

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

May/June 2021, VOL. 48, NO. 4

peopletribune.org

WE CAN STOP THE RISE OF A POLICE STATE

Celebrating in Minneapolis after the guilty verdict of former cop that killed George Floyd.
Photo / Louie Tran



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Thank you!

Words from Visionaries

"This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, and no room for fear. We do language. That is how civilizations heal." — *Toni Morrison*



"It is now highly feasible to take care of everybody on Earth at a higher standard of living than any have ever known. It no longer has to be you or me. Selfishness is unnecessary. War is obsolete. It is a matter of converting the high technology from weaponry to livingry." — *Buckminster Fuller*

About the People's Tribune

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 a 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. Ultimately, 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.

Articles that are unsigned, such as the cover story and editorials, reflect the views of the editorial board. Bylined articles reflect the views of the authors, and may or may not reflect the views of the editorial board.

Editorial staff: Bob Lee, Editor, Ran Dibble, Chris Mahin, Sarah Menefee, Sandy Reid, Cathy Talbott.

On the anniversary of George Floyd's death: One cop jailed; fight for justice continues!

These photos are of people taking to the streets in Minneapolis during the trial of Derek Chauvin in April, 2021, for the murder of George Floyd, and of the victory celebrations once the verdict, GUILTY, GUILTY, GUILTY, GUILTY! was read. "Derek Chauvin is the first white police officer in the history of Minnesota to be charged and tried in a courtroom for the murder of a Black man, despite that Black, Native, Indigenous, Hispanic, Latinx and Asian people are disproportionately murdered at a higher rate," wrote photographer Brad Sigal. "We will not rest until we see all four of George Floyd's killers taken off the streets, and our communities have the power to decide who polices our communities and how our communities are policed," said Move for Justice News, a group of local Twin Cities photojournalists, some of whom have photographs on this page.

— The Editors

Guilty, Guilty, Guilty!



Photo / Brad Sigal



Photo / Louie Tran



Photo / Phil Ward



Photo / Brad Sigal



Photo / Phil Ward



Photo / Louie Tran



Photo / Louie Tran

We can stop the rise of a police state

From the Editors

In what many considered a surprise move, a Minnesota jury in late April convicted former police officer Derek Chauvin of all three counts of murder and manslaughter for his sadistic killing of George Floyd in May 2020.

The decision was rightly celebrated in the streets as a victory for the people. As the same time, many people sense that the fight for justice is far from over, and that we all still need to fight the continuing moves toward a police state — a society where every move made by people to better their lives could be violently suppressed.

Prosecutors tried to portray Chauvin as an exception — one “bad apple.”

The truth is that a cop getting convicted for killing a civilian is the aberration — not the murdering of civilians by cops.

From 2013 until 2019, only 25 cops who killed civilians were convicted of a crime — out of 7,666 officers. In 99% of the cases, there were no charges at all. People are demanding a system where this will never happen again.

To get the systemic change millions of us need, we must go to the root of the problem. From the beginning, policing in this country has been designed to keep the wealthiest firmly in control. Specifically, policing in North America began as an inseparable part of preserving the system of slavery. We can draw a direct line from the horrors of pre-Civil War times to the modern era. In the South, slave patrols were used to stop runaway slaves. In the North, the predecessors to the police focused on repressing any rebellion or strike by free laborers.



Joy in Minneapolis after the verdict in the trial of Derek Chauvin, who was convicted of killing George Floyd.

Photo / Brad Sigal

Emphasizing that police departments are descendants of the slave patrols, more activists called for defunding the police after the police murders of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile in 2016. Grassroots leaders point out that police departments soak up anywhere from 25% to 50% of the general fund in many U.S. cities. For example, in Baltimore, for every dollar the police get, the schools receive only 55 cents. (Jobs programs get a nickel, while substance abuse, mental health, and violence prevention programs receive a mere one cent each.) People are demanding the defunding of the police and the refunding of our communities. That means taking money away from this system where it's failing and putting money where it will succeed, building long-term public safety and an economy for everyone, with the ultimate goal of abolishing the police.

Some may consider that ultimate goal far-fetched. One year ago, many would have deemed it unlikely that tens of millions of people would rise up in protest against the killing of a then-unknown Black man named George Floyd. However, they did. And this massive movement of outraged people showed its power when Derek Chauvin was led out of a courtroom in handcuffs. The development of this movement shows that we the people have the power to demand that this country's resources be used to construct a new society that cares for its people, instead of for repression. We can, and we must, defund and abolish the prison-industrial complex. We can stop the rise of a police state. It's up to all of us to fashion a new future.



Photo / Phil Ward

May 4, 1886 - Police attack at Haymarket Square: May Day was born in the fight against killer cops!

By **Chris Mahin**

"[M]y blood was boiling ... seeing men, women and children fired upon, people who were not armed, fired upon by policemen."

Those words sound as current as today's news. In fact, August Spies, a leader of Chicago's working class, spoke them in a Chicago courtroom in 1886. He and six co-defendants were being framed – falsely accused of murder. They had been singled out because they had dared to oppose police brutality and had helped organize a nationwide strike on May 1, 1886.

The framing of Spies and his co-defendants set off a chain of events which ultimately led to May 1 being celebrated as May Day. But while May Day began in part because of the strike for the eight-hour day on May 1, 1886, it also has deep roots in the fight against killer cops.

KILLER COPS IN CHICAGO

When August Spies told the court that his blood "was boiling," it was because of what he had seen firsthand. On May 3, 1886, cops attacked workers at the McCormick Reaper factory, killing at least two strikers. Outraged, Spies and other labor leaders composed a flyer calling for a rally to "denounce the latest atrocious act of the police" — to be held the next day at Haymarket Square.

As that peaceful rally was ending, 176 cops moved in to halt it. Then someone threw a bomb, killing one policeman. The cops began firing wildly. In the days that followed, the police unleashed a reign of terror, arresting and even torturing militant workers.

August Spies and seven other labor leaders were charged with being accessories to murder and with a general conspiracy to murder. Most had not even been present when the bomb was thrown.

Tried before a biased judge and jury, the defendants were convicted. Seven were sentenced to hang. (An eighth, Oscar Neebe, was sentenced to 15 years at hard labor.)

Albert Parsons, George Engel, Adolph Fischer, and August Spies were hanged in November 1887.

On July 14, 1889 – the 100th anniversary of the storming of the Bastille – the International Labor Congress in Paris adopted a proposal to declare the first of May to be International Labor Day and a day to remember the "Martyrs of Chicago."

Today, as police killings of the impoverished and the marginalized – especially Black and Brown workers – intensify, truly honoring the Haymarket martyrs means demanding justice for all those cut down by police violence, including the most recent victims – whether they died on picket lines,



Adam Toledo — 13 years old — was killed in March 2021 by Chicago police just a few blocks from where cops killed strikers during the labor upheaval of 1886.

PHOTO / [SARAH-JI RHEE](#)

outside convenience stores, or in neighborhoods. We should never forget that in March 2021 a Chicago cop killed 13-year-old Adam Toledo just a few blocks west of where cops killed McCormick Reaper strikers in May 1886.

This year, let's demand that the killer cops of today be held accountable. The Haymarket martyrs understood full well that murdering cops serve the interests of the exploiters. They were committed to uniting workers of all ethnicities to wrest control of society from those exploiters. Perhaps the true spirit of May Day can be summed up best in the words of Haymarket defendant Oscar Neebe. The last words of his autobiography read simply: "I call on all workingmen or working women of all nationalities and all countries to unite and down with your oppressors."

The people defy the attempts to silence them

By **Bob Lee**

In the past year, the people have taken up both the vote and the mass street protest in record numbers to defend themselves against police violence, racism, and an encroaching police state, and to demand that government meet their needs for jobs, housing, health care, water and more.

The corporate billionaires who run this country have fought to dismantle democracy for decades. That their effort is now intensifying is no surprise, given how the capitalist system is failing people, and that a broad movement for transformational change is rising in response. Today the people's fight revolves around defending the right to vote and the right to protest.

As the 2022 and 2024 elections loom, key Republican-controlled battleground states such as Florida and Texas have been focal points, and the exclusion of Black voters has been the strategic focus of the attack on everyone's voting rights. At least 404 voting-restriction bills have been introduced in 48 state legislatures and 25 have already become law. At the same time, 843 state bills have been introduced to improve voting access. At the federal level, the fight is around ending the filibuster in the Senate so federal voting rights legislation, which would block many of the state restrictions, can be passed.

A woman named Catherine recently tweeted her defiance of efforts to restrict the vote by saying, "Let's do what my grand-



Washington, DC.
Photo / Yashmori

daddy said to do, give them The Big Pay Back. Let's go vote again in big numbers, bigger than before."

Defending the right to protest is another major front of battle. More than 90 anti-protest bills have been introduced in 35 states. Some include provisions giving immunity to those who kill protesters. The recently passed Florida bill is one of the most dangerous examples of the effort to criminalize protest. Rachel Gilmer, co-director of Dream Defenders in Florida, told Teen Vogue recently that "Under this law, anyone who tears down the Confederate flag could get 15 years in prison — yet George Zimmerman didn't spend a day in jail for killing Trayvon Martin. The absurdity and injustice of a Confederate flag meaning more than a Black child's life is absolutely disgusting."

Evictions: 'I'm praying I receive help'

From the **Editors**

Leylany, a 29-year-old resident of the Pico-Union area in Los Angeles, told Spectrum News 1 recently about the crisis the pandemic imposed on her family. They lost their jobs and savings, and now they are seven months behind on rent and facing eviction. They are hoping for emergency help from the government, including the city. "I'm praying I receive that help, because if we don't, I don't know what's going to happen," she said.

A pandemic eviction moratorium issued by the Centers for Disease Control, which protected at least some renters, is set to continue only to June 30, unless it is further extended. And the moratorium is now in jeopardy because of court rulings challenging the CDC's authority to issue it. Tens of thousands of people have already been evicted since the pandemic began. Millions more face eviction when the moratorium, such as it is, expires. And this rent delay — which is not rent forgiveness — leaves many with a huge back rent they must pay when the moratorium expires, or face eviction. Billions of dollars in assistance promised to tenants (which is not enough) has still not reached those who need it, while many large landlords have

reaped huge profits during the crisis.

By one estimate, 12 million renters are behind an average of \$5,000 each on rent. Homeless activists and advocates are reporting a large jump in the number of people newly entering

homelessness in the past year. Many groups are calling for rent cancellation. The LA Tenants Union is calling on Los Angeles tenants "to choose food not rent and demand rent forgiveness for the duration of the crisis."

A Boston activist, Marvin Martin, told a reporter there recently that things were bad for tenants before the pandemic. "We can't go back to the way things were," he said. "We've got to decrease the cost of housing. We've got to decrease the cost of living. We've got to tear everything down and start over again."

Housing is a human right. We need a halt to all evictions, cancel the back rent, and a national housing guarantee for all.



Cancel the rent rally last year in Washington, DC.

Stop the attacks on Austin's unhoused people!

By [Stop the Sweeps Austin](#)



Photo / [Stop the Sweeps Austin](#)

AUSTIN, TX — Last Saturday we marched on Matt Mackowiak's office, the genocide-supporting Republican strategist behind Prop B and Save Austin Now.

We first rallied at the Texas State Capitol with a small camp tent, and distributed literature against Prop B and the myriad of other repressive unlawful measures that aim to criminalize or otherwise force our street friends and neighbors to put up with displacement, coercion, targeting and abuse by the City of Austin and the State agents. Police showed up briefly at the end, but we continued to take the street and the intersection outside the home of Save Austin Now.

Prop B, the proposal put up in the brightest lights, would not only bring back a city-wide camping ban (currently, camping is mostly just banned near shelters), it would unconstitutionally make several prohibitions: Establish no rest for anyone (no sit/no lie) in the zones downtown and near the University of Texas campus; ban "panhandling" (free speech) — 'flying a sign' [panhandling with a sign] — overnight; potentially close parks to all poor people.

There is a quieter more predictable victory being organized by the genocidists of the Texas Legislature. HB 1925 and SB 987 are both bills working their way through the House and Senate that would deny funding to cities that relax camping bans. All of these laws are steeped in Austin's racist past of vagrancy laws aimed at people of color.

The city's current strategy to clear camps, the HEAL initiative, is just one of these. This program is currently targeting four camps containing a couple hundred people with "housing" that consists of hotels staffed by almost a dozen police officers each, with only 50 rooms currently available. Once people at a camp are "housed", the camp will be permanently "closed" to keep Austin from seeing the future houselessness created by the City's hyper-development/hyper-inflated high-rise condos real estate market, poverty wages, and a profit-centered ineffective healthcare system.

We called out all of these programs and more for their dehumanizing approach to people suffering the economically and socially-determined ills of houselessness. We will not accept the further abuse of our friends and neighbors.

Thanks to allies from the Challenger Street Newspaper, Downtown Camp, ATX Camp Support, Concordia Co-op, Star Power Black Collective, Little Petal Alliance, and Homes Not Handcuffs.

For a more detailed version of this article, please see [People's Tribune Latest News](#).

Meditation

By [Johnavalos Rios](#)

LOS ANGELES, CA — I was meditating at the LA River/Los Feliz Blvd. The great blue heron flew by and told me to make some more tamales for the young homeless dudes in the tents. They might also need some packs of underwear. They are not criminals but need help. I guess I gotta take a quick drive to East Los to buy the masa and hojas de elote.

One kid, Carlos, a filipino, asked me to bring some tamales. He and a tall 20-something dark Black man have been living in the drain tunnels for quite some time. At least they get to be one with the birds. The beautiful geese seem to live with them. The river is indeed being taken care of by the city and the animals are thriving. I love it. The trash from the rainstorm is regularly cleaned up by crews in large trucks. I am glad the wealthy homeowners of Atwater Village are not sending evil cops to abuse these survivors in tents. They are trying to understand and bring food for the homeless as well.

Editor's Note: Artist, dancer and educator Johnavalos Rios says of himself: "I have been starting a journal on searching for housing as a gay, disabled senior with a little dog and a monthly Social Security check that won't get me anywhere in Tongva [the original inhabitants of the Los Angeles basin] Land."

Palestine and the global fight against oppression

From the Editors

As this is written, people across America and the world are demanding that Israel stop its brutal oppression of the Palestinians.

In a recent article in Truthout, Lea Kayali, a Palestinian community activist and writer, noted that the dispossession of Palestinians that began in 1947 and 1948 (the Nakba) when Zionist militias violently drove three-quarters of a million Palestinians from their homes (including her grandparents), is still continuing today. She also pointed out that the “U.S. finances the Israeli military with a colossal \$3.8 billion annually,” and that American police departments “waste public resources sending officers to Israel to learn strategies for increasing the discrimination, surveillance and harassment already faced by our communities.”

Kayali said, “The average American pays about as much to Israel’s murder machine as they do toward the public library system. All of this money should be going into our communities instead.” Americans “should decry the ongoing catastrophe wrought against Palestinians not only because we are funding it, but also because opposing this violence is the right thing to do,” she wrote. She urged readers to support the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, and to encourage their congressional representatives to halt all aid to Israel.

Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, a Palestinian-American, spoke on the House floor May 13. These are excerpts: “If we are to make good on our promises to support equal human rights for all it is our duty to end the apartheid system that for decades has subjected Palestinians to inhumane treatment and racism, reducing Palestinians to live in utter fear and terror of losing a child, being indefinitely detained or killed. . . .As Palestinians talk about our history, know that many of my Black neighbors and Indigenous communities may not know what we mean by Nakba [Catastrophe], but they do understand what it means to be killed, expelled from your home, your land, made homeless and stripped of your human rights. . . .”



Chicago, IL.

Photo / Sarah-Ji Rhee



Palestinian Youth Movement, Detroit Chapter, speaker tells crowd: “We cannot be marching in the streets saying Free Palestine and not also saying Black Lives Matter, and all the walls have to go, from the US to Palestine to Mexico. When you’re saying Free Palestine, you’re also saying free everyone else, because the same Israeli military police that we know as the militia trains this police [here].”

Dearborn, MI. Video Still, Detroit Will Breathe

“We all deserve freedom, liberty, peace, and justice, and it should never be denied because of our faith or ethnic background. No child, Palestinian or Israeli, whoever they are, should ever have to worry that death will rain from the sky. . . . Meanwhile, Palestinians’ rights to non-violent resistance have been curtailed and even criminalized. Our party leaders have spoken forcefully against BDS, calling its proponents anti-Semitic, despite the same tactics being critical to ending the South African apartheid mere decades ago. What we are telling Palestinians fighting apartheid is the same thing being told to my Black neighbors and Americans throughout that are fighting against police brutality here: ‘there is no form of acceptable resistance to state violence’. . . .”

“I stand before you not only as a Congresswoman for the beautiful 13th district, but also as a proud daughter of Palestinian immigrants and the granddaughter of a loving Palestinian grandmother, living in the occupied Palestine. You take that and you combine it with the fact that I was raised in one of the most beautiful, blackest cities in America, a city where movements for civil rights and social justice are birthed, the city of Detroit. So I can’t stand silent when injustice exists, where the truth is obscured. If there’s one thing Detroit instilled in this Palestinian girl from Southwest it’s that you always speak truth to power, even if your voice shakes. The freedom of Palestinians is connected to the fight against oppression all over the world.”

In praise of long lines

The following is a shortened version of the original story.
By [Elena Herrada](#)

As an elder in Detroit, I regret that younger people will not know the feeling of waiting in lines for the things The State imposed on us.

As a young pregnant woman from Detroit at a time when auto factory shut downs required workers to go to the Unemployment Offices, a whole world opened up to me. I waited in the snaking line outside of the office on Michigan and Clark, around the corner from the Cadillac plant in Detroit and across the street from UAW Local 22.

Outside, people played the shell game. People stood around them and watched for hours as the experts moved the shells around between three cans. I saw people lose their whole two weeks checks. Vendors sold African clothing, food, books, records, tapes. Anything could be found outside the unemployment office, legal and illegal.

When I was nursing my first-born child, the sound of any baby crying would bring in the milk. I turned to a man holding an infant and asked if I could feed him. The man quickly agreed to release his screaming baby to me. I exited the bathroom with a sleeping child and a roar of applause from the crowd.

That was in 1979 and layoffs were all over the country. Detroit was hit hard and lots of people went to the unemployment office every two weeks. We organized potlucks and had conversations about life, about Beloved Detroit and how we would survive the brutal winter. People of all ages and races waited together as we discussed the state of the world. Chicanos often translated for people who didn't speak English. It was a time.

Secretary of State was another important venue. The lines are always long and filled with people who cannot get tag renewals online. There's a huge class distinction between those who renew by mail or online and those who go to LA Insurance on the day of their tags' expiration and get the one-week certificate for a huge amount of money and then their



tags. Some racist from Michigan presented legislation outlawing immigrants' right to drive without a social security number; for years I had tags in my name for workers who simply needed to get to work. I entered Secretary of State with a stack of titles and got tags for a fleet of hoopties. On my birthday every year, the fleet would arrive in front of my house and we would put tags on cars. The State criminalized us all.

The insurance industry in Detroit is an apartheid project. We pay up to ten times more for car insurance than our suburban (Read: White) counterparts. Cars get stolen, smashed, damaged and we get nothing but the right to drive. Countless immigrants have lost their cars to predator impounds.

In the Secretary of State office on Bagley, which I have affectionately referred to as the Mexican festival, important conversations are had involving all manner of people waiting for their number to be called. Once a Latina woman said in Spanish that she was going to wait in line for the Latina (Spanish speaking worker) to wait on her as the Black worker behind the desk waited with no one in her line. I asked her if she speaks English, why not go to the English speaker? She said she didn't want to deal with a Black worker and I said, "You must be pretty unhappy in Detroit." This started a very lively conversation from Mexicans who did not speak English and were newly arrived and had no guideposts for conversations on race.

It was one of the most transformative moments I have ever had in my life in these trenches. A Black and Brown conversation ensued in absolute joy. All kinds of questions about why people came here, when, what life was like. People shared their experiences and I got to translate a lot of that conversation between my Spanglish and other bilingual volunteers who came out of the woodwork to join this rare discussion.

Revolution and redemption can be fomented in the long lines of The State. I miss talking to strangers at the predatory Water Department, at monopoly DTE, at the brutal Secretary of State. It's a sweet life in Detroitistan if you know where to look.

Elena Herrada is a long-time fighter and leader who stands for the people of Detroit in their struggle for survival against the corporate power structure.



[Elena Herrada with her grandson.](#)
Photo / Facebook.

Our communities can get us herd immunity

Guest Editorial by **Kathy Powers**

CHICAGO, IL — There is a simple, cost-effective solution readily available to get us herd immunity that Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot refuses to implement and acknowledge.

The “Take the Vaccine to the People” Chicago City Ordinance was introduced by Alderman Sigcho-Lopez and ten cosponsors on March 24, 2021 because vaccines are not being made accessible to many poor communities. Dr. Howard Ehrman and Dr. Barbara J. Norman, former Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) officers under Mayor Harold Washington, suggested this plan (which could be implemented in any city or state nationwide):

- Create walk up friendly, accessible sites in neighborhood schools, parks, churches, and other well-known, trusted facilities, prioritizing the 26 Chicago High COVID Vulnerability Communities, one site per square mile, staffed by new (CDPH) nurses, nursing assistants and community health organizers, recruited from the African American and Latino neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID infections and deaths. With existing CDPH staff, fixed, permanent sites would be opened 12 hours/day, 7 days/week. Residents could either walk-in without appointments or make appointment by phone or online in the neighborhood’s native language(s)**.
- Form Community Health Brigades to work door to door, to educate, organize neighborhoods, contact trace, test, and vaccinate the infirm in their homes. This initiative would rapidly achieve the 90% vaccination rate that Dr. Fauci confirmed is needed for herd immunity.
- Thirdly, Workplace Health Brigades would use OSHA COVID-19 risk guidelines to go into public and private workplaces to vaccinate workers.

Instead, here is how non-community involvement vaccination distribution works:

- 12/11/2020 — The COVID-19 vaccinations for public use were approved by the CDC.
- 12/14/2020 — The first COVID-19 vaccine given in Chicago.
- 04/20/2021 — Mayor Lightfoot bemoaned that 40% of Chicagoans have received at least one COVID-19 vaccination at her Chicago State University site visit. She noted the number drops to 25% for African Americans.
- 04/27/2021 — Dr. Allison Arwady, MD, MPH, Commissioner of the CDPH, announced that this will be the last week for walk-in appointments at United Center. Starting Tuesday.
- 05-04-2021 — the drive-thru* site will only use the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine, and then only for a week.
- 04/29/2021 — The mayor announced, “Our progress since COVID-19 first hit our city makes this smart, safe reopening possible. Chicago Bulls and Chicago Blackhawks fans, welcome back to the United Center! Let’s go. #OpenChicago.”
- 05-11/2021— 34.2% of Chicagoans are vaccinated. 34.2% of residents is not even close to herd immunity (The World Health Organization says you need 80-85%).



The vaccinated areas are in the wealthy sections of the city (dark blue)

Image / City of Chicago

It is evident that the current use of private organizations and community pop-up testing and vaccination sites is not getting the job done.

It’s time to rebuild the public health department from the community. This will create more resources, so residents know the vaccines are safe and how to get them. As usual, the people know and can get what they need.

As we go to print, Dr. Howard Ehrman has just said, “156,000 CPS children need to be vaccinated by Sept. 1 before schools can open safely.”

Also as we go to print, the CDC announced fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear masks or maintain social distance in many indoor situations.

*Under 30% of Chicagoans own a vehicle according to governing.com.

**According to US Census data, 25 million people across all racial and ethnic groups in the US are not able to communicate well in English.

Michigan Speaks: Frontline Communities on Lead in Water

The *People's Tribune* water discussion group is presenting a series of webinars on the fight for clean water as a human right. Sponsors include the *People's Tribune/Tribuno del Pueblo*; Our Illinois Revolution; People's Water Board; Denmark Citizens for Safe Water; Youth for Global Health & Social Justice & Walk Around the World for Water; Democracy Defense League, and many others from across the country. The webinars support all communities that want to help build a powerful movement for water as life. See videos on our [YouTube Channel](#). Below are excerpts from testimony from the second webinar, on Michigan fighting lead in the water. As co-host Nayyirah Shariff points out in the opening, lead is a neurotoxin and there is no safe level. And in Michigan, the takeover of certain cities by State-appointed emergency managers who served corporate interests and denied democracy set the stage for these cities to have poisoned and unaffordable water, and for the attempted privatization of water. Communities became democracy sacrifice zones, but not without a fight that continues to this day.

Claire McClinton, Democracy Defense League (Flint): I send you greetings from the occupied and poisoned city of Flint, MI! A lot of journalists and media came and went ... But the People's Tribune stayed with us in the trenches and



I thank you for that. The *Markets Insider Magazine* published a headline: "Water Futures Set to Join Likes of Gold and Oil and Trade on Wall Street for First Time Ever." They will not be retreating from seizing ownership and control of public water. This should caution us as we go forward in our fights to just get a glass of clean water. For seven years we have demanded restorative justice for Flint: We demanded they abolish the Emergency Manager Law...instead...we got saddled with bond debt... their purpose [which resulted in the poisoning was] to seize public assets, water being number 1. [We demanded] clean water. What did we get? Service line replacement, but... the private replacement was like drinking dirty water with a clean straw...We still have 500 residents who have not had lead lines replaced. Our next demand was accessible, affordable water. [Instead] we paid among the highest water rates in the nation. Our next demand was education. In Flint, the learning disability rose 57% because of lead contamination. We demanded they provide our children with things they need to cope. We have not got any of that yet... We demanded Medicare for all. [Instead] we got a temporary expansion of Medicaid, but no guarantees that our medical needs will be met now [or] in the future... Lead poisoning is generational... our children's children may be impacted by the poisoning...

Rev. Edward Pinkney, President, Community Water Council (Benton Harbor): Benton Harbor is a very small city...nobody really cared about the city. Even the elected officials... only cared about what they could get from Whirlpool Corporation, [headquartered in Benton Harbor]. If it wasn't for Flint, we wouldn't be talking about the water. They knew it was bad in Benton Harbor in 2010...under the emergency manager...They didn't care until one young man, 10 or 11... got sick. They...discovered he had more lead in his body than 10 people would have had, and eventually he died, but they didn't say he got it from the water... this is how the Community Water Council was born. Emma Kinnard [and I] went and got two pints of water and took them to city hall and gave them to the mayor...he refused to have them tested. [That's when] the Community Water Council went out and got 75 sample water tests and sent it to the University of Michigan biological lab, and discovered the water was undrinkable. You shouldn't have ONE drop of lead in your drinking water..."



Gracie Wooten, Highland Park, Member, Highland Park Human Rights Coalition:

In 2017, as a result of the Michigan Lead and Copper Rule [revisions], the levels of lead made Highland Park part of an action level...In Highland Park the infrastructure is old...Like other Michigan cities, HP has suffered under the financial managers...Being an auto town, it suffered from the disinvestment in the auto industry... When the water plant opened in 1914, Highland Park was still a village....Corporations have been running from one city to another to increase production and get more profit... By 2000 we had our first emergency manager...[they] dissolved city unions, the police department was farmed out, building after building closed down and they tried to privatize the water department. The Human Rights Coalition was established around that time... 50% of the people couldn't pay their water bill...Highland Park was under emergency management for nine years...[and is] still suffering from emergency management and disinvestment... Nothing in the city was fixed, it's rotting, no repairs on the water department... Gov. Snyder... would not repair it, the Highland Park water department shut. Right now we have problems...with service lines [and] the water mains keep breaking...The pipes are over 100 years old, estimates are over 80% are lead. It's criminal what's being done to us. As a result of what the original human rights coalition did, we do have a water affordability plan...



Roslyn Walker, Detroit, Member,

People's Water Board: There's over 80,000 lead service lines in Detroit . . . they are servicing water to homes built back in 1945. Detroit Water and Sewage came up with a water upgrade to replace lead pipes and doing water main lines and water and sewer lines; so with that, the cost was going to be on the residents. Rates kept going up after that; they still installing water main replacement as they call it, they were installing plastic zip lines, [a plastic liner that they] install in the pipe, not replacing the pipe. With them doing that, they're shaking up these pipes... different dirt ... then you've got lines to the house ... and lead faucets in the house... so residents have to pay for those things to be done...also replaced blue water hoses for service to go into homes. They also gave residents pitchers to drink out of with filters that wasn't certified, and only gave people one filter with one pitcher... So I got me some flyers, and knocked on people's doors... said they didn't tell you about lead piping... so I educated these residents in the community. From there we've been out ever since 2011-12, now 2021 and here in a pandemic... And they got a plan where you pay \$25 toward your water bill if you can't pay the whole bill, but they getting loans to fix all this infrastructure and these pipes, and residents have to pay. So we still losing out; still need the water affordability plan which we have come up with. They overlook that for years, then...the emergency manager came in and took over. No one is helping residents at all, you have to buy bottled water, no one wants to drink contaminated water. I want everyone in the whole US to know.... We need to grab ahold and make these corporate people pay for what they're doing to our system.



ON WHAT TO DO NOW TO CHANGE THINGS:

Nayyirah Shariff: This is like racial capitalism and disaster capitalism playing out in real time, because this is going to be the model of other communities facing environmental devastation from corporations ... in collusion with their government. And this is showing that poor people don't matter. Black people don't matter. Latino, Latin, Latinx, Hispanic people don't matter.



Roslyn: Don't matter what color. It's the rich class. Corporate class. Detroit Water and Sewage have a \$500 million plan to fix the infrastructure and they are making us pay for that. We are paying back money that Detroit Water and Sewage owed to these corporations.

Bishop Jefferson: And the emergency manager was just put in the cities that were predominantly Black and Brown people. There were other cities that have financial problems ...



Claire McClinton: We need to keep building coalitions and keep building networks like with these webinars and also do some digging [so people know who the real enemy is]. Whatever your water issue is, ask yourself who benefits from what is being done to the water. We know in Flint the bond holders are JP Morgan, Stifel, and Wells Fargo. . . the system of privatization is what's driving our sky high water bills up . . . we are paying for bonds,

not water. ... Now the city of Flint is getting \$99 million with the COVID relief package; we see an opportunity to reverse some things the emergency manager did, and establish water affordability and reverse privatization. We're going to prohibit water shut offs in the city of Flint. And we're going to say: "It's our money. And you're going to use that money how we want it used for our needs."

Bishop: They try to divide and conquer. They're going to try to pull you to their side and get you off their trail to keep you from exposing what they're doing, who they're doing it to, who they're trying to tear down. And so, one thing we have said here in Michigan is if we have to go to South Carolina, to Benton Harbor, to Washington, D.C., wherever we have to go to stand up and fight with those who are struggling, we're going to do it. So that together we shall win.



Cartoon by Andy Willis

I Want the Wide American Earth

By **Carlos Bulosan** - 1913-1956

Before the brave, before the proud builders and workers,
I say I want the wide American earth,
Its beautiful rivers and long valleys and fertile plains,
Its numberless hamlets and expanding towns and towering cities,
Its limitless frontiers, its probing intelligence,
For all the free.

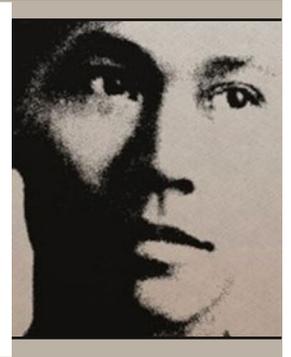
Free men everywhere in my land—
This wide American earth—do not wander homeless,
And are not alone; friendship is our bread, love our air;
And we call each other comrade, each growing with the other,
Each a neighbor to the other, boundless in freedom.

I say I want the wide American earth....
I say to you defenders of freedom, builders of peace,
I say to you democratic brothers, comrades of love:
Their judges lynch us, their police hunt us;
Their armies and navies and airmen terrorize us;
Their thugs and stoolies and murderers kill us;
They take away bread from our children;
They ravage our women;
They deny life to our elders.

But I say we have the truth
On our side, we have the future with us;
We are millions everywhere,
on seas and oceans and lands;
In air;
On water and all over this very earth.
We are millions working together.
We are building, creating, molding life.
We are shaping the shining structures of love.
We are everywhere, we are everywhere.
We are there when they sentence us to prison for telling the truth;
We are there when they conscript us to fight their wars;
We are there when they throw us in concentration camps;
We are there when they come at dawn with their guns.
We are there, we are there,
and we say to them:

"You cannot frighten us with your bombs and deaths;
You cannot drive us away from our land with your hate and disease;
You cannot starve us with your war programs and high prices;
You cannot command us with your nothing,
Because you are nothing but nothing;
You cannot put us all in your padded jails;
You cannot snatch the dawn of life from us!"

Carlos Bulosan (1913-1956), a Filipino-American writer and union activist, wrote this poem in the early 1950s to help the legal defense of union leaders persecuted during the McCarthy period. We reprint it as part of commemoration of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month (May 1 - 31). — *The Editors*



And we say to them:

"Remember, remember,
We shall no longer wear rags, eat stale bread, live in darkness;
We shall no longer kneel on our knees to your false gods;
We shall no longer beg you for a share of life.
Remember, remember,
O remember in the deepest midnight of your fear,
We shall emulate the wonder of our women,
The ringing laughter of our children,
The strength and manhood of our men
With a true and honest and powerful love!"

And we say to them:

"We are the creators of a flowering race!"
I say I want the wide American earth.
I say to you too, sharer of my delights and thoughts,
I say this deathless truth,
And more—

For look, watch, listen:

With a stroke of my hand I open the dawn of a new world,
Lift up the beautiful horizon of a new life;
All for you, comrade and my love.

See:

The magnificent towers of our future is afire with truth,
And growing with the fuel of the heart of my heart,
and unfolding and unfolding, and flowering and flowering
In the bright new sun of our world;
All for you, comrade and my wife.

And see:

I cry, I weep with joy,
And my tears are the tears of my people....

Before the brave, before the proud builders and workers,
I say I want the wide American earth
For all the free,
I want the wide American earth for my people,
I want my beautiful land.
I want it with my rippling strength and tenderness
Of love and light and truth
For all the free—

"I Want the Wide American Earth" ca. 1950. Copyright © Carlos Bulosan.

Biden administration deports 300,000 in first 100 days

Editor's note: The following is excerpted from an article published April 27, 2021, at [Common Dreams](http://CommonDreams.org) by [Jake Johnson](#).

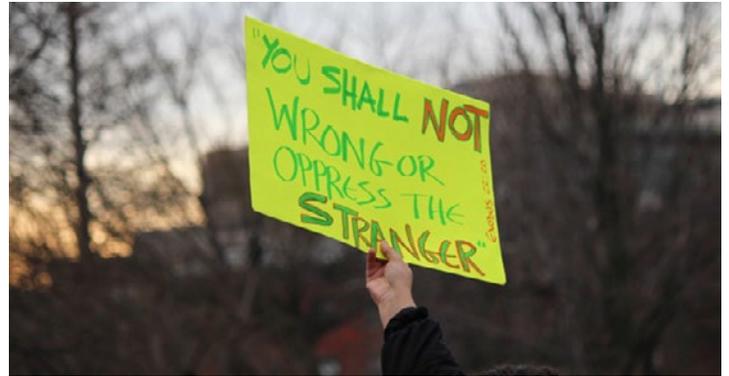
Rights group United We Dream warned April 27 that unless he takes immediate steps to improve his administration's treatment of immigrants, President Joe Biden is at serious risk of repeating the destructive failures of former President Barack Obama, who deported roughly three million people during his eight years in office.

Despite Biden's characterization of Obama's mass deportations as a "mistake" and pledge to usher in a more humane immigration system, United We Dream estimates that the administration has deported just over 300,000 people since January—largely using a Trump-era policy called Title 42.

The policy was first issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in March 2020—at the start of the coronavirus pandemic—and has been kept in place by the Biden administration. As Human Rights Watch (HRW) explained earlier this month, "The Title 42 expulsion policy has effectively closed the U.S. border to nearly all asylum seekers based on the misapplication of an obscure, 75-year-old public health law."

Cynthia Garcia of United We Dream stressed that "Title 42 was designed under one of the most anti-immigrant administrations in modern history."

"President Biden and the Department of Homeland Security must be reminded that their inaction to protect vulnerable immigrant communities seeking refuge in the U.S. is not only putting lives on the line; it upholds a white nationalist immigration system that seeks to expel and keep Black and brown immigrants



Protest against the immoral treatment of immigrant families, 2017
Photo/Joe Flood

out at any cost," said Garcia, who voiced dismay at the Biden administration's deportation of vulnerable Haitians and others. According to a report released late last month by the Haitian Bridge Alliance and other advocacy groups, the Biden administration used Title 42 to deport more Haitians during its first weeks in power than the Trump administration did in all of Fiscal Year 2020.

"Reflecting on his time as vice president, President Biden acknowledged that the Obama administration was wrong in deporting over 2.5 million people and vowed to never make that mistake again when he took office," Garcia continued. "President Biden is well on track to repeat history. Now, he must make a choice: repeat the mistakes of the Obama administration or do everything in his power to end the cruelty of detentions, expulsions, and deportations and show that he is a president of his word."

See full article at [Common Dreams](http://CommonDreams.org).

Cinco de Mayo memories . . .

By [Crystal Rose Sanchez](#)

Been a tough day.

So a little of my family history. This is my grandma. Her grandma (my great great grandma) use to hide Poncho Villa. He was on the run from the law. My great great uncles fought with him. Their names are on a memorial wall in Mexico. My great great grandmother was a shero in her own sense. She brought in revolutionary guerrilla fighters, fed them, housed them. She had six children of her own. Three boys, three girls. The girls ended up going to New Mexico, then to Arizona to Catholic school. The boys went to military school. She sent them here for a better life. My family has struggled but worked hard.



One of my earliest memories is when I was about eight-years-old. It was Cinco de Mayo. I had two braids with red white and red ribbons hanging all the way down my back. I remember being so excited and nervous. I was dressed in my beautifully made (by my great Grandma) folklorico skirt and shirt. I had little heels. As we got set to dance down the La Cienega Boulevard in LA., I can't even explain the feelings. I twirled my skirt and danced during the march and for hours after. The music and atmosphere was so amazing, happy, festive. Today I was talking to my grandma about it and it reminds me where I come from. It makes me sad that along with this busy life, I have lost my roots, but it also makes me realize why I am who I am. My grandma is pushing 90. And just sitting on this Cinco de Mayo reminds me that life is short. Don't get lost in the day today. Take time while you make your own roots to remember the ones your elders have rooted.

[Crystal Rose Sanchez heads up the Sacramento, CA Homeless Union.](#)