



## HOMELESS REFUSE TO BACK DOWN

*Homeless mothers organize to reclaim vacant homes from real estate speculators*

*See pages 3 and 6*

Homeless moms in Oakland, CA, took over a vacant investor owned home, a fight that ended in victory. They vow to continue fighting until all who want shelter have it.

PHOTO/MOMS 4 HOUSING



PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

**100-year  
commemoration  
of women's vote**  
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PHOTO/TRIBUNODELPUEBLO.ORG

**Migrant children  
cry out for help**  
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PHOTO/ERIK MCGREGOR

**Fighting for  
environmental justice**  
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# Sanders' call to transform America attracts millions

## EDITORIAL

*Editor's note: Vast numbers of people are participating in the 2020 election campaign to demand change. Here we look at the Bernie Sanders campaign. See pages 5, 6 and 7 for more election coverage.*

"If you are willing to fight for a government of compassion and justice and decency, not only will we win this election but together we will transform this country.

"The pain that one person feels if we have children who are hungry in America, if we have elderly people who can't afford their prescription drugs ... that impacts you, that impacts me—we are all in this together."

Those were the eloquent words of Sen. Bernie Sanders. In speeches, videos, and comments during the presidential debates, Sanders repeatedly condemns the cruel operating of the American economy. He pointedly asks asked how we tolerate a situation in which a handful of millionaires and billionaires live in luxury while tens of millions of people struggle to survive. He dares to question why this country spends 10 times more than any other country on its war budget, and calls for money to be transferred from the war budget to social programs. Sanders has also emerged as the most prominent advocate in the US for a universal, single-payer health care system—"Medicare for All."

Sanders also pledges: "We're going to develop a humane border policy. ... We will not be a government that snatches babies from the arms of their mothers or puts children in cages." He has announced a \$2.5 trillion housing plan designed to end homelessness and limit rent increases across the country by imposing a national rent control standard.



Senator Bernie Sanders.

PHOTO/PHIL ROEDER

He has spoken out passionately in defense of public schools and public school teachers. Sanders supports labor-law reform measures that would remove blocks to unionization. He has called for wiping out student debt. He is committed to transforming the country's energy system to 100 percent renewable energy, and has been particularly forceful in condemning the greed of the fossil fuel industry. Sanders calls for ending private prisons and detention centers, and ending the mass incarceration that disproportionately affects people of color. And he says women should make the decisions about their bodies, not politicians.

These progressive positions have struck a deep chord with an important segment of voters—especially those in an economically precarious position. Sanders' forthright support for a single-payer health care system has won him the enthusiastic endorsement of unionized nurses and many physicians and other health-care workers. His recog-

nition that we are facing a potential environmental catastrophe has secured the support of the Sunrise Movement and other young people. His pledge to make it possible for every workplace to have a union is creating growing goodwill within the grassroots of the union movement.

In fact, the Sanders candidacy has developed into something much bigger than one individual's quest for high office. The campaign has become an expression of a cause—part of a new, multi-racial, multi-generational movement to transform America.

This new movement will continue after the primaries. As Bernie himself puts it: "It's not me. It's us." The millions of people who have been drawn into this battle are not just fighting to elect one man. This is a gigantic effort to change America, to make America what it should be and can be—a just society for everyone.

No matter who wins the Democratic nomination for president, no matter who wins the White House, this fight must go on and intensify, even after Inauguration Day 2021.

## What are your thoughts on the elections?

We would like to hear from our readers what are your thoughts on the 2020 elections. Which candidate do you think has the best program for you, and why?

Please email your responses to [info@peopletribune.org](mailto:info@peopletribune.org), or post comments on articles on our website at [www.peopletribune.org](http://www.peopletribune.org), or find us on Facebook ([fb.com/peopletrib](https://www.facebook.com/peopletrib)), and on Twitter ([@PeoplesTrib](https://twitter.com/PeoplesTrib))

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The *People's Tribune* is devoted to the understanding that an economic system that doesn't feed, clothe, house, or care for its people must be and will be replaced with a system that meets the needs of the people. To that end, this paper is a tribune of the people. It is the voice of millions of everyday people who are fighting to survive in an America in crisis. It helps build connections among these fighters and the awareness that together, we can create a whole new society and world.

Today, technology is permanently eliminating jobs. Our needs can only be met by building a cooperative society where we the people, not the corporations, own the technology and the abundance it produces. Then, everyone's needs will be provided for.

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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# Homeless refuse to back down

## COVER STORY

People across the world are talking about how the Moms 4 Housing group in Oakland, CA, won a victory after their homeless members occupied a vacant house owned by an investment company.

One of the Moms occupying the house, Dominique Walker, told a reporter, "Shelter is a human right ... and it shouldn't be commodified."

Commodifying housing has become a trend. When investment columnist Mark Hulbert was asked during a January interview, what is the more profitable investment: stocks or real estate, he answered, "If one were to press me into a bet for the next decade I think I'd bet on real estate over stocks." Then on Jan. 9, a survey was released showing 97% of major corporate chief financial officers expect a recession in 2020. Thirty five percent of those surveyed are looking to layoffs as a profitable "defensive" measure.

Also in January, three homeless people, Christina Fowler, 53, Gregory Corcoran, 40 and Tony Williams, 50, were shot to death while they slept on the streets of

Baton Rouge, Louisiana. It could be argued that if these three people were not homeless, they would still be alive. Let's connect the dots.

When corporations buy housing, its not to provide people with a human right to housing. Their only concern is profits. They accomplish that by keeping their properties vacant, forcing the supply down and the demand up, until it is expensive enough for them to make maximum profits. This practice has contributed to a situation where in many cities the number of vacant units outnumbered the number of unhoused persons. Oakland, CA for example has 3.8 vacant units for every one homeless person. This is so lucrative that the Census Bureau reports nearly 3 million homes and 13 million apartment units are owned by LLC, LP and LLP shell companies.

Meanwhile, 4.4 million Americans are on HUD's waiting list for housing, many of them homeless. And yet, 453,000 of HUD's 5,035,824 units remain off-line in need of repairs (HUD office of Policy Development and Research 2018). One look at HUD's 2020 budget cut of \$9.6 billion, with capital funds for repairs on units to make them occupancy ready slashed to zero,

informs us that this is being done on purpose in lockstep with private sector corporations.

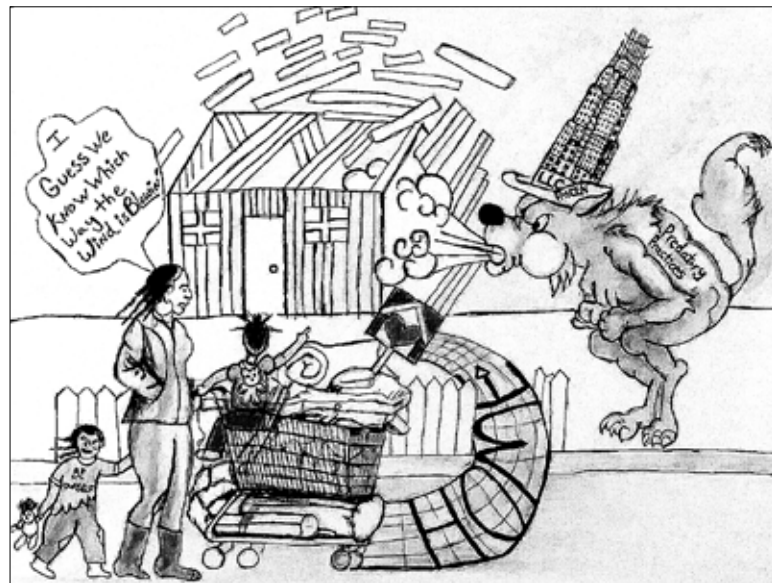
If there is a recession followed by mass layoffs, with the continued practice of purposely keeping housing vacant in order to make it more expensive, along with a lack of public housing, then 2020 promises to be a perfect storm for a sharp increase in homelessness, and with it, more needless deaths on the street. Bitter cold weather makes being homeless in cities like Chicago, Detroit or Milwaukee in the middle of winter a possible death sentence.

Shall we repeat for the entire nation the late summer of 2012 when 165 homeless people were buried on the same day in paupers' graves in Homewood, IL, a suburb of Chicago, where caskets with unidentified bodies went into the ground bearing the words, "known only to God?" Or shall we celebrate the lives of all those martyred by the system and then fight like hell for the living?

The homeless need tents, blankets and warm food, i.e., the necessities of life, right now. And they need the rest of society to become part of the movement they are building that will house all Americans and end homelessness forever.



Moms4Housing rallied the Oakland, CA community when they took over a vacant investor owned home kept off the market to drive up prices.  
PHOTO/KIMBERLY KING



CARTOON/LUIS GARCIA

*No place like HOME*

# Stop the war before it destroys the world



Women's March, 2020, Lansing, MI. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

## From the Editors

The US government's assassination of Iranian Major General Qassem Soleimani and a top Iraqi paramilitary commander in Baghdad was in part calculated to provoke Iran into going to war with the US. It was also intended to derail the peace mission that Soleimani was involved in; he was helping Iraq act as a mediator between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

After Iran fired missiles in response, the shooting died down, but the situation has not really de-escalated. The US has imposed more economic sanctions on Iran, a form of warfare. Iran and other governments have demanded that all US forces leave the region. And though the Iraqi parliament voted for US forces to leave Iraq, the US is defying the Iraqi people and staying.

US foreign policy is set by the richest 1% who dominate

our country. US involvement in the Middle East has nothing to do with stopping terrorism. It has to do with who will control the region's oil. It has to do with maintaining the dollar as the currency for world trade, especially the oil trade. It has to do with blocking Russia and China's plans for a vast Eurasian market. It has to do with who will profit from selling Middle Eastern natural gas to Europe.

Russia and China have emerged as global competitors to the 1% in the US. To block Russia and China from dominating the Middle East, the US strategy has been to promote chaos and division in the region, break up countries like Iraq and Syria, get control of Iran, and keep control of Saudi Arabia. Because of its oil and its location, Iran is strategically important. The economic interests of America's ruling billionaires are compelling them along the path of war.

A US war with Iran would not be easy and would kill many people on both sides. It could also draw in the Russians and Chinese and escalate into a nuclear war that would destroy the world.

We, the American people, have to stop this madness before it goes any further. People have already stood up to resist the drive toward a global catastrophe, and this must continue. We are responsible, because it is our government that is pushing humanity toward another world war. Our troops need to come home. Our government should be using diplomacy to promote peace and stability and stop dragging the world toward war. The trillions of dollars being spent on war should be spent on human needs.

The vast majority of the world's people have no reason to fight each other. There is plenty to go around. We can share the world. America can and must be a force for peace. We, the people, have to make that happen.

## Cut the military budget

Military spending makes up two-thirds of the US federal budget, and it could soon become three-quarters of the budget. The \$1trillion US military budget today is bigger than the next seven largest military budgets of other countries combined. An estimated one-fourth of the US military budget would eliminate poverty in the US, and to eliminate poverty worldwide would cost only about 10 percent of world military spending.

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# West Virginia ‘Street Moms’ aid those living on the margins

WHEELING, WV — “We’re cousins ... we care, we listen, we share, we open our hearts to those who need. We are blessed!” said Street MOMs, a group in Wheeling, West Virginia, “dedicated to serving those living in the margins in our community. This includes the working poor, the homeless, the addict, the alcoholic, the mentally ill. ... We see value in all of our friends and try to meet each person with love and compassion...”

“I see us as bridging a gap, filling in the cracks, meeting needs that other agencies don’t meet. I have this vision in my head of the suspension bridge—the only way it can stay up is if each cable holds its share of the load,” said a Street MOM. “[We are] just one of the cables, and this week we pulled together with other agencies and caring folks on a mission, and together we got through a very trying weekend. Our community suffered a blow with the Salvation Army closing its doors to women. We are still giving out tents today ... we have folks who are soaking wet from last night’s storms and nowhere to get dry. Street MOMs will be taking our wagon out this week and



Susan Brossman and Lynn Kettler.

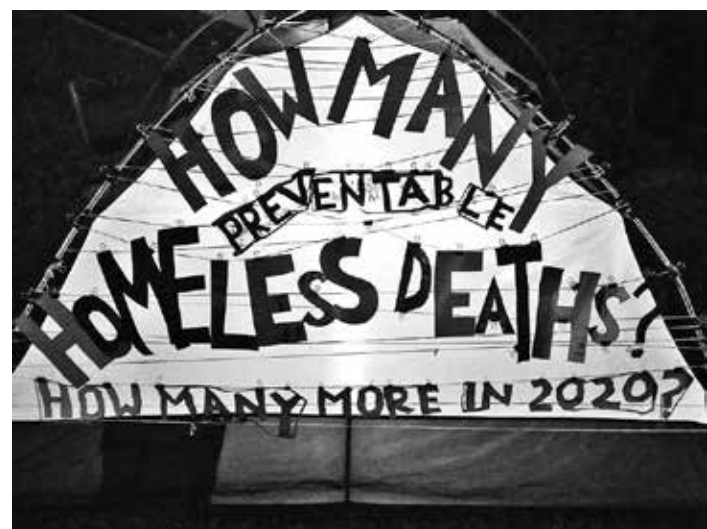
PHOTO/STREET MOMS

making sure everyone has water, toilet paper, hand sanitizer. All of this is made possible by you guys who have donated water, toilet paper, sanitary supplies, diabetic supplies, tents, sleeping bags. ... Together we can make a difference.”

Street MOMs also educate,

refuting homeless myths like, “They just need to get a job ... [when] a significant portion of homeless people do have jobs—they just cannot afford to pay rent [in a low-wage job market].”

*Editor’s note: The above are excerpts from FB posting and messages.*



PHOTO/TOAN NGUYEN

## Mourn homeless deaths – and organize!

On New Year’s Day, a Kansas City homeless man found his friend frozen to death in a shed where they slept at night. “I picked him up and he was frozen.” A friend of the two men said “They’re all somebody’s child that’s cold, that’s hungry.”

Everyone’s child: millions of them across the country, of all ages and backgrounds, thrown out into the cold by a failing economic system and a political system that refuses to put human needs first. Each year cities and towns across the country memorialize and mourn those who have died in their streets of exposure and neglect. Homeless people and others are taking up the demand that their government make housing all a priority, and organizing to house the homeless, by any means necessary: whether defending tent communities or taking over empty housing for homeless mothers and children. Housing is an absolute right, for all!

— The Editors

## Voices at the homeless front ‘We can’t be heard without a fight!’

By Crystal Sanchez,  
Sacramento Homeless Union

SACRAMENTO, CA — As I walk through the camps with a huge jacket, frosty temps in the air. ... It takes me back to a time when I was young and homeless. I look at what I’m fighting now and what my friends on the street endure and there is no comparison. My goal today was to make sure there is at least one working phone in the camps, after hearing of a stabbing where they literally had to walk to get help.

As I climbed through the hole in the gate and walked the long trail of colorful tents, I could see my breath in the evening dusk. Walking down I could smell the smell of fires. I walked past many tents. People were making dinner on their little man-made BBQ and fire pits.

Growing up as a group home foster youth, I spent many nights on the run. Sleeping outside, hitchhiking back to Sacramento from wherever the county placed me. As I aged out I was dumped with no services. Mind you this was 20+ years ago. We still see it, very young people on their own on the streets.

Being on the run and then homeless/unhoused wasn’t a struggle like today. I was living by the river like the free spirit I was. Survival came natural.

Twenty-plus years ago isn’t today. I never

feared law enforcement, sweeps didn’t happen, people didn’t hate us like they do now, people gave willingly, even offered space in their homes. We had restrooms and we didn’t have to buy something to use them. We stayed in vacant houses not legally but not with the fear people have today. Even 20 years ago you could speak to your mayor without an auto response and a slammed door in your face.

Society has divided, we can’t even be heard without a fight. People are being punished for surviving! People are getting lewd and lascivious charges for urinating and defecating outside because as humans we have to relieve ourselves. The police are being forced to do the dirty work handed down by officials. They are militarized and aren’t afraid to do as they are told, like marionettes in the capitalist hands that run this nation.

Laws now have hundreds of ordinances and other things linked to them. Do you consider that being 62,000 affordable housing units short is a reason to punish those with nowhere to go? Are we really free? What is gonna have to happen for you to say ‘enough’? What rights do they have to take from you for you to see what’s really going on?

Tonight brought back a bit of my PTSD, a sense of déjà vu, with a trigger of thought and fear. Not for me or my past but for the future of my unhoused friends and the PTSD that the state is creating.

Stand up, and look outside the straight lines!

Coffins are not carpeted  
they’re not for standing  
Linoleum is useless  
as the imagined dreams,  
some believe they’ll be having.  
The padding is for comfort  
to those left standing,  
Imagining death’s visions  
going over the width,  
linoleum’s length and pattern  
hoping for a like padding.  
Maddening.  
How many comrades  
died for standing.  
For them  
do more than stand.  
the padding useless as  
linoleum in the streets.  
Where some are taking back land  
because coffins are not carpeted  
we must more than stand.

— Ayat Bryant-Jalal



## Refugees huddle in makeshift tents awaiting asylum

By Baldemar Velásquez, President,  
Farm Labor Organizing Committee

At the invitation of Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur and Sec-Treasurer Christiana Wagner, I accompanied a 17-member congressional delegation to visit the refugee camp in the dangerous Matamoros, Mexico. The delegation did fact-finding of President Trump's "stay in Mexico" policy for migrants while waiting for asylum hearings.

The so-called Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) is a misnomer! Migrants squat near the international bridge for safety. Under constant pressure from gangs, cartels, kidnappings and rape, neighbors from their own countries huddle together in makeshift tents made out of plastic bags, sticks, and boards. We heard heart-breaking stories of how even their current situation is better than their home countries. A woman's father was murdered by a local gang. She fled with her children after an extortion demand under threat of death to her and her children. Rapes and abductions are commonplace. US policy seems aimed at discouraging people from attempting asylum here by heaping misery upon these mostly poor, innocent people trying to survive.

We also visited the asylum processing center on the US side which was eerily empty! Migrants told us they had been waiting 6-8 months for their hearing. We asked why the interview rooms and courtrooms were empty. They said only the DOJ schedules hearings. Apparently, DOJ made scheduling down to a trickle to force the migrants into the intolerable conditions in Mexico.

We were briefed by the few attorneys about legal challenges. They are only permitted to gain access to clients the morning of their hearing, putting the migrants at an impossible disadvantage in preparing their petition. This is not justice, it's a kangaroo court! This MPP is shameful, unjust and immoral.

## Immigration: Demand candidates keep their promises

The year 2019 brought children in cages, families separated, and thousands locked in detention centers. The gates were shut, supposedly because there's "no room at the inn." Now, a year later, the Trump administration advocates for its immigrant and migrant zero-tolerance policy to be used against homeless people here too, proposing to round them up and force them out of the cities. It won't stop there either, unless we stop it now.

Various Democratic presidential candidates have called for reforming the immoral and barbaric U.S. immigration system. Let's hold their feet to the fire now. One step is to demand that all candidates fight any attempt to declare a zero-tolerance policy against any part of the population, whether homeless or undocumented.

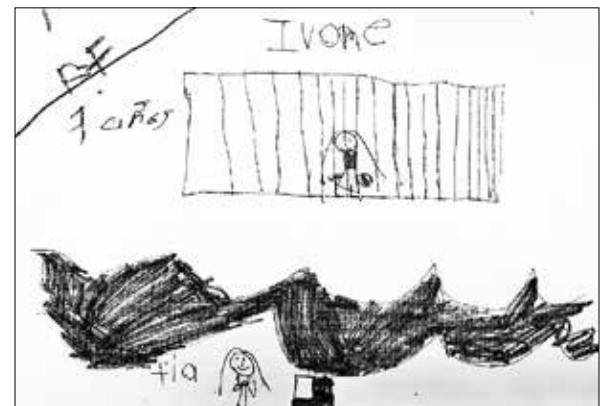
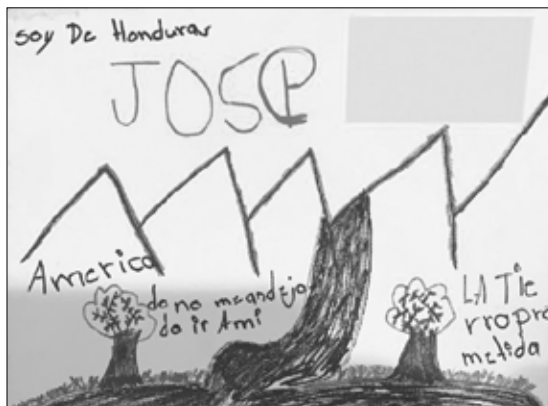
Read the *People's Tribune* and *Tribuno del Pueblo* for stories on what candidates and everyday people are doing to defend the people.

## Drawings become migrant children's cry for help

On this page are drawings from children awaiting asylum at the U.S. border in Matamoros, Mexico. They drew their experiences as part of an art project by Dr. Belinda Arriaga, an associate professor at the University of San Francisco

who specializes in child trauma and Latino mental health. "Their drawings become their voice," Arriaga says. "When they started handing me one-by-one their pieces, it was really jolting to see what they were drawing. ... The drawings help us

understand the trauma that this country is inflicting on them." Dr. Arriaga traveled to Matamoros in October, 2019 as part of a group of volunteers who provided aid and psychological care to migrant children and their families.



## Elections: Voices of the people on universal healthcare

Below are recent quotes from a variety of people, from Twitter posts and other sources, regarding the question of universal health care in America, including their support for candidates who address it. The Twitter posts were at the time of the Democratic debate in January.

"I'm from Canada, can't believe you are living without universal health care. I'd be living in a box on the street with all the surgeries that I've needed."

— Julie Shaw, on Twitter

"It's sad as a nurse to see people that cannot get appropriate mental health care, either due to no insurance or lack of providers available. People are

truly suffering. We need #Medicare4All, which includes mental health care. It will save lives. #Bernie2020"

— Mary Redden, on Twitter

"People FLEE America to not only get AFFORDABLE Healthcare, but also SUPERIOR healthcare. America doesn't have to be a place where people die unnecessarily to provide more profit for the already wealthy. #M4A"

— Secret Ingredients, on Twitter

"The one thing I think that would probably help to unionize this whole country is if we would take the healthcare issue off of the table to start with, and just give everybody government healthcare like they should

have. You know, when you start bargaining, that's the first thing now that comes up. So take that off the table and we'll bargain for what we need to be bargaining for: wages and pensions and days off and safety and things."

— Terry Steele, a retired coal miner in West Virginia, quoted in "In These Times"

"Imagine if CNN cared about how much going to war with Iran, or the endless wars we have waged in the Middle East has cost us. No, instead, they are worried about what it would cost us to care for everyone in this country ... during peacetime."

— Dan Arel, on Twitter

## Yang's 'Humanity First' campaign sparks debate about the future

Andrew Yang wasn't in the most recent Democratic debate, but he continues to amass a hard core of supporters, many attracted by his position regarding technology eliminating jobs, a central issue of our time.

Yang has written: "Since 2000, technology has replaced the jobs of four million American manufacturing workers and decimated communities. ... Experts are predicting that one out of three Americans will lose their jobs to new technology in the next twelve years." Yang has also said, "In an economy of \$21 trillion a year there is no reason for poverty."

His proposal for a Universal Basic Income to mitigate the crisis is popular among many, with more than half of people age 18-49 supporting it.

This quote is illustrative of people's response to Yang's ideas: "Andrew Yang is talking about things that are existential threats that if we don't start addressing them actively with comprehensive solutions, I think it's going to be too late." — Brandon Laws, a Nashua, NH, alderman and Sanders supporter, quoted by NBC News.



# CALIFORNIANS FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE STREETS, AT BALLOT BOX, AND LEGISLATURE

## Community unites with homeless moms for housing

*Editor's note: As we go to print, a victory for Moms4Housing was announced. Wedgewood Properties agreed to sell the house to the Oakland Community Land Trust. Moms will move back in.*

**By Mereia Shaw, Monica Cross and Kimberly King**

OAKLAND, CA — Members of the Poor People's Campaign (PPC) at Laney College in Oakland, California, attended the December San Francisco mass meeting of the national Poor People's Campaign Tour, "We Must do M.O.R.E" (Mobilizing, Organizing, Registering, Educating). One student noted, "This campaign is something new for me, seeing people coming together across race, religious denomination, gender, sexuality, and geography saying, 'We will not be silent anymore, because everybody's got a right to live!' It opened my eyes to the plight of the U.S. poor. As I marched, sang and chanted with the crowd, I realized that in order to be heard, one must turn up and speak up."

In Oakland, a concrete battle for housing as a human right has broken out led by Moms4 Housing, a collective of insecurely housed mothers, who occupied a vacant investor-owned house in West Oakland on November 18 to reclaim housing for the Oak-

land community from real estate speculators. The Laney PPC, Bay Area PPC, and many others are actively supporting the Moms by attending rallies, strategy sessions, court hearings, eviction defense, posting on social media and conducting political education. The house, vacant for over 18 months, is owned by corporate investor Wedgewood Properties, a "flipper" of distressed residential real estate. The UN has identified Oakland, with four empty housing units for every homeless person, as a "hedge city," dominated by financial corporations that make speculative bets and own massive amounts of housing, driving up housing prices.

PPC members joined the large group of supporters attending their eviction court hearings. While the judge refused to hear expert testimony on the Oakland housing crisis, he did consider the Moms' defense that housing is a human right, eventually deciding in favor of Wedgewood that the Moms should be evicted. One Laney PPC member posed, "The question for me as a minister and theologian is: are property rights more sacred than human beings?"

Hundreds in the community rallied and conducted eviction defense on January 13, chanting "Housing is a Human right!" and "No More Speculators!" But

around 5 a.m. on January 14, sheriffs with riot gear, assault rifles and an armored vehicle conducted a militarized eviction, arresting two mothers and two supporters, who were then bailed out the same day. We need to decommodify housing and make it available to everyone! The people of Oakland are fighting for that. As Dominique Walker of Moms4Housing said, "We view what happened today as a beginning of a movement ... for housing for all."

**[Right] Moms4Housing members.**  
PHOTO/INDYBAY.ORG

**[Below] Supporters of Moms who occupied a vacant investor owned house so their families would not freeze.**  
PHOTO/ DANIEL LEE



## Environmental racism and psychological trauma

**By Maria Estrada**

LOS ANGELES, CA — For over three decades, Exide Technology contaminated their employees and the surrounding areas in Southeast Los Angeles County, while every government agency in place failed to respond.

Exide recycled 11 million auto batteries per year and released 3,500 tons of lead until it closed in March 2015 as part of a legal settlement for hazardous waste violations. Since Exide was closed, over 10,000 homes have been tested for lead with 97% testing positive. There are no safe levels of lead.

An estimated 250,000 residents exposed to lead were predominantly Mexican Americans,



**Residents express outrage at lead contamination by Exide plant in southaast L.A.**  
PHOTO/CBECAL.ORG

and many now face chronic health issues from airborne lead and arsenic that subsequently settles into the soil.

The psychological trauma experienced by families is heart wrenching. New parents whose

beautiful children have behavioral issues and difficulty learning often blame themselves. Teachers who lack resources and are expected to teach these damaged children, are also deeply affected by this tragedy.

Exide, this large corporation, is being protected by California Assembly members Christina Garcia and Miguel Santiago, former Governor Jerry Brown and Speaker of the Assembly Anthony Rendon, who perpetuate the myth that Democrats are environmentally friendly. Speaker Rendon, the assemblyman of the district, shelved SB562, Single Payer Healthcare, which would have been extremely helpful and alleviated some of the families' pain and the inevitable financial burden of the health issues related to lead poisoning. Southeast Los Angeles has the highest rates of uninsured children and the second highest rate of uninsured adults, yet even with arguably the most powerful man in the state of Cal-

ifornia representing the area, the people of Southeast Los Angeles were denied healthcare by him.

Every elected official in the area is aware of the devastation in the area and have done little to address the problem, which to this day has not been cleaned up. Yet every election season they come around to take a photo with your child and ask for your vote. The failure of all involved—the Department of Toxic Substance Control, South Coast Air Quality Management District, Department of Public Health, and elected officials—shows they lack the political will to address this disaster and this will ensure that this contamination will continue to devastate the community for decades to come.





Decarcerate Sacramento demonstrates against the downtown jail expansion.

PHOTO/DECARCERATE SACRAMENTO

## Sacramento group stops downtown jail expansion

By Cathleen Williams

SACRAMENTO, CA — The grassroots community group, “Decarcerate Sacramento,” has mobilized the public to oppose jail expansion in Sacramento, calling for the funding of sustainable, community-based, alternatives to incarceration and a drastic reduction in the number of jail prisoners.

“Can’t Get Well In A Cell” is the theme of Decarcerate Sacramento’s exposure of the negative impacts of jail expansion plans. Contra Costa, San Francisco and Los Angeles counties have all recently refused to fund jail expansions because of these negative impacts.

Decarcerate Sacramento points out that the majority of prisoners are poor and vulnerable. Two out of three persons in the jail—like Lorenzo Mays, the plaintiff in the class action

suit against abuse of mentally ill prisoners—haven’t even been convicted of a crime. Too poor to afford bail, they wait for trial in jail, sometimes for years.

The jail incarcerates uncounted numbers of houseless people. Many are routinely jailed by law enforcement in Sacramento for petty offenses or simply for living outside. “I did 45 days in jail—straight time—for taking electricity from a pole to light my tent,” a houseless resident reported recently to the local homeless advocacy group, Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee (SHOC).

More than half of jail prisoners struggle with mental illness and substance abuse disorders and need treatment. African Americans constitute 37% of jail prisoners, even though they represent only 11% of the population, compelling evi-

dence of the racially discriminatory arrest, prosecution, and incarceration of people of color in the county. The jail population has risen even as crime has gone down.

Decarcerate Sacramento, by awakening public awareness, has already scored some success in stopping the proposed expansion of RCCC. On October 22, the County Board of Supervisors bowed to public outcry against the jail expansion plans, and, citing the rising cost of the project, voted to delay further proceedings until November 5, 2019. At that meeting, the Board cut the \$80 million project from the County budget, effectively killing it.

*La lucha continua—the struggle continues. Check out Decarcerate Sacramento on Facebook for updates and information.*

## Homeless people not in need of a cell to get well

*Editor’s note: This testimony below was delivered at a hearing on so-called “Laura’s Law,” forced treatment and conservatorship for homeless people, to California’s Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors in December 2019.*

By Paul Soto

SAN JOSE, CA — Members of the Council and my fellow citizens, in the spirit of the ancient Greek forums of old, when men of reason, logic, and a sense of civic duty gathered to bear witness to the affairs that impact the body politic, it is with great humility that I present my contention.

Human compassion, moral conviction, and ethical concerns compel me to challenge the well-intentioned, politically expedient, yet ignorant assertion that homeless people should be conserved and incarcerated.

Human beings are not broken parts in a machine. We are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights. Amongst these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and to secure these rights, governments were instituted to provide for the common welfare.

My homeboys and homegirls living outside along the Guadalupe River are not in need of a cell to get well, they are in need of spiritual physicians to heal their human conditions.

Can you realize the law has no place when a human needs shelter? Yesterday’s Martin v. Boise decision by the Supreme Court permitted the lower court ruling to stand that a human being has a right to erect a shelter in any public sidewalk or



Paul Soto speaks in December at rally in San Jose against Trump’s plan to round up homeless people in San Jose and 20 other cities across the country.

PHOTO/RONALD ORLANDO

park, if the City or County fails to provide housing. Is not this a vindication of the idea that the law has no place if no shelter exists?

As a society, in order to have social justice we must first practice economic justice. The notion that pointing a gun at a citizen ordering him to put his hands behind his back because he is experiencing the abject consequences of poverty, generational trauma, PTSD, or schizophrenia is insane.

Members of the Council, I appeal to your sense of humanity, which should be the ethical guide in the legislation of laws that impact men’s lives. We are at a precipice. Your decisions will impact the lives of not only the least of these, but will reflect on us as a community, baring our impotency in dealing ethically, morally, and compassionately with our fellow citizens.”

## Our survival depends on our fight for democracy!

By Peggy Elwell

SAN JOSE, CA — As the California Primary on March 3 looms just ahead, we find ourselves in a fight for our lives. Articles on these pages reflect some of these fights: from Moms 4 Housing in Oakland fighting for their families not to freeze outside while investment housing remains vacant; to the residents in Southeast L.A., campaigning for environmental justice; to Decarcerate Sacramento that won a victory against expansion of the downtown jail, to the homeless in San Jose speaking out against Trump’s proposed roundups.

The main battlefield of these struggles at this time is the fight for power in the electoral arena. Inspired by Bernie Sanders’ Political Revolution, brave fighters are challenging the hold of corporations on the California Democratic Party and stepping forward to run for office. Young and old are phoning, texting, and walking precincts to make sure that authentic leaders who stand for what we need get elected. The California Progressive Alliance, which had its annual meeting in Berkeley on January 11, is one of the formations taking on corporate Democrats.

The fight for democracy includes opposing voter suppression and disenfran-

chisement. Nation-wide, cross-check and other voter purge mechanisms in southern and battleground states have deprived millions of their right to vote, especially African-Americans. Immigrants, both documented and undocumented, who have been long-time contributors to the economy, face barriers to citizenship and have no say in elections. Current and formerly incarcerated people are either denied the right to vote or face hurdles to exercising that right. Native Americans on reservations are being targeted because they have no street address.

This suppression also extends to the barriers that those who registered as No

Party Preference in California, often millennials, will face if they want to vote for Sanders in the Democratic Primary, as happened in 2016. This voter suppression imposed by the California Democratic Party is destined to be repeated in March, as those who do not know how to specifically request a crossover ballot will see their vote languish for weeks in a pile of “provisional” ballots, and often not counted.

Let us continue our righteous fight for democracy, on the streets, at the ballot box, in city council chambers and in the California legislature!



# ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE BATTLE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

## The plastics giant and the making of an environmental justice warrior

By Julie Dermansky

NEW ORLEANS, LA — On the evening of January 6, 2020, Louisiana state regulators issued 15 key permits to the Taiwanese petrochemical corporation Formosa for its \$9.4 billion plastics manufacturing complex proposed for the historically Black area of St. James Parish. The approvals pave the way for the project's construction, [which is] opposed by local and national environmental advocates.

Sharon Lavigne, a demure, 67-year-old recently retired special-ed teacher born and raised in St. James Parish, cried when she heard the news. Her community along the Mississippi River is already saddled with petrochemical plants and oil storage tanks, which release known carcinogens

into the air that she fears are making her and her family sick.

"Something isn't right about this," said Lavigne, who founded the community group RISE St. James to oppose new industrial development in the area. After doing everything she could to raise awareness about why Formosa shouldn't build its plastics plant in St. James, she is baffled by the state's decision.

"If they think we are going to sit around and let them poison us, they are wrong," Lavigne said. She is ready for the next round in the fight to stop the plastics complex. "God is on my side. He has sent me the people I need to help fight this fight, and that is what I'm going to do."

She is trying to stop the corporation from building a sprawling plastic manufacturing com-

plex a mile and a half from her front door.

St. James Parish is in the middle of an 80-mile stretch of the Mississippi River, from just outside of New Orleans up to Baton Rouge. It used to be known for its bucolic landscape lined with sugarcane fields, former slave plantations, and churches, but over the last 50 years, it has been transforming into an industrial wasteland.

That transformation is poised to worsen tenfold as more petrochemical companies build megaplastic manufacturing plants, dwarfing the facilities already polluting the region known to industry as the Petrochemical Corridor, and to locals as Cancer Alley.

The project was endorsed by Democratic Governor John Bel



Sharon Lavigne and other Coalition Against Death Alley (CADA) members approach the Sunshine Bridge in St. James Parish, Louisiana during a CADA protest march last year.

PHOTO/JULIE DERMANSKY

Edwards before the community even knew about it. He was the first to announce the project, welcoming Formosa to Louisiana.

*Editor's Note: This article is excerpted from a longer article by Julie Dermansky of DESMOG at [www.desmogblog.com](http://www.desmogblog.com). Envi-*

*ronmental groups are suing the Trump administration, challenging the permits given to the company by the governor, and exposing the impact of chemical corporations in rural poor and Black communities in Louisiana and on the global environment.*

## Flint students with special needs increase by 56% since water crisis

*Residents cry foul on double standards and negligence by county board*

*Editor's note: On January 14, residents of Flint confronted the County School Board for failure to dispatch needed Special Education funds to the long suffering, poisoned children of Flint. Speaker after speaker called out the Board who hid behind a formula that they claimed would not allow more funds for children in distress per the Flint water crisis. (As the public left the meeting, four sheriff patrols lined up outside.) The following are excerpts from an article written by Pamela Pugh, former Chief Public Health Advisor for the City of Flint and current Vice President of the Michigan Board of Education. Submitted by Flint correspondents.*



Flint children continue to be abandoned by government, particularly State and County entities.

PHOTO/FLINT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

These "solutions", especially building closures, ignore the fact that school-building closures have historically led to greater student losses, and a consequential loss in revenue. Furthermore, it presents a false narrative that the dire conditions of Flint schools, like other districts that serve our children of color and low-income children, are solely due to mispending, overspending, or even corruption and ineptness on the part of local school leadership.

Placing focus here also causes an overshadowing of the fact that inequitable funding is greatly at play in Flint. For instance, Flint Community Schools

receive a portion of special education cost-reimbursement funding through a countywide millage that all Genesee County taxpayers must pay. The Genesee Intermediate School District's (GISD) Special Education Mandatory Plan, last modified in June 2013, outlines how the millage funds are disbursed to its local districts.

Grand Blanc, a neighboring, much more affluent and predominantly white district, has only half the number of special-needs students as Flint but gets twice the amount of special-education millage funding from GISD. More startling is that, with a Special Education Fund Balance of over \$23,000,000, including a fund for future capital expenditures, GISD is sitting on a Special Education Fund balance that is much greater than other much larger intermediate school districts.

If millage funding were distributed more equitably based on special-education populations, then Flint would receive approximately 20% of the special-education millage funding distributed throughout Genesee County, versus 7.5% that it currently receives.

*See entire article at [OpEdNews.com](http://OpEdNews.com)*

### Ecorevolution

Beautiful blistering sun –  
Mother sun, giver of life,  
Thwarted from energizing our  
every need.

Petro kings foul the Earth,  
Turn up the heat.  
Must be dethroned.

GMOs taint our food,  
Sicken our kids,  
Monsanto and Bayer have to go.

We reclaim our Earth and Sun  
To save humanity.

— Karel Riley

## On alternative energy and 'our intelligence'

"So if we are in this situational reality where we're looking at the predatory ... ruling class, and we're talking to them about environment and ... alternative energy, then we have to understand that as human beings, we are the original alternative energy source, it's our intelligence, it's how we use the energy and the power of our intelligence. Our intelligence."

— John Trudell, excerpt from speech at Social Forum in Detroit in 2010



# Youth-led Sunrise Movement endorses Bernie Sanders



Sunrise prepares for Iowa caucuses. PHOTO/SUNRISE

By Patrick Baranovskis,  
Chicago Sunrise member

CHICAGO, IL — The Sunrise Movement, a youth-led grassroots organization fighting to stop the climate crisis and create millions of good jobs in the process, endorsed Bernie Sanders for president on January 9, following an internal vote. They see the coalition of working class power represented by the Sanders campaign as fundamental to the success of a Green New Deal. They rightfully claim that a political revolution is necessary to actually solve the cli-

mate and social crisis. It is a fitting way to kick off what Sunrise's central hero, Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, coined the "Decade of the Green New Deal," one which will determine the habitability of life on Earth going forward according to the leading climate science.

A vision of a Green New Deal is one which responds to the actual needs of people and planet, where hundreds of millions of working-class people are waking up to the wealth of antagonistic relationships that are born out of exploitative labor relations, energy generation, agriculture, transportation, and waste management. The common goal is to transform these parts of our society in order to stop and reverse climate breakdown, improve the quality of life for those most affected by environmental and social injustice, and ensure a humane life for future generations. This can only be accomplished through a fight for political revolution and a cooperative society.

To learn more about Sunrise, the Green New Deal, to find a Sunrise hub in your area, and to donate to the movement, visit [www.sunrisemovement.org](http://www.sunrisemovement.org)

## CA candidate for the people



PHOTO/DANIEL LEE

Jackie Fielder (seen at right, kneeling with supporters) is running for California State Senate in District 11. She told *Teen Vogue*, "California is my home state and we have 157 billionaires, while thousands sleep unhoused on the street. We spend \$81,000 [per inmate each year] to incarcerate people, while classes are understaffed and teachers are struggling to make ends meet. Most recently, the fires that have ravaged the state from San Diego to the top of California speak to the inaction on climate change."

Jackie Fielder is a Democratic Socialist, endorsed by Black Lives Matter cofounder Alicia Garza, the Harvey Milk Democratic Club, San Francisco Tenants Union, and others.

## Amazon threatens workers who say Bezos should not be in fossil fuel

Editor's note: This story is from tweets by Amazon Employees For Climate Justice

We're a group of Amazon employees who believe it's our responsibility to ensure our business models don't contribute to the climate crisis.

Jeff Bezos and Amazon executives are threatening to fire a few members of our group after we spoke up about wanting our company to be a leader in the worldwide effort to avert climate catastrophe.

How will the world remember Jeff Bezos in the era of climate emergency? Will he use his immense economic power to help, or not? Please tell @Amazon and @jeffBezos: Our world is on fire and desperately needs climate leadership. Stop silencing employees who are sounding the alarm.

We started organizing because we knew our company could and must do better. Amazon and

now Microsoft's climate announcement [to radically reduce its carbon emissions] came only "after" employees began organizing and pushing their companies to stop contributing to climate change.

Like Amazon, Microsoft leadership has no plan to stop taking money from fossil fuel companies to help them find and extract, faster and with lower costs, more fossil fuels from our planet. This fact undermines much of the public goodwill of these climate announcements. When a reporter asked Bezos if he would be canceling his company's contracts with the oil and gas industry, his response was a simple: "No."

It's clear that our work as employees pushing our companies to prioritize our children's and grandchildren's future over environmentally destructive short-term profit is not over. We must and we will keep standing up and speaking on behalf of our beautiful planet!

## Humanitarian and political crisis in Puerto Rico

From the Editors

After two major hurricanes devastated Puerto Rico in 2017, Congress approved almost \$20 billion in disaster aid. But the Trump administration has refused to send \$18 billion of this relief after more than two years. And now a second humanitarian crisis has hit the island. Tens of thousands were still living under temporary blue tarps, when, in December, earthquakes and aftershocks began. All this on top of a debt-crisis caused by a 12-year recession and years of forced austerity, coupled with tax relief to corporations. As we go to press, there are massive popular protests in Puerto Rico, a sign of continuing discontent with the colonial administration of the island and with the US government's response to the crisis. Still the US government continues to abandon Puerto Rico, whose people are American citizens. The US has the resources to provide immediate help and restore Puerto Rico both physically and economically, and indeed to care for all of our people. This humanitarian disaster aid must be released NOW!



Devastation in Puerto Rico following earthquakes.



Children's lawsuit seeks government action to stabilize climate system. PHOTO/OUR CHILDRENS TRUST

## 'This isn't over!' vow children suing government over climate

Editor's note: The following are excerpts from a press release at [ourchildrenstrust.org/press-releases](http://ourchildrenstrust.org/press-releases)

Juliana v. United States is not about the government's failure to act on climate. Instead, these young plaintiffs between the ages of 12 and 23, assert that the U.S. government, through its affirmative actions in creating a national energy system that causes climate change, is depriving them of their constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property, and has failed to protect essential public trust resources. The case is one of many related legal actions brought by youth in several states and countries, supported by Our Children's Trust, and all seeking science-based action by governments to stabilize the climate system.

On January 17, a divided Court recognized the gravity of the evidence on the youth plain-

tiffs' injuries from climate change and the government's role in causing them. Yet ... two out of three judges said the court can do nothing. The third judge affirmed the youths' constitutional climate rights and said "our nation is crumbling—at our government's own hand—into a wasteland."

Kelsey Juliana, the 23-year-old named plaintiff in Juliana said: "THIS ISN'T OVER. Prepare for a petition for review to the 9th circuit as we refuse to do anything but move forward. Courts do have an obligation to address issues of constitutional, existential crisis, like climate change. STAY HOPEFUL, STAY WITH US, STAY TUNED, STAY IN POWER."

Levi Draheim, 12-year-old plaintiff from Florida, commented: "Much like the civil rights cases, we firmly believe the courts can vindicate our constitutional rights and we will not stop until we get a decision that says so."



# 100 years after women won the vote – We still want bread and roses

## Lessons of Lawrence, 1912

*Editor's note: The year 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of women winning the right to vote in the United States. To commemorate that important victory, the People's Tribune will be printing articles this year about different aspects of the fight of women workers for equality. This first article describes the historic "bread and roses" strike by Massachusetts textile workers in 1912.*

By Chris Mahin

"We want bread—and roses!"

"Bayonets cannot weave cloth!"

"Better to starve fighting than to starve working!"

More than a century ago, thousands of men, women, and children shouted those slogans—in many different languages—in the bitter cold of a Massachusetts winter.

On January 12, 1912, thousands of workers walked out of the textile mills of Lawrence, Massachusetts. Almost half were women. Many were immigrants.

Lawrence, Massachusetts was a city of 86,000 people in 1912, and a great textile center. Within a one-mile radius of the mill district, there lived 25 different nationalities, speaking 50 languages. By 1912, Italians, Poles, Russians, Syrians, and Lithuanians had replaced native-born Americans and western Europeans as the predominant groups in the mills.

The cost of living was higher in Lawrence than in the rest of New England, and the wages of the textile workers were totally inadequate. The city was one of the most congested in the United States, with many workers crowded into foul tenements.

The immediate cause of the strike was a cut in pay. Lawrence was quickly transformed into an armed camp, with the police and militia guarding the mills.

The Lawrence strikers created a democratic form of organization in which every nationality of worker was represented. The strikers voted to demand a 15 percent increase in wages, a 54-hour week, double time for overtime, and the abolition of the premium

and bonus systems.

The agents of the mill owners struck back. When the police and militia tried to halt a parade, a bystander, Annie LoPezzo, was shot dead. That same day, an 18-year-old Syrian striker, John Ramy, was killed by a bayonet thrust into his back.

Concerned that the growing outrage over the conditions in Lawrence might lead to public support for lowering the woolen tariff, the mill owners began to look for a way to end the strike. First the largest employer, the American Woolen Company, came to an agreement. Then the others followed. The workers won most of their demands. By March 24, the strike was officially over. It was a tremendous victory.

The victory at Lawrence showed that women workers and immigrant workers would not only support strikes—if given the chance, they would gladly lead them, and lead them well. The strikers in Lawrence won their demands because they never let themselves be divided on ethnic or gender lines, because they were militant (and creative) in their tactics, and because they found a way to appeal to the con-



1912 Bread and Roses strike.

science of the public.

The Battle of Lawrence is summed up in the strike's best-known slogan: "We want bread—and roses!" The Lawrence strikers wanted more than a wage increase. They were inspired by a vision of a new society, one where the workers themselves ruled. In this society, every human being would have "bread"—a decent standard of living. They would also have "roses"—the chance to learn, to have access to art, music, and culture; a society which would allow the flower-

ing of everyone's talents, the full development of every human being.

On this anniversary of women winning the right to vote in the United States, we should learn from all those who made that victory possible—including all the brave women industrial workers who waged their struggles before women had the right to vote in the United States.

If we all act with as much foresight and courage as they did, we can create a world with both bread and roses for everyone.

## While people suffer, Feds launch \$71 million policing 'surge' in 7 cities

By Bob Lee

The US Justice Department on Dec. 18 announced the launch of "Operation Relentless Pursuit," which Attorney General William Barr claimed is aimed at "combating violent crime" in seven cities through a "surge" in federal resources. The cities are Albuquerque, Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, Kansas City, Memphis, and Milwaukee.

The plan to flood these cities with more police comes ahead of the 2020 elections and on the heels of a boost in Trump's assault on immigrants and his announced plans to round up the homeless and force them into camps. And while additional funding is put into policing the people, residents in every one of the seven cities involved face rising poverty, a lack of affordable housing, school closures, deteriorating infrastructure, lack of healthcare and other crises.

The operation will increase the number of federal law enforcement officers to the selected cities, and increase federal collaboration with state and local law enforcement. It also involves up to \$71 million in federal grant funding that can be used to hire new officers, pay overtime and



Police in military fatigues with armored vehicles work in the service of real estate speculators to evict homeless mothers living in a vacant Oakland, CA home.

PHOTO/EAST BAY DSA

benefits, finance federally deputized task force officers, and provide equipment and technology.

So why the stepped-up police presence?

Just as we saw in Ferguson, Standing Rock, and now in Oakland, as people fight for their rights, militarized police are

used to put down protests and to protect the interests of big money. In Oakland, sheriffs with AR-15 rifles and a tank showed up to evict homeless mothers.

It appears the continuing rise of poverty in America goes hand in hand with the rise of a police state. People are beginning to see this and are standing up against it.

### my children

these black children  
without windows  
without mirrors  
these black children  
dehumanized  
criminalized  
these black children  
scrutinized  
brutalized  
these black children  
policed  
surveilled  
these black children  
are my children  
these black children  
are our children

— Daniel Brooks



# Black History Month 2020: Join fight for voting rights for all

By Joseph Peery

When Carter G. Woodson introduced African American History Month in 1926, as Negro History Week, it soon became clear that American history without African American history was a lie of omission. One cannot exist or be understood without the other. It is through the struggle of Black Americans for equality that the real history of the US is revealed.

Black History Month's 2020 theme of "African Americans and the vote," illuminates this. It's the 150th anniversary of black men and 100th anniversary of black women getting the right to vote. It's also a crucial election year with the impeachment of a president, putting suppression of especially the black voter front and center.

At the birth of the US, voter suppression was legal. Only white men with property were allowed to vote in most states. The 3/5 (per slave) compromise of the 1787 Constitutional Convention gave advantage to slave states in congressional representation and presidential elections. Democracy, freedom and justice? No. The legal and political superstructure conceived at that convention simply built itself around the economics that without the brutal exploitation of the African slave and white supremacy as its justification, there was no cotton and without cotton, no modern industry, expansion of world trade or Industrial Revolution.

This stood until the election of Lincoln. In response the South rebelled and tried to win on the battlefield what it lost at the ballot box. Losing there as well, they resorted



**Stacey Abrams in Atlanta organizing against voter suppression. After the gross mismanagement of the 2018 election by Georgia's Secretary of State's office, she launched a fight for every Georgian to have a voice in the elections. 17 million voters were purged nation-wide from 2016-2018.**

PHOTO/STACEY ABRAMS

to the terrorism of groups like the KKK to rollback Reconstruction gains, especially voting rights, won by former slaves and their white allies who understood ... "white labour will never be emancipated so long as black labor is still stigma-

tized." Terror like the 1873 Colfax, Louisiana Easter Sunday massacre coupled with the Hayes Tilden agreement (The Great Betrayal) brought reconstruction to an end.

The Jim Crow laws that followed shackled the Black freedmen to share-

cropping where they were joined by poor whites. Previous support of slavery and an end to Reconstruction did not save poor whites from generations of poverty alongside blacks. Both were denied voting by every conceivable fashion. When the mechanical cotton picker of the 1940s replaced sharecropping, it destroyed the economic basis of Jim Crow, led to the Great Migration to northern industrial cities and ushered in the civil rights era.

Today, the replacement of industrial workers by computers and robots is nearly complete. The resulting homelessness, unemployment, stagnant wages and lack of healthcare affecting all workers is disproportionately hitting African-Americans.

Trump & company are resurrecting white supremacy to redirect blame onto people of color for society's woes. Jim Crow style tactics are now restrictive voter IDs, name crosscheck, gerrymandering and scarcity of voting machines. In response, people are uprising all over by joining the electoral process as new candidates and voters. Traditional voters are taking a closer look at Sanders, Warren, Yang, and others for their stances on wealth redistribution. Here the African American voter has been critical in elevating society for new social change.

In the spirit of African American History Month 2020, let us all join the battlefield of the electoral arena armed with the weapon of massive voter registration and inscribed on our banners, "End voter suppression, voting rights for all."

## 'I never saw Adam again' – a woman's response to war

By Retha Daugherty

CARBONDALE, IL — I'm thinking of a young man I met back when the "forever wars" were juicing up. Bookstores were still the place to hang for an afternoon of delightful escape. At the local Barnes and Noble, a likable young man named Adam was often behind the coffee counter. Dark short hair, dark complexion, handsome, a student. He served in the National Guard. He and his wife were expecting their first child when he told me was being deployed to Afghanistan. He would miss the birth. He was heartbroken, but trying not to show it. I was heartbroken for him.

Months went by, and one day I walked in to find Adam behind the counter again, serving up coffee for the book hounds. I was so elated to see him, alive and well, and home again! We exchanged a happy greeting and I asked about the baby. Six months old already!

Months went by again, and one day a coworker told me Adam had been deployed back to Afghanistan. Again! My heart sank. It seemed absolutely inhumane to be called back for a second tour after hav-

ing survived the first. As the war went on, it became common for men and women to be called multiple times, leading to the suicide of soldiers like the husband and father out east who was facing his FIFTH deployment.

I never saw Adam again. Though I asked, none of his coworkers ever had fresh news of him. As I thought of him, in my mind he is, of course, that same young man I knew then. I thought of his six-month old baby, a girl, I think. Did she get her daddy back home a second time?

Then I realized with a start that she would be nearly a grown woman now, old enough to enlist herself, possibly to help foot the cost of an education, as her dad had done. Adam, if still alive, would no doubt be starting to gray around the temples.

I don't know where I'm going with this. It's just a sadness that needs to be expressed.

Our generals admitted, as revealed in the Afghanistan Papers, that they don't know where they're going or what they're doing either. With the wars, that is. And they never did. Our presidents lied about it

till they were red (or blue) in the face. But they sure as hell like to blow up things anyway. Including our lives and our kids. It's madness and must be stopped. Problem is, our economy is now quite dependent on it. It must be stopped anyway. It ain't easy to stop a war. Ask any child of the sixties.

*Retha's family is from the West Virginia coalfields, and she had relatives at the Matewan Massacre.*

**A mother and child at a peace protest against further war in the Middle East, at the Wisconsin State Capitol on January 4, 2020.**

PHOTO/KEN FAGER



Working in daycare is the pits  
Being homeless is the pits  
Living in a shelter is the pits  
Living under imperialism is the pits.

– Yolanda Catzalco



# Occupy the PGA! Mass demonstration in Benton Harbor

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

BENTON HARBOR, MI — The attack on democracy in Benton Harbor, MI shows that the corporate power structure aims to crush anyone who stands in its way. It is a process under way across America. After the once stable working-class community of Benton Harbor was devastated by automation and globalization, the community began resisting, fighting back and confronting the Corporations.

As concerned citizens of Benton Harbor, with support from our allies here and around the world, we protest the exploitation of our community by Harbor Shores, Kitchen Aid/Whirlpool Corporation and PGA of America.

The Harbor Shores development came about through the undermining of democracy, political pressure on public agencies, theft of public land for private profit, destruction of rare ecology, theft of water from the public and the continuing destruction of the very fabric of the predominantly Black community of Benton Har-

## “Voices of Benton Harbor”

“We can no longer stand back and do nothing. People are dying in Benton Harbor. Whirlpool Corporation will be taking over the Harbor Shores development in 2025. Benton Harbor received no tax dollars from this project. I will stand with Rev Pinkney on May 23, 2020. Occupy the PGA.”

— Quacy

bor, which is already politically disenfranchised and economically impoverished.

Harbor Shores has refused to pay taxes to the city of Benton Harbor on all stolen land—645 acres of which is to become St Joseph land.

We hereby make the following demands on the 2020 Senior PGA:

We demand the cancellation of the tournament in Benton Harbor, MI. Unless these demands are accepted, there will be no

peace.

We want the transfer of 25% of all profits of the 2020 Senior PGA to go to the citizens as partial compensation for stolen land and water for the purpose of meeting budget deficits and building affordable housing for the people of Benton Harbor.

We want you to acknowledge in an announcement at the Senior PGA event that the people of Benton Harbor have been exploited in numerous ways, including the theft of land for profit.



Rev. Edward Pinkney at Martin Luther King event in Detroit.

PHOTO/VALERIE JEAN

The failure to address these grievances and demands publicly at the event will reflect the collusion of the Senior PGA with the ongoing hypocrisy and exploitation of Harbor Shores and Kitchen Aid/Whirlpool Corporation.

Benton Harbor residents need jobs with a living wage, better schools and teachers, affordable housing, political self-determination, true democracy, justice, free-

dom, park land, and a future for our children. We must remember the opposite of rich is not poverty. It is justice.

Join us on May 23, 2020 in Benton Harbor, Michigan at City Hall, 200 Wall Street, at 10:30 a.m. for a mass demonstration. We will have speakers from around the country. Occupy the PGA. Justice for all.



Marchers protesting outside the Democratic Party presidential debates in Detroit in September declared their demands centered on the burning issues facing workers: climate change and Green New Deal, union jobs, racial justice, keep families together, safe water, and more.

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## Film Review: The First Rainbow Coalition

By James Tracy

Filmmaker Ray Santisteban's new documentary, the First Rainbow Coalition, tackles the question of what it takes to build trust and solidarity between oppressed groups in a country atomized by racial capitalism. His cinematic eye is precise as he digs deep into the story of the alliance in the 1960s between the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party, the Puerto Rican Young Lords, and the poor white Young Patriots Organization.

This alliance was a living experiment in building left, multiracial unity while preserving the self-determination. Together these groups challenged police brutality and urban renewal, and built survival programs in Chicago neighborhoods.

Up until recently, this story was hidden in the footnotes of books about the Panthers and the 1960s. Books such as "From the Ballot to the Bullet," (Jakobi Williams) and "Hillbilly Nationalists, Urban Race Rebels, and Black Power."



(Full disclosure: I was the co-author of that book with Amy Sonnie and also appear for twenty seconds in the film.)

Beautifully shot, the film weaves together substantial new interviews with Rainbow Coalition participants. Santisteban is a master of the interview which allows him to build a narrative based on the experiences of the people who built the coalition.

The film makes two major contributions to our understanding of this tendency: ample time to

explore the under-explored Young Lords Organization, and a powerful exposition of state repression leading to the death of Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark. Former Panther Ericka Huggins plays an essential role in setting much of the context of the history, helping the viewer to make sense of the fire and fury of the era. If there are any weaknesses in the film, it is only what was left on the cutting room floor. Few of the women who directly participated in the Rainbow Coalition are directly interviewed

here. Some of the mentions of the forces that brought together the coalition are far too brief.

This film could not have come at a better time. With the racist far-right ascendant again (with a friend in the White House), the story of the Rainbow Coalition contains the threat of a good example. The fact that it existed, even briefly, gives evidence that with patient organizing and alliance building, racism can be challenged and open up a political space for new possibilities.