Flint residents march in Lansing, MI at the capitol about the governor’s decision to shut down water distribution in Flint before the toxic pipes are fixed. While Nestlé gets an all-you-can-drink buffet of Michigan water for a mere $200 annual fee, Flint residents still can’t trust that their water is safe.

PHOTO/DAVE OLDS, MICHIGAN SENATE DEMOCRATS

**FLINT PROTESTERS DEMAND:**

**WATER FOR FLINT, NOT FOR NESTLÉ**

**Elections:** The people light a fire under the corporate government

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Teachers and others demand government serve the people

Read on page 2

Oklahoma teachers’ strike. PHOTO/JASON STEPHENSON. TWITTER
May Day 2018
Teachers say education fight is a ‘turning point’

EDITORIAL

A striking Oklahoma teacher called the mushrooming struggle around public education “a turning point.” She is right.

This year we have seen sweeping, rolling statewide strikes by teachers that began in West Virginia and spread to Oklahoma, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Arizona, with stirrings in other states (as we go to press a strike has begun by teachers in Colorado). At its simplest level, the strikes are about teacher salaries and benefits. However, as many pundits and experts are forced to acknowledge, it is about education and a system of funding which has brought everyone to examine the entire system and how it is connected to capitalism.

The entire concept of public education has been redesigned and corporatized through privatization, introducing voucher systems, charter schools and defunding at the local and state levels. These constant cuts affect not just salaries of teachers, but the conditions of classrooms and availability of materials, especially books.

The unity expressed in this fight is not just by teachers, but students, parents and the community over the demand for quality education.

Since the strike by the Chicago teachers in 2012, and their plan to strike again in 2016, the fight over public education has been elevated to a new level.

Today that fight is surging at a time when people all over the country are struggling over issues ranging from pipelines that destroy the environment and communities, to immigration reform, to healthcare, to water, to police violence, to gun violence, and more. There have also been women’s marches, student marches, and thousands of local fights in every small town and city breaking out.

The one consistent factor is the role of corporations in the financial, social and political insecurity that our people face. There is a plan to control and continue to redistribute more wealth to a shrinking corporate class by any means necessary, and to Hell with the consequences for families and communities. The political spokespeople and representatives of the corporations at the local, county, state and federal level steer the economy and legislation to protect their interests and implement their plan. Since the corporations need less and less labor in an increasingly automated economy, they will not provide services like public education to workers they no longer need.

There is a growing resistance. This upsurge and tendency toward unity by various forces against the design of these corporations is an essential stage of the struggle toward building a movement with a plan of controlling the economy in the interests of the people. A step in the direction of a planned economy that serves the people is nationalization. In the case of education, properly funding education starts with nationalizing that funding — making it the federal government’s responsibility to properly fund a public education for every child. There is no shortage of anything today. The illusion that we cannot “afford” to do what is right is a blunt distortion of the reality of the abundance of wealth and resources that exists today.

Indeed, it is a “turning point” that began some time ago. Education, like Medicare, Social Security, healthcare and the salaries of public employees with a pension system etc., are all increasingly on the table. This stage of the turning point requires a vision that recognizes it is possible to have a new world based on the needs of the people, not corporations.

May Day is when we celebrate the historical struggles of the working class and demonstrate our solidarity. This May Day it is urgent to recognize the contribution the teachers are making to the political education of our class—the working class—and our communities and to the struggle for a new world that is already playing out across the country and the world.
Elections:
The people light a fire under the corporate government

The American people are standing up. Teachers are striking. Students are mobilizing. The homeless are organizing. Whether the issue is water, homelessness, environmental destruction, low wages, lack of jobs, poverty, police violence and other violence, healthcare, immigrant rights, education, the shredding of the safety net or other issues, people are confronting the billionaires and the corporate political parties. The people are demanding that the government be their government.

“Until recently, a lot of people have been very quiet, they’ve taken on the opinions of those in power,” one striking Oklahoma teacher told a reporter. “They’ve trusted their elected representatives. But now people have been woken up to what’s really going on.”

A woman running for office against a corporate Democrat in West Virginia said, “We’re seeing an uprising in West Virginia. … We want clean and safe jobs, a livable wage, we want clean water, we want clean air and opportunities for our children, and we want healthcare. It doesn’t matter what walk of life you’re from, everybody is saying we want the same things. We don’t want these corporate politicians.”

And a California activist spoke about the developing split in the Democratic Party there as she lambasted Democrats in the legislature for refusing to pass a universal single-payer healthcare bill. “We want to hold the establishment Democrats accountable. They have never questioned how the government is obligated to guarantee us these rights.”

As the economic system continues to fail, we, the people, are eating, living in tents and shelters and doorways, living in our cars, trying to get by on low wages or no wages, dying for lack of healthcare, seeing our children denied an education and a future, and on and on—and we’re through putting up with it. We have the abundance as a society to solve these problems. We are demanding that the government stop being a willing pawn in the hands of the corporations and start using that abundance to solve the problems that confront us.

Running for office is one way we are fighting. More people are running for office who have never done so before. Some of these candidates are trying to take the government away from the corporations. They run on various party tickets (including Democrat) or as independents.

How do we tell who is really trying to represent the people and who is just saying what they think we want to hear? Ask them where they stand on this program: “We, the people, have a right to food, water, housing, healthcare and all the other necessities of life, and government is obligated to guarantee us these rights.”

The government is supposed to be the people’s instrument. The fight to take it away from the corporations and billionaires will mark a step forward on the road to a whole new America.
The aftermath of winter in Chicago
An interview with a homeless survivor

Andy Willis: Martin, I haven’t seen you all winter and you tell me that some people you know either froze to death or got their legs amputated.

Martin Cygan: One of my friends about 60 years old died in the alley where he stayed. Another guy got both his legs amputated at the knees when the frostbite got him. Another guy died in a nursing home. One toe got frostbite. They gave him antibiotics and an I-V. Another guy, he died over there across the street. He had a heart attack and an asthma attack.

They were homeless the same as I’ve been, about seven or eight years. The City or aldermen do nothing to help. They’ve got deep pockets. That’s the way the city is run now.

I was born and raised in Chicago. I was born at Cook County Hospital. I used to have an apartment and I was working until my daughter got sick. She had a brain tumor operation. She died at 5 years old. I was going to the hospital and home. Then I lost my job when they said they couldn’t afford to keep me.

AW: Have any of the agencies that are supposed to help done anything for you?
MC: They ain’t done nothing for me. They say “give it time—give it time.” Give them time for what? Till I die in the street too? Hey, help the homeless person out. It’s just not right.

AW: Do you see heated properties around?
MC: I see properties with lights on and everything. But what are they doing with this property? Just letting it sit there? Drawing interest? What are they doing? People say, “We can’t help you.” They don’t want you in Chicago. They want you out. The property is going higher. We can’t afford these high rents.

AW: In Hawaii there’s huge homelessness. Living in a warm climate is one thing but living in Chicago in the winter on the street is impossible.

MC: I don’t know how I made it this long on the street, but by God’s grace I’m still alive. I go to a motel once a month for three days when I get my check. That’s nothing. Then back on the streets again.

AW: The United Nation’s Declaration of Human Rights said everyone was entitled to a house and decent place to live. Whether or not you had a job. Now many of us are not employable.
MC: I’m 56 and judged totally disabled—not employable. My ankle is bad. My knees are bad. My shoulder and lower back is bad.

AW: We are using the paper to show housing is available and those who need it should have it now.
MC: Housing is available. You’re right. But all the aldermen want to do is drive property taxes up in their wards. They’re putting money in their pockets.

Letter to the editor:
Homeless mother tells her story

Editor’s note: Below is a letter from a reader about a February article entitled, “Maine wants homeless people to go away.”

I am also homeless, a mother of an 11 year-old girl and a 23 year-old son.

My son was in a car accident when he was 9, suffered severe head trauma that today prevents him from work and living, and been turned down for disability. He says, “Mom, I wish I could work so I could help you and my sister.”

We are living in a tent in the country. I don’t drive, which makes everything difficult, getting to a grocery store, taking showers, seeking help. I’m currently on disability. I crushed both my feet a few years ago, and now they’re taking my check away because they feel I can work. And I probably could find a sit-down job, but not without transportation.

I’ve been in two shelters that did nothing for me, not even point me in the right direction, just threw my daughter back out on the streets. And that’s another story I promise myself I’m going to address, to hopefully help other single mothers that are discarded like trash at these places for stupid reasons.

For whomever reads this, if there’s something I can do to help myself, please let me know.

God Bless.

An awakening experience

By Amy F. Marshall

OAKLAND, CA — The fear of becoming homeless crept up on me slowly. Housing security had never been an issue as I moved between nine states and two countries over the last thirty years. Relocating was as natural as breathing, or so I thought. I wasn’t working, my health wasn’t good, my mother was having major health challenges, my partner and I had broken up.

My mother was hospitalized and lost the ability to walk and make personal decisions. I lived with her friend for three months as I alternated being my Mom’s caregiver, and packing to relocate her to the Bay Area. Sleeping on someone’s sofa in their home was new to me yet cheaper than a hotel.

Within nine months after returning to the Bay Area with my Mom, I was homeless. Where would I go? Consumed with fear I confided my predicament to someone I recently met. She made it possible for me to get an interview with a women’s shelter. For one night I had to sleep in my car. I parked near a Safeway gas station where I reasoned I would be safe in a well-lit place with people milling about. I didn’t sleep well and worried about bringing attention to myself.

My temporary residence consisted of one room, a shared restroom and dayroom facilities. After moving in I looked out the window, surveyed my surroundings and cried. The move from Dublin to inner city Oakland was a dramatic change.

For two years I lived in a shelter for women. Homeless men and women congregated on the corner. I spoke to the familiar ones daily and corrected the ones who mistook me for someone who worked in human services. I live here and I’m your neighbor was my phrase to set the matter straight. When the litter became too much for me to bear I protested, and one man said “We’ll take care of it Miss Lady” and they did. While I lived there, every morning the area was swept up and a bag hung from the street sign to collect garbage. I gave out small gifts of sweets during the holidays and they treated me like I mattered, always. I was grateful for my mother’s care, my shelter, and having a sense of community. Leaving was bittersweet. Relocating without being concerned about another’s comfort was liberating. Yet, receiving care and concern from those whose living situation was worse than mine was an awakening experience.

Today, I see past the clutter of makeshift shanty housing and tents. I see individuals in fellowship and community, claiming, organizing, and sweeping the entry around their space. I’ve slept on someone’s couch for months, rented a room, slept in my car overnight, and lived in a shelter for two years. I have my private space again and no longer take having a place to live for granted. My concern is that rising rents may put me at risk of homelessness. The fear of ‘where will I go?’ is ever-present.
‘We’re taking our state back, from the bottom up’ says West Virginia candidate

By Caressa Stoller

MORGANTOWN, WV — I officially began my real political activism in 2015. I was inspired by none other than Bernie Sanders. Bernie spoke to me like no other politician ever had. He lit the flame that will forever “Burn” in my heart. I helped Bernie win ALL 55 Counties in WV. I helped my two Bernie National Delegates get funded so they could make it to Philly. I am a firm believer in Democracy.

I am running to make sure that what happened at the DNC in Philadelphia NEVER happens again. I was absolutely heart broken to watch WV be called for Hillary when Bernie had won EVERY county in our State. I was so frustrated I pretty much ran out to the media tent. So I followed. That time in the media tent with the other hundreds of Bernie delegates was the most amazing experience. We sat there in complete silence holding each other’s hands trying not to lose it. We ALL were absolutely devastated. However, not surprised. I think our hearts broke because we knew then that Democracy and Freedom were just an illusion.

Since the DNC, I have not stopped. I consider myself a human rights activist. I fight for those who cannot fight for themselves.

There are still so many West Virginians that have no idea how the WV Democratic Party screwed them over. I am running for re-election to the County seat and running for the State Democratic Executive Committee against the WV Democratic Party Chair who was also one of the Superdelegates that chose Clinton. She is a root of the WV Democratic Party Corruption.

WV is having a huge Progressive movement. I am only one of OVER 50 Progressives running for office in WV for the first time. I am so proud and excited to be a part of this movement. We are taking our state back, starting from the bottom up. I personally helped get many of those Progressives to step up and run. Let’s move WV forward together! I will NEVER stop fighting for our Almost Heaven and our wonderful people in West Virginia.

Message to Democrats: Take responsibility for poverty and injustice

Cathleen Williams: Desiree, you were elected as an Assembly Delegate to the Democratic Party for District 4 (Yolo/Solano County in Northern California). As a committed progressive organizer and outspoken Latina Chicana, what issues do you bring to your Party work?

Desiree Rojas: Let me give you an example. A group of Democratic legislators in California introduced SB 562, the Healthy California Act, which would provide comprehensive universal single-payer health care coverage and a health care cost control system for the benefit of all residents of the state, including the undocumented.

This bill has been frozen even though Democrats control both the governorship and the legislature in California. With the California Nurses Union and others, we are fighting the establishment Democrats who are refusing to let SB 562 proceed through the legislative process. We want to hold the establishment Democrats accountable. They have never questioned how to fund a war, yet they are baffled about the funding of health care for all.

CW: You also brought to the local Democratic Party Convention a resolution supporting the Driscoll’s Berry Boycott. The boycott campaign exposes and protests the slave-labor working conditions and wages of Driscoll’s berry workers in Baja California, Mexico. How did the Democrats react?

DR: Look, we have to really remember and never forget that it was the Democrats who passed NAFTA, which was written by corporations. NAFTA created a lot of poverty in Mexico. It resulted in the devastation of small farmers. Seventy thousand were forced to migrate to Baja California to pick berries for Driscoll’s, desperate for any work, no matter the wages and conditions.

The resolution in support of the boycott was designed to bring the message to the Democrats that we have to change our foreign policy and take responsibility for the poverty and injustice that this Party has created. The resolution passed, but there was resistance from agribusiness interests in the Party.

CW: Are progressive delegates like yourself discussing the need to break away from the Democratic Party and create a new Party?

DR: I want to say yes. Absolutely. There is a split in the Party. Many establishment elected representatives are pretty much paid by corporations, including Big Pharma. That money trickles down to the delegates they appoint. The party functions as an “old boys club” of powerful white businessmen who are determined to maintain control. The grassroots elected delegates are one fourth of the total. We are fighting for democracy in the party and for the interests of the community.

What I’m finding is that there are many organizers and people who really understand how much this party is in trouble. They are fighting back inside the party. Also, a lot of people are proposing a “Demexit” and the need for a party that focuses on labor and the needs of the people.

Michigan Greens to hold nominating convention in Flint

From the Green Party of Michigan

The fourth anniversary of the Flint Water Crisis looms large as the Green Party of Michigan prepares to nominate candidates for public office at the organization’s 2018 Nominating Convention. The Snyder Administration recently ended the free bottled water supply, leaving thousands of Flint residents in a desperate situation.

“The people of Flint have suffered needlessly because of poor decisions by political leaders at both the state and local levels,” states Erin Fox for the local group, Vehicle City Greens. “It’s time for us to build an effective political alternative to challenge the status quo in local politics. The status quo simply isn’t acceptable.”

The convention will be held on Saturday, May 5, at the University of Michigan-Flint Harding-Mott University Center, 400 Mill St. in Flint. Green Party leaders, candidates and members will pick the party’s 2018 slate. For more information, contact info@vehiclecitygreens.org or visit the Green Party of Michigan at www.migreenparty.org.

Elections: Government must serve the people

From the Editors

More grassroots candidates than ever before are running for office. Many put forth a program that “we the people” have a right to food, water, housing, healthcare and all the other necessities of life, and government is obligated to guarantee us these rights.

These electoral campaigns are battlegrounds of ideas. Should the government exist to serve human needs, or should it serve the private interests of billionaires and corporations?

Participating in these elections is an opportunity to educate people and build a powerful movement around the people’s demands. It is an indispensable step on the road to the cooperative society that will stop the destruction of the earth and meet the needs of everyone.
By Howard Elman MD, MPH

PHILADELPHIA, December 30, 2015 — In this issue of People’s Tribune, we’ll continue our coverage of the Flint water crisis, which was first highlighted in our May 2015 issue, and which has now made its way to Michigan’s capital city, Lansing. We’ll also be featuring an interview with Maureen Taylor, the co-founder of People’s Water Alliance, and an article on the problems of using lead water service lines, which we first covered in our May 2016 issue.

The Flint water crisis has continued to grow and get worse, with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) issuing a new advisory on the use of bottled water, and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) issuing a new advisory on the use of tap water. The MDEQ has also issued a new advisory on the use of reverse osmosis systems, which are designed to remove lead from water.

In our May 2016 issue, we reported on the problems of using lead water service lines, which are the pipes that carry water from the city’s main water supply to individual homes. We reported that the use of lead service lines can cause lead to leach into the water, and that the use of lead service lines can also cause other health problems, such as lead poisoning.

In this issue, we’ll be covering the ongoing problems of using lead service lines, and we’ll be featuring an interview with Maureen Taylor, the co-founder of People’s Water Alliance, who is a leading advocate for the use of alternative water systems, such as reverse osmosis systems, and who is a strong supporter of the people of Flint and their right to clean, safe water.

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Appalachian addicts: Creating addicts and ‘treating,’ reviving, and securing the next generation of addicts

By Tinia Creamer

WEST VIRGINIA — Pharmaceutical companies are sure winning in the epidemic of addiction in America. We trust them since most Americans live on multiple medications. They have our interests at heart. Sure.

Yet, these Pharmaceutical companies manufactured drugs they knew created addicts. Now they are poised to make as much in Big Pharma’s pockets. The Sackler family, which owns Purdue Pharma, is the 16th richest family in the country. They claim much of the increase in wealth came on the heels of the success of OxyContin. Sure. It was a success. A deadly one, but who cares? These are only junkies’ lives. Except some used to be something else, if lucky enough to escape being born addicted. The odds are more bleak these days. Bleak to the tune of 25% of babies born in West Virginia addicted at birth. In my area, at least 50% are born to addicts. So, their bodies programed from the womb to need a high to feel “normal.”

Choices. Like when our Politicians accept huge contributions from Big Pharma companies.

In 1996, when OxyContin came out, it produced $45 million in sales. By 2000, it was up to $1.1 billion. By 2010, it was at $3.1 billion. In the end, one family made $35 billion from this pill. Too often, it happened in Appalachia. Few jobs, No Hope, plenty of Pain Pills.

In 2015 with Kentucky on a suit concerning their misleading marketing of OxyContin. They admitted to creating their own fake scientific charts and more. Of course, we’d have seen far more lawsuits if more politicians were not in Big Pharma’s pockets. The

NOW, THE RESISTANCE

In the most powerful nation on earth, a flame of fascistic fervor is taking hold,

fueled by privileges, corruption and greed.
We the people must not let it grow.
If we just sit and mope, paralyzed by fear, our ending’s sure to be near.

So let’s unite and fight, it’s our right, our survival and, for generations to come,
comrades, let’s come together and we’ll win because the “morality within” always prevails.

— Diego De Leo

Dr. Lee criticized his colleagues who aren’t trying to solve the problem. “What’s worse … is that they actually refuse to acknowledge the problem exists in the first place.”

“We’re not ready for it… not ready for the massive societal upheavals on the way.”

The transition from production by human labor to production by robots is entirely new; and yet, to understand how to deal with it, we, the workers of the world, can learn from the past.

Dr. Lee criticized his colleagues who aren’t trying to solve the problem. “What’s worse … is that they actually refuse to acknowledge the problem exists in the first place.”

“These changes are coming,” Lee said, “and we need to tell the truth and the whole truth… These will be the best of times and the worst of times. If we act rationally and quickly, we can bask in what’s best rather than wallow in what’s worst.”

So true. We face a choice. On one hand, we can live equally and happily in the society of abundance that robotics makes possible.

On the other, we can live doubled up in small apartments, sleeping on the streets, or struggling back home on failing farms—if the powers that be let us live at all.

That’s what we face—and what our children and grandchildren face—if we don’t take hold of our society and reorganize it so the way to get fed, clothed, and housed is no longer only by working at jobs that no longer exist.

And while we have ever faced this choice before, our ancestors have taken control of their lives and made major changes, from organizing and striking for living wages in the U.S. textile industry or dividing up the fincas of the latifundistas and returning the land to the indigenous villages in the Mexican Revolution.

The robots are replacing us! Is that a bad thing? The problem is that under capitalism, corporations own and sell the abundance the robots produce and for a profit. Meanwhile, we the increasingly jobless, impoverished and hungry workers, end up in the streets, too poor to buy what we need. Imagine the world we could create if the public, not corporate billionaires, owned these robots? We could put them to work for us. We could provide the abundance of food, housing, water and other things robots produce to all in a socialized economy.

The best of times or the worst of times – it’s our choice

By Dave Ransom

“It will soon be obvious that half our tasks can be done better at almost no cost by AI [artificial intelligence] and robots,” wrote venture capitalist Kai-Fu Lee to the technology community recently.

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Outpouring of support for immigrants is on the rise

From the Editors

In April, ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) conducted the largest workplace raid in the last ten years, arresting 97 workers, leaving families in a rural Tennessee town terrorized and heartbroken. More than 550 students didn’t show up for school the next day out of fear that ICE may still be in the town or come back. A teacher, outraged at ICE storming into a workplace and arresting people told the media: “They are parents just like other parents, they care for their children and want the best for the kids. These parents and the other students are part of our family. We have to work together to create the best environment for their kids.” Commenting on the outpouring of support for the families in their town another teacher said, “What scares us is what more are they [ICE] capable of and what more can they get away with. I hope they are watching this. If they thought they could come into this little town and rip 97 people away from their families and no one care, they are wrong.” (Now This News)

Also in April, an immigrant rights activist, held in detention, was reunited with his family. He had been picked up and detained with no warning. The next day, a mother was released from detention, at least temporarily. That same day a man was released after a year in detention and after multiple hunger strikes to call attention to the conditions, while facing months of solitary confinement. Organizers at the Northwest Detention Center Resistance say these victories in Washington State highlight how community leadership and support can win fights against the detention and deportation machine.

Immigrant youth launch walk from New York to D.C. to stay home

By Eli Gips

NEW YORK, NY — Eleven undocumented youth and allies began a “Walk to Stay Home,” a 15-day walk from Battery Park in New York to the Martin Luther King memorial in Washington in February.

The 250-mile journey was organized by the Seed Project with the support of the Our Dream Campaign to draw attention to the need for a clean Dream Act that not only grants permanent protection for undocumented youth, but does not harm 11 million undocumented people living and working in the United States.

“It is time for us undocumented youth to once again step out of the shadows and make a simple demand: Let us stay home,” said Héctor Jairo Martínez, a DACA recipient from Brooklyn.

The “Walk to Stay Home” is an undocumented youths’ response to politicians who use “Dreamers” as talking points on the campaign trail, but back down when it is time to demonstrate real support. Democrats showed no sign of using their power to protect the undocumented youth while Republicans drafted legislation to drive the immigrant community deeper into the shadows.

The walkers’ sacrifice to stand for their right to stay home underscores their dedication to loved ones who have not been offered the same protection under DACA.

U.S. veterans deported. What?

The shocking story of United States veterans deported across the border to Tijuana, Mexico, is told in the video, “The Deported Veterans of America.” The video says this has been going on since the 1980s. Most of the deported veterans are Mexican but some are from Canada and as far away as Africa. They served in the military and somehow got caught up in the U.S. legal system, and some were deported. The deported veterans are having a hard time. One who served in Korea went back for medication and got four years. The deported veterans’ goal is to make Americans aware so they will act. When people find out, they don’t believe it. They say “these veterans put on a uniform and they are Americans and deserve to stay here.”

Excerpts from veterans’ stories in the film, “The Deported Veterans Of America”:

“When I got drafted, I got out of high school, got my physical and went straight to Fort Ord. That’s where I did my training. When I got out, I went to look for a job and didn’t have my Green Card. The lady in the unemployment office said, ‘go to immigration, they got your papers.’ I thought they had my citizenship. When I got there, they put the cuffs on me. I said look, I just got out of the military, why am I getting deported? They said you have no records. I said my parents brought me when I was a little kid…”

“I served in the U.S. Navy in Phoenix, AZ, from 1996-2000, Operation Desert Storm, and was honorably discharged. Since the military, I had a history with alcohol and drug abuse. I never got any help. I got in trouble. The judge recommended a drug program. I was supposed to do a year and a half and get out and be with my family. I never got to see my family. I am deported on perjury. After I pleaded guilty, the judge said, ‘do you understand what you’re pleading guilty to?’ Perjury is lying to a jury court, and you never had a jury. You’re being charged with something you didn’t do.” The judge said on the record, ‘based on all the letters I see, you are pretty much a good guy but you got in trouble this one time. Sorry, thank you for your service, but I have to deport you.’”

“Since I was little, I was told, our strength as Americans was our diversity, that we’re a nation born of immigrants. The Italians, Jewish, Irish came over; slowly but surely they all became the fabric of America, and it’s the same thing for us. Don’t destroy what makes America great. We need to come together and unite and make America what it is supposed to be, and that is all-inclusive. What is more American than a U.S. soldier?”

“The military trained us well. We’re going to fight till we get back home.”

Laws have to change. Laws without morals are useless. This is inhumane.

Watch the film at you.tu.be/E07ylag4vJLY
Disability group fights electric shock treatment of autistic youth

By Shark Barros, Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign

Coming into D.C. in March, 2018, to support National ADAPT, a national grassroots disability rights organization which works to secure rights and liberties for disabled Americans. There we protested the inhuman torture and shock treatment of autistic youth at the Judge Rotenberg Center run by Dr. Scott Gottlieb. Shame on America, shame on this corrupt system that still allows this kind of treatment to anybody!

Witnessing the abuse by the state of Washington, D.C., to the National ADAPT contingent was sad. Turning the cheek to the pain and suffering of the ADAPT testers, showed the evilness of today’s society.

Going to the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) building, I watch as the pretend cops belittle the protesters by saying they will scream and holler and then go away: they will out-wait us!

No response from the FDA so we shut down the freeway in Maryland! Shuttering down the freeway in both directions brought out people from Maryland and Washington, D.C.—talking down to us from both sides of their mouths and threatening us with arrest—which they did. ADAPT warriors holding down until rush hour—all night until 5 a.m.

Wet, cold, freezing sick and tired—ADAPT are put on buses to be thrown off a bus in D.C., with no power for the wheelchair and sick, painful, tired, but no matter what their spirits are stronger today!

To fight your battles under these conditions will tell the world we are moving forward—come rain or shine, police-abuse, or death. The struggle continues. We call upon the world to see that we will no longer sit idle anymore. Stop the shock, stop the torture. This is unacceptable. A better world is possible if we struggle together! No more shock, no more torture! ADAPT will be back!

Contact ADAPT at www.adapt.org.

Illinois illegally ignores needs of the people

By Kathy Powers

CHICAGO, IL — The Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) are not serving the needs of the people. DHS and DRS documents are lost, people are cut off unjustly from the food stamp program (SNAP), without an assigned case managers, and the state of Illinois is not ensuring the rights of people with disabilities.

In November 2017, the DHS system terminated SNAP benefits for more than 40,000 households. Initially, the state blamed the people for not filing on time, however, the system’s insufficient bandwidth caused the delay in handling all the beneficiaries’ filings.

In March, 2018, Blocks Together and The Alliance for Community Services held a “Community Speak Out! Stop cuts to SNAP and Medicaid” at the YMCA in Humboldt Park, Chicago. Legislators invited were State Senator Patricia Van Pelt, State Representative Melissa Conyers-Ervin, State Senator Omar Aquino, and State Senator Julie Morrison who promised to send representatives to the town hall. Their table remained empty.

We were there, though, and filled the room: persons with disabilities, persons who are hungry, persons who are poor, persons with mental illness symptoms, persons who are on kidney dialysis, persons who are home-care personal assistants, single-payer health care advocates, and equally, were the workers themselves who testified about the nightmare that the IES imposes upon them every day.

All participants agreed that this system illegally removes benefits, services without assigned case workers are unmanageable, waiting times can sometimes last up to eight hours because of system crashes, and some state workers desire to deliver services and cannot because of the broken IES system and an insufficient number of staff.

The cry of Mother Earth

By David Schwartzman

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The First Ecosocialist International Convocation was held from October 31 to November 3, 2017 in the state of Yaracuy, Venezuela, where mainly people of African descent live. The Convocation sought to undertake the collective construction of a program for the salvation of Mother Earth.

Of the roughly 100 delegates to this Convocation, the indigenous community of the Amazon was strongly represented, joined by a representative of the Lakota tribe of North Dakota. Other participants included a representative of the Kurdish people, along with delegates from Argentina, Bolivia, Tanzania, Kenya, Indonesia, and Switzerland.

The Convocation recognized that this Convocation was only a first step, looking forward to bringing in strong representation from Africa, China, India, Japan, Vietnam, other countries of Asia, and Europe. U.S. groups represented included Cooperation Jackson, the Labor Community Strategy Center (LCSC), and a new black arts movement in Brooklyn. Organizers of this Convocation included Quincy Saul of EcoHorizons.

Participants joined live working groups to consider goals focused on the short-term (the time of struggle), medium-term (the time of construction) and long-term (the time of utopia).

I joined our FIRE group, working along with delegates from indigenous communities as well as Manuel Ciriolo, the Director of Organismo de LCSC, and Kali Akuno, Co-Director of Cooperation Jackson, joined by Professor Julio Escalona, an elected member of the Constituent Assembly. Our group focused on strategies and actions to reclaim our economies of mutual aid, our ecologically and socially appropriate and appropriable technologies, and our sources of renewable energy.

The other groups considered strategies and actions “to reclaim control of our cultures, models of civilization, and ancestral cosmovisions” (AETHER), “to reclaim the management of our liberating education and communication, for the defense of peace, rights, and living the good life (AIR), “to reclaim the management of our water and other common goods” (WATER), and “to reclaim management of our food and health” (EARTH).

As an example of short-term actions, the Convocation committed to launching campaigns of information and concrete action all over the world against fracking and nuclear war, as they endanger Mother Earth, the human species and all life.

Mid-term, the objectives included expanding solidarity exchanges/ cooperatives promoting a transition to an ecosocialist economy. The Convocation made a commitment to advance an international solar energy project, focused on collectively raising funds to finance three to four solar farms every year, between the organizations and communities who form part of the First Ecosocialist International.

Further, this Convocation proposed to the people and the revolutionary government of Venezuela that she should lead a transition to 100% renewable energy in Latin America, using its oil as a source of energy to create this alternative.

On November 4 in Caracas, Blanca Ekhout, minister of women and gender equality, welcomed the creation of this International, as a step forward in fulfilling Venezuela’s Plan of the Homeland, by taking it to the necessary next level: a Plan for the Planet.

You can find out more at Ecosocialist Horizons, (ecossocialisthorizons.com/) as well as from Quincy Saul’s article, (telesurtv.net/english/ opinion/From-the-Plan-of-the-Homeland-to-a-Plan-for-the-Planet-20171208-0010.html).

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Students going hungry at colleges in California

By Keith Welch

OAKLAND, CA — Why is there food insecurity on the Laney College campus, when we have one of the largest Culinary Arts Departments in the Bay Area? Why is food insecurity a problem in the great state of California while it leads the world in agriculture production? What are student leaders and faculty doing about food insecurity on campus? No more excuses, no more talk, and no more denial. The problem has to be dealt with.

I’ve attended Laney College for four years and am President of Associated Students of Laney College (ASLC). I’m a Culinary student, and was homeless for a time.

I asked Chefs Lorianne Raji and Laurence Jackson, both veteran Culinary professors at Laney College, if they knew about food insecurity on campus. Both said housing cost is a big problem facing students because it leads to food insecurity, and it leads to shrinking enrollment and high drop-out rates.

High rents are driving students further and further from Oakland and Laney College. Many students have to travel up to three hours a day to and from Laney. When you were paying $1,200 and your landlord raises your rent $600, you’ve got to move. Over 10% of students are homeless; they sleep where they can, couch surfing with family members and friends, or sleep in cars, public transit, or outside.

And there’s no shortage, with 5,000 empty housing units in Oakland, and 3,600 new units being built just in 2018. But these average $2,226 or more a month. They’re very profitable for giant corporations, but no one in poverty can afford them.

Scott Strong, Laney Food Service Manager, spoke with colleague Peter Brown about the problems facing food service for students who need to nourish their brains for effective study. Laney Food Service is not subsidized, it’s required to break even. Shrinking enrollment means fewer customers, but the cost of running a kitchen and cafeteria doesn’t shrink, so prices rise. Fewer students can afford the more expensive food, and reduced hours serve less people. It was once supported by public education funds.

Laney College is tackling the food insecurity problem short-term with food banks and a weekly food pantry on campus, but there is more work to be done. As president, I’m proud to say that ASLC is leading the way; it provides funds to all student clubs, and all student events on campus. Since I demanded it in 2016, all food for ASLC events is provided free by the Culinary Arts club, and has fed over 12,000 students. I plan a Housing Summit at Laney College in May.

But housing and food are more than a problem, they’re a catastrophe; something has to be done to end hunger and homelessness forever in a world of plenty.

Housing and food are human rights, and it’s our government’s responsibility to provide every human being food in their belly and a safe place of their own to call home. Sleeping in your own bed, cooking food in your own kitchen and taking a bath in your own tub is a wonderful feeling.

Stop the war, help the people

From the Editors

With each passing day lately, humanity moves closer to another world war, and the threat of a nuclear war that could destroy the world is becoming all too real.

The people of the world don’t have anything to gain from world war, and we have everything to lose. This war is about the global elites fighting over markets, resources and territory. The rich are fighting over money, while billions of us are without regular access to food, clean water, housing, healthcare and other necessities.

The American corporate class is driving the world toward war. Capitalism is dying and they hope to save their wealth through war. The U.S. spends nearly $1 trillion a year on the military. Its military budget is larger than that of the next nine countries combined. There are nearly 200,000 American troops in about 1,000 bases outside the U.S., spread across 177 countries. We have spent some $4.5 trillion on wars since 2001.

We are being bankrupted by military spending. Our military budget accounts for more than half of the discretionary spending in the federal budget. U.S. billionaires and corporations, in pursuit of their mad dreams of global domination, are starving the American people to feed the military budget, and threatening to destroy the world in the process.

And then we are told that spending on things like food stamps, education, Medicaid and Medicare must be cut because the government spends too much. About $5 trillion in cuts in social spending are planned over the next 10 years.

This is insane. It’s estimated that it would cost only about one-fourth of the U.S. military budget to eliminate poverty in the U.S., and to eliminate poverty and hunger worldwide would cost only about 10 percent of world military spending.

The drive toward war not only threatens to destroy us all, but is taking food out of our mouths. We, the people, have a right to food, water, housing and other necessities, and we and the rest of humanity have a right to be free of the threat of war. We must demand the U.S. government pull back from the brink of war and cut the military budget to pay for human needs.

We, the people of the U.S., have a particular responsibility to impose peace on the war makers.

People’s Tribune Radio podcasts are available at peoplestribune.org. Hear from people at the forefront of the struggles for a new America.
Occupy the PGA: Mass demonstration in Benton Harbor on May 26

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

BENTON HARBOR, MI — On Saturday May 26, 2018, Occupy the PGA—a coalition of Benton Harbor residents, community groups, and allies from across the region—will hold a mass demonstration to save our children! We will rally and march in protest of the 2018 Senior PGA golf tournament. The rally will begin at 11 a.m. at Benton Harbor City Hall, 200 East Wall St.

This year’s tournament will be the fourth since the construction of the controversial Harbor Shores golf course and luxury condominium development, backed by the Whirlpool Corporation. It also marks the fourth Occupy the PGA protest.

The coalition has demanded that the Senior PGA transfer 25% of its profit to Benton Harbor, where more than half of the residents live in poverty, where over 90% are Black. Occupy the PGA also indict Whirlpool, Harbor Shores and the Senior PGA for its unfilled promises of significant jobs and tax revenue for Benton Harbor residents.

The group also continues to demand a public acknowledgement at the tournament of the theft of public park land for profit, referring to the leased 22 acres of dunes on Jean Klock Park for transformation into three holes of the Harbor Shores golf course. The group attributes the transfer to the complete undermining of democratic structures via former Democratic Governor Granholm’s installment of an Emergency Financial Manager in Benton Harbor in December 2010. Benton Harbor was the first predominately Black Michigan city in recent years to be subjected to an Emergency Financial Manager, and then Emergency Manager, with absolute power.

Occupy the PGA organizers see the Harbor Shores development as a prime example of racist genocide by gentrification, designed to force out Black community members who have lived in Benton Harbor for generations, instead of bringing jobs and opportunities. Such luxury developments at best bring only a few low-wage service jobs for locals.

I, the Rev. Edward Pinkney of the local community group BANCO (Black Autonomy Network Community Organization) say Benton Harbor continues to be a city under siege. The mishandling of public trust could not be more massive, unjust, inhumane, and unconstitutional. The Senior PGA needs to hear our voice. It’s time to stand up and fight for what’s right. We must confront Whirlpool, Harbor Shores, and the Senior PGA.

Why police terror?

An interview with Kevin ‘Brother’ Carter

Cathleen Williams: Kevin ‘Brother’ Carter, you are a leader in keeping alive the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King’s Poor People’s Campaign in Sacramento, California, where Stephan Clark, a young, unarmed African American man, was recently killed by the police. How would you describe your goals in the movement?

Kevin ‘Brother’ Carter: We need to change the power dynamics between the “haves” and the “have-nots.” We struggle to survive in the new jobless economy. There’s no replacement for displacement. It’s class warfare against the poor. My goal is to foster conscious awareness that we are not fighting for one culture or for one nationality. This is about the human race. As the poor, we are all suffering, we all have the same problems and the same challenges. Currently, I am active in the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, to build a movement against poverty, militarism and the war economy, environmental devastation, and systemic racism.

CW: Stephan Clark was recently killed by the police in his grandmother’s backyard in Sacramento. He was unarmed and holding a cell phone. Why did this happen, in your view?

KBC: First, we live in a nation that is under the gun. We have police with guns, we have ordinary people with guns. Corporations like the NRA have put everybody in the mindset of fear. The police classify such neighborhoods as dangerous and “high risk.” When they go into a “high risk” neighborhood, they have a tactical, military mindset, driven by fear of danger and crime. They see you more as a target than a resident, especially if you are a person of color. Many assume that if you are Black or Brown, you are associated with crime.

When the police pursued Stephan Clark, they felt they had to “eliminate” the threat regardless of whether he had a gun or cell phone. This is simulated in their training. Their mindset prevails over our human rights, our civil rights, and our constitutional rights.

The justice system is designed to protect the police. The “haves” make the laws for the “have-nots.” That’s where the problem lies. It operates as a fascist system within itself, with the police acting as judge, jury and executioner.

CW: What do you see as the solution?

KBC: We must stop the oligarchs of this country who want to divide and conquer us and keep us apart so they can continue to do what they are doing to us, keeping us in this confusion about hate, race and prejudice. We need to keep our eyes on the prize, and come together for the common goal of understanding what’s holding all of us down. We can make new policies to control the police and to protect our families and our future. You have to continue to keep the vision of unity, that’s the most important thing.

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