

# PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

SPECIAL PULL-OUT: POETS UNITED TO END HOMELESSNESS | NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2017

## Mission of this poetry pull-out

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

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

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

The poetry pull-out editors,  
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ILLUSTRATION/  
SEAN BROWN

## *Enslaved since an Embryo*

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

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

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

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

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

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

— David Tojin aka Astrow

## *Home, More or Less*

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

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

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

I don't have that now where I reside. I pay 70% of my social security income in rent. The front door of my apartment building, perpetually open, does not bother the landlord. I have broken windows in my unit since 2011 when I moved in. I reported them. They are not fixed. The landlord does not seem to care, although the City of Chicago cited him two years ago for this. Mold and moisture invade my walls. I breathe toxic air daily.

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

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

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

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

— Kathy Powers

## PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE MISSION

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

vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it.

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

We welcome articles and artwork from those who

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

The People's Tribune, formerly published by the League of Revolutionaries for a New America, is now an independent newspaper with an editorial board based in Chicago. For more information please visit [www.peoplestribune.org](http://www.peoplestribune.org)

## ***BUDDIES***

a purple heart in 'Nam  
a room at the "Y"  
thirteen trips to detox  
houses all over town  
you built, before  
you crashed your van  
and lost your business

you have a lot of nerve,  
making fun of my life

— Paul Whittaker

McStarving  
her dog's sign  
says

\*

flame

last year this time  
sleeping out there  
he was so cold he dreamed  
he'd  
spontaneously combusted  
at 4am

jumped up in flame  
and walked around  
the rest of the night  
to keep from freezing  
he said

\*

he blows on his conch shell horn  
the saddest tune  
of his evicted waterfront

call me 'just another John' he said  
a fisherman and crabber  
playing his lugubrious horn

we bailed them out when they screwed us  
that's what this demonstration is about  
says 'just another John'

— Sarah Menefee

## ***In the Eyes of a Child***

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

— Ayat Jalal-Bryant

## ***The Stray***

too many homeless  
too many strays  
they wander the  
streets  
both nights and days

no one to need them  
no one to care  
no food to eat  
no love to share

some misfortune  
altered their life  
now all they know  
is hunger and strife

they ask so little  
they need so much  
a little food  
a loving touch

man and animal  
share the sad plight  
looking for shelter  
in the cold night

drawn together  
by a common foe  
both human and beast  
with nowhere to go

next time you crawl  
into your warm bed  
think of the homeless  
and the un-fed

— Christine Tabaka

## ***My Two Worlds***

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

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

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

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

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

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

— Allen McNair

## ***The Voices in Your Head***

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

It didn't used to be like this,  
she thinks. *Don't enable them,*  
her father used to say.

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

*Hey brother, can you spare a life?*

I don't have any to spare, but  
I'll dig deeper and give 'til  
it hurts you more or less  
than it hurts me.

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

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

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

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

— Sean Murphy

## *Discarded*

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

"Get a job," you mutter.  
Too late, I already have three – all temporary –  
Taking tickets at Husky Stadium,  
Sweeping peanut shells at Safeco Field,  
Pulling weeds from sidewalks in the searing sun.  
You have it backwards, ma'am  
Society is a burden on me.

You tell yourself I must be on crack or meth  
Or cheap burgundy, any drug but the one  
That would pin down my fluttering thoughts  
Like moths under glass.  
It would be too awful if I were sober and sane,  
If I'd had college, marriage, mortgage  
Until I got laid off, until I got sick.

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

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

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

You claim to care.

— Jill Charles

## *Who built the cafés for admiring and not making?*

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

-elf pre or post-appendectomy? Prefer a 2 or til death do you part  
hour erection? Every time I try to throw life away it shows up  
panting, throbbing like the sun, an everlasting matinee I conjure to conjunct  
w/ meaning since I'm already in permanent flirt w/ the sweetest thighs apart

under the Biggest Dipper—have you ever seen it?  
Take a tract to get you through the cosmos entitled "what may already be  
dead" or buy a replica of the cage of my youth, it comes free.  
I like to anthologize irrelevancy I'd like to speak now about speaking's sorcery.

I like the hand against the coffee cup, the thin vault of ceramic between  
Me and enough and the cuffs on a mild businessman's hands clasped,  
opening, folding again and the only so many folds the hands can have  
and you, sole owner of the only set of so many limited time gaps

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

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

I take my hand off the spinning lobe and O My  
the other side as bright as a big thick star—  
sand and thirst and then the dream kept scraw  
smoke and scarf and green eyes awed

sport coats flanked by words on all sides  
TV's that curl up into the lap of your face  
all the consequence fighting just to place  
Marvin Gaye's murder lacing the steamer pried

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

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

— Michael Joseph Garza

It's time to stop talking  
about the problem.  
It's time to stop blaming  
one another.  
It's time to stop thinking  
in black and white.  
It's time to start living  
in color.  
It's time to start helping  
one another.  
It's time to start being  
a solution...

Let Us Rise

— Chase Cinder

## *two haiku*

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

\*

collectively we gather  
together we live  
community is formed

— Debra Lujan  
(AnonaMoma)

Don't be a robot, don't be a sheep.  
Don't be scared to take a leap.  
Freedom isn't free - you must fight for your right.  
In this age of darkness we will find light.

— Julianna Cheng

## *Depart*

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

— Markell Thompson

## *PATH*

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

— Jack Hirschman

## *Untitled*

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

— Hoodraised

## *FOUL FERN*

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

Foul Fern. Her red plastic sandals down Devon Avenue. That's her street and her anger so hot her red plastic sandals nearly melt. The kids hiss and blow stage kisses. Across the street the deli ladies tsk tsk about that poor .... Left her cold, he did ....Hush Tommy! And quit staring.... She just couldn't take it....

On every corner a fresh gust of north wind rumples her hair, picks at the scraps of paper where she writes down all the things she wants to remember before gathering them into her pockets, picks at the scraps of paper till just one is tossed up barely out of her reach.

— Elizabeth Marino

## *Untitled*

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

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

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

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

— John Safari



Pictured: Poet John Safari & Clemmie Williams III.

PHOTO/RICHARD LYNCH

## *Family*

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

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

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

my forever family.

— Doogie Lish Sandtiger