the poets, please go to the Revolutionary Poet’s Brigade Chicago website at www.revolutionarypoetsbrigadechi.org.

Poets United to End Homelessness is a project of the Revolutionary Poets Brigade of Chicago.

The poetry pull-out editors,
Eric Allen Yankee & Lew Rosenbaum

Enslaved since an Embryo

Thick skins for gates two shells for a cell
Serving my nine before i bail and dwell
Nothing but a rush as i elbowed kicked and pushed
As i squeezed out i heard my lunch pipe bust gush
Bush as my only guide
Its 95 with a barrel between my eyes
Am i child of earth
I only witnessed the worst
I stay reminded by the universe

With different heights of life
With different types of light that gives
Its provided with life given for natures kids
I stay inspired as a slum beneath the ghetto
Full of wild cats well known as street rebels

A gutter for a home
Now im out the womb
Where they dumped and raped my mother
Now shes through
Im in the same place
Facing the same Jakes
With the breath of death
From tasting pig Mace

Anxiety stress
1932 im curious
I hold my neck from the Globus Hystericus
irritated flesh from the water source
Another blown out skull by a racist force

Living to reheat the preheated corpses now
Highly ranked with the key to the slaughter house
Im a killer providing the freshes flesh
Hypnotized by the lies for a Chef
A whole lot guilt i feel sick
When the blind starts to praise for the meals im paid to give
It affects my esophagus
Water rapids in our home
Global warmings in effect

How many more homes have to float
How many more of us have to go
How many more deaths does it take
To realize that we’ve been provoked as slaves

— David Tojin aka Astrow

Home, More or Less

I have my own apartment until the end of December, then I will be homeless, i.e., without permanent shelter.

Psychologically, I am already homeless. My son doesn’t want me in his life, my cousins have full lives in which I have no room, and my cats are my only connection to order and responsibility that I have left.

I applied years ago to two senior centers. I have not heard word one from either of them. I guess they don’t want me either. All I want is a safe place to stay with my cats that I can afford on my social security income.

I don’t have that now where I reside. I pay 70% of my social security income in rent. The front door of my apartment building, perpetually open, does not bother the landlord. I have broken windows in my unit since 2011 when I moved in. I reported them. They are not fixed.

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The landlord does not seem to care, although the City of Chicago cited him two years ago for this. Mold and moisture invade my walls. I breathe toxic air daily.

I don’t think about these things. When I say, “I’m going home,” I mean that place where my cats greet me in my apartment. My cats make me comfortable, they are the special part that make me feel at home.

My psychiatrist does not understand how important my cats are to my bipolar recovery. My therapist of over 40 years does. Apartments do not like pets. My cats are not pets. They are my guarantee of my sanity. They are my service and emotional animals.

Sandusty and Treasure love me and I love them, unconditionally. This is what makes wherever I land with them an assurance of home. We share a communal schedule that I rarely break. Together we are warm and cozy. Home is a place where we live together.

I am so worried that I won’t be able to take them with me. I am not afraid of much, but this threatens my ability to look forward to a place to live. I would rather die!

— Kathy Powers

PEOPLE’S TRIBUNE MISSION

An economic system that doesn’t feed, clothe and house its people must and will be overturned and replaced with a system that meets the needs of the people. To that end, this paper is a tribute 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. For more information please visit www.peoplestribune.org.
BUDDIES

a purple heart in ‘Nam
a room at the “Y”
thirteen trips to detox
houses all over town
you built, before
you crashed your van
and lost your business
you have a lot of nerve,
making fun of my life

— Paul Whittaker

The Stray

too many homeless
too many strays
they wander the streets
both nights and days
no one to need them
no one to care
no food to eat
no love to share
some misfortune
altered their life
now all they know
is hunger and strife
they ask so little
they need so much
a little food
a loving touch
man and animal
share the sad plight
looking for shelter
in the cold night
drawn together
by a common foe
both human and beast
with nowhere to go
next time you crawl
into your warm bed
think of the homeless
and the un-fed

— Christine Tabaka

McStarving
her dog’s sign
says

*flame*

last year this time
sleeping out there
he was so cold he dreamed
he’d spontaneously combusted
at 4am
jumped up in flame
and walked around
the rest of the night
to keep from freezing
he said

*he blows on his conch shell horn
the saddest tune
of his evicted waterfront
call me ‘just another John’ he said
a fisherman and crabber
playing his lugubrious horn
we bailed them out when they screwed us
that’s what this demonstration is about

— Sarah Menefee

My Two Worlds

I live in two worlds. The
First is one of accomplishment,
Of college degree and literary
Talent readily acknowledged.

The other is of abject poverty and
Cold, thoughtless residence, of
Shelter filled with unknown men
And careless, heartless agencies.

In the past, I looked out of
A warm-lit clothing store
To see a ragged woman—she
Seemed as distant as the moon.

My first world is of brightly colored
Books and new clothes not yet worn.
It speaks of money and belonging,
But I retreat from it, apart from it

And join the army of walking wounded,
The untapped potential of the real people
Who walk the bombed-out streets beside
The false display of life’s riches.

While I rebuild the first world,
My heart remains open to bring
Along the real people I’ve met
Into my future dreams and yours.

— Allen McNair

In the Eyes of a Child

In the eyes of a child
place gently all things
with no prejudice to truth
nor fear of a world against them
place gently all things
like the blades of grass that cracks concrete
these delicate souls will endure
place all things gently before the eyes of a child
with a note of care
with fiery pen
that they ascend, give foundational knowledge
concerning the future of all
In the eyes of a child
place no worry or personal fears
place all things gently
but leave nothing out
leave no child in darkness
allow love to grow fierce and confident
In the eyes of a child
place all things gently

— Ayat Jalal-Bryant

The Voices in Your Head

It didn’t used to be this way,
he sighs, static and unshaven.

It didn’t used to be like this,
she thinks.
Don’t enable them,
his father used to say.

But where is his father, and
what would I say if my son
stood before me, neither policeman
nor president, but the deferred dream
of better intentions?

Hey brother, can you spare a life?
I don’t have any to spare, but
I’ll dig deeper and give ‘til
it hurts you more or less
than it hurts me.

It’s always been thus,
God might explain, but
He’s busy with a billion other
street corners, alleys, slums and
the newer tent cities He can
scarcely keep track of.

The earth itself is silent.
but what would it say:
All its stages a world
With so many passion plays?

So many dispirited shapes,
sleeping under overpasses,
bridges with graffiti singing
songs of pain and witness.

Huddled masses, created in their own
image, forever and ever.
World without end
Amen.

— Sean Murphy

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Discarded

You’re scared to see me reading quietly
Stained jacket, knitted hat, secondhand shoes.
I clutch a dusty green book like Aladdin’s lamp
Take me anywhere but here,
Atlas open to a Ghana market or Angkor War.
I chuckle at Chaucer’s dirty jokes
But you didn’t come here to read the beggar’s tale.

“Get a job,” you mutter.
Too late, I already have three – all temporary –
Taking tickets at Husky Stadium,
Sweeping peanut shells at Safeco Field,
Pulling weeds from sidewalks in the searing sun.
You have it backwards, ma’am
Society is a burden on me.
You tell yourself I must be on crack or meth
Or cheap burgundy, any drug but the one
That would pin down my fluttering thoughts
Like scorners under glass.
It would be too awful if I were sober and sane,
If I’d had college, marriage, mortgage
Until I got laid off, until I got sick.

You never admit it, but you fear poverty,
Like leprosy, might be contagious
That if I touched your French manicured hand
Calluses would form
And your pressed khakis would fade to dusty gray.

Afraid to look me in the eye,
You order a librarian to send me away.

My life story is discarded, unread,
So I read other stories now.
You will not allow that last free happiness.
I interrupt your intimate moments with your laptop.
You claim to care about hygiene and safety.
“Our library is so shiny and new
You claim to care.

— Jill Charles

Who built the cafés for admiring and not making?

Life could be great if he just shut the fuck up for 2 3 minutes—
1 minutia!—20 millileagues to at least pretend like it respects me.
We get it—you double major and minored in Vulgar and Vagaries.
But if your body never knew the need does it feel better in its

elf pre or post-appendectomy? Prefer a 2 or til death do you part
hour erection? Every time I try to throw life away it shows up
panting, throbbing like the sun, an everlasting matinee I conjure to conjunct
w/ meaning since I’m already in permanent flirt w/ the sweetest thighs apart
under the Biggest Dipper—have you ever seen it?
Take a tract to get you through the cosmos entitled “what may already be dead”
or buy a replica of the cage of my youth, it comes free.
I like to anthologize irrelevancy I’d like to speak now about speaking’s sorcery.
I like the hand against the coffee cup, the thin vault of ceramic between
Me and enough and the cuffs on a mild businessman’s hands clasped,
opening, folding again and the only so many folds the hands can have
and you, sole owner of the only set of so many limited time gaps

who either can dance or wants to
who either loves language or it’s math bloomed
like the Hebrews do, Millennials conversing in hieroglyph nudes
only a few more acres, stay with me or stay away

I am fossilising towards a more fully decayed
I see the world hurtling forward and believe me—
this is regret for never going to any of her meets.
I need to be here so at least she can see what she doesn’t need.

I take my hand off the spinning lobe and O My
the other side as bright as a big thick star—
sand and thirst and then the dream kept scrawl
sport coats flanked by words on all sides
TV’s that curl up into the lap of your face
all the consequence fighting just to place
Marvin Gaye’s murder lacing the steamer pried

open here in this café, decades in the future
millions of turns later depending on how you slice it, if you sluice her

how you say—we’ve run full out of soy lecithin
so nothing further can be made or dispersed
I’m rambling I know My step-father The Earth
I get all this from him.

— Michael Joseph Garza

two haiku

as one we open our eyes
together we see
consciousness is achieved

collectively we gather
together we live
community is formed

— Debra Lujan
(AnonaMoma)

Depart

Segregated thoughts leads to separation
The negativity soon forms the deprivation
To see people live life without a destination
Always too real and have no imagination
Real aint real I know that from creation
All it takes is persistence no procrastination
And enough faith to turn mountains into nations
Do you need a demonstration
I get to think what I choose I get it from the ether
I pick up on the frequency and its translated through the speaker
So if you listening through the speaker its probably sound like you hear Jesus
Jesus......
Manifestation at its finest I chose these thoughts
The only thing I control but see I had to be re-taught
I had to reprogram myself step by step
Building faith everyday breath by breath

— Markell Thompson
**PATH**

Go to your broken heart.
If you think you don’t have one, get one.
To get one, be sincere.
Learn sincerity of intent by letting
life enter, because you’re helpless, really,
to do otherwise.
Even as you try escaping, let it take you
and tear you open
like a letter sent,
like a sentence inside
you’ve waited for all your life
though you’ve committed nothing.
Let it send you up.
Let it break you, heart.
Broken-heartedness is the beginning
of all real reception.
The ear of humility hears beyond the gates.
See the gates opening.
Feel your hands going akimbo on your hips,
your mouth opening like a womb
giving birth to your voice for the first time.
Go singing whirling into the glory
of being ecstatically simple.
Write the poem.

— Jack Hirschman

**Untitled**

There’s no Tangible way to view my existence.
Yet my presence can’t be denied anywhere there’s livelihood.
It’s because of me most of bend but never broken.
I cause Broken Cycles.
Spiked Vitals.
Eyes on Idols.
Lax and Idled
And you only prove my Need stronger.
Shortness of Breath?
My Langs go Longer
Car Crash?
I be Bus Pass!!!
I be the Reason for Hard knocks in your toughest class.
Need for me be Constant.
While most keep my counter part in their subconscious.
Without direction
My directive be a Compass.
Unbeknownst i guide you.
Separate Accomplished from “Tried to”
Im available even when not recognized.
I be the Vision in a shepherds eyes
So the flock is never Jeopardized.
I overcome the Hindrance in alleged lies.
Indulge in me and be upgraded..
Psychologically updated,
ill make sure you never Lag Behind.
My purpose is you pushing past the line
Instead of you just finding ways to pass the time.
Learn to look to me...
Im self determination

— Hoodraised

**FOUL FERN**

“They’re all out there,” she rages and she
rages from in here
to out there and they’re
real because she sees
them and she sees them –
“Look! Right there!
They’re coming
closer!
That
Goddamnmotherfuckingcocksucker
Harry Truman!”

Foul Fern. Her red plastic sandals
down Devon Avenue.
That’s her street and her
anger so hot her red
plastic sandals nearly
melt. The kids
hiss and blow stage kisses.
Across the street the deli
ladies tsk tsk about that
poor ….
Left her cold, he did ….Hush
Tommy!
And quit staring…. She
just couldn’t take it….
On every corner
a fresh gust of north wind
rumples her hair,
picks at the scraps of paper
where she writes down
all the things she wants to
remember
before gathering them into
her pockets, picks
at the scraps of paper till
just one is tossed up
barely out of her reach.

— Elizabeth Marino

**Family**

I was born to a man and woman,
I do not know. They had
other children, I do not know.
I have their last name,
but I don’t want it.

I’ve had many families in my life.
Temporary foster homes and shelters
that shuffled children like a deck
cards, they came and went
but were never permanent.

I want to find a family on
my own. Love should not be forced;
it should be earned, just as a
family should come together
stay together, I want that,
my forever family.

— Doogie Lish Sandtiger

**Untitled**

“You’re enabling them
Straight up coddling them”
When?
By giving someone a bathroom?
Who do you think you are, dude?

“Burn the encampments”
They’re trespassing, oh shit
You think they can handle it?
Tossed in a corner they have been

Families and children, they’re all friends
Staring past blank stares from mad men
Maybe you’ll become one yourself man
Ill bet you’d wish you had helped then

If you don’t want them to camp
Allow me to light up your lamp
Empty houses we have
A whole 18 million of them

— John Safari

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to do otherwise.
Even as you try escaping, let it take you
and tear you open
like a letter sent,
like a sentence inside
you’ve waited for all your life
though you’ve committed nothing.
Let it send you up.
Let it break you, heart.
Broken-heartedness is the beginning
of all real reception.
The ear of humility hears beyond the gates.
See the gates opening.
Feel your hands going akimbo on your hips,
your mouth opening like a womb
giving birth to your voice for the first time.
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Need for me be Constant.
While most keep my counter part in their subconscious.
Without direction
My directive be a Compass.
Unbeknownst i guide you.
Separate Accomplished from “Tried to”
Im available even when not recognized.
I be the Vision in a shepherds eyes
So the flock is never Jeopardized.
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ladies tsk tsk about that
poor ….
Left her cold, he did ….Hush
Tommy!
And quit staring…. She
just couldn’t take it….
On every corner
a fresh gust of north wind
rumples her hair,
picks at the scraps of paper
where she writes down
all the things she wants to
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before gathering them into
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