

# PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

FEBRUARY 2013, VOLUME 40, NO. 2

DONATION \$1



City police at the anti-NATO protests in Chicago, where more than one million dollars was spent on riot gear, including assault weapons, for the four-day NATO summit. As the economy deteriorates and protests mount, police departments are increasingly being militarized across the country. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

## INSIDE:

- Third parties on the rise 2
- Foul water and fracked politics 4
- Black History Month 5
- Healthcare for the 99% 7
- Homelessness & housing struggles 8, 9
- Chicago school closings 10

# VIOLENCE IN AMERICA REFLECTS A MILITARIZED SOCIETY

[Read story on page 3](#)



Protesters at the 2012 Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina.

PHOTO/MEREDITH JONES

## Third Parties: *From impulse to imperative*

### EDITORIAL

It is an American belief that our political parties will serve the interests of all Americans—that politicians are to serve the people of America as a whole.

This idea comes from a time in American history where the driving forces of the American economy were small farms, local merchants, and factories, employing the majority of America's workers.

Our economy is changing in fundamental ways, as America's once prolific industrial factory jobs and family farms have nearly completely disappeared due to a globalized economy, more efficient and profitable automated technologies, and advanced communications.

As the economy of America changes, so must the way it is organized politically. In this new American landscape, the Republicans and Democrats (often together through "bipartisan" ef-

orts) are enacting policies that make working people pay dearly for the benefit of the corporations, banks, and very rich—a process of consolidating government with the corporations.

As the government more openly prioritizes corporate profits over the wellbeing of the vast majority of people, voters are left politically voiceless, creating a political vacuum.

This vacuum is illustrated by

---

New third parties are emerging and will continue to as the American people struggle for their needs to be met.

---

fact that about 50% of the electorate does not vote in national elections. Pew exit polls show that out of those who did vote in the 2012 elections, tens of millions were not actually supporting the candidates they voted for: 20% of Obama voters said they were voting *against* Romney

rather than voting for Obama, and 40% of Romney voters said they were not voting for Romney, but *against* Obama.

Increasingly, people see that the major parties are incapable of meeting their needs. Under their rule, the American situation has become increasingly dire, with hunger, homelessness, and unemployment increasing each year, and an environmental crisis that threatens humanity's long-

term existence on this planet. Democratic and Republican politicians are unable to break from the corporations that have created these crises in their relentless pursuit of profits.

Only a third party that is of, by, and for America's working people—completely indepen-

dent from the corporations—is capable of addressing the crises we face. As the major parties continue to alienate themselves from the electorate, third party impulses will increase. Already, the Green Party has outlined a program to address the needs of the people by refocusing America's spending on the green economy, creating new jobs and averting environmental collapse.

New third parties are emerging and will continue to as the American people struggle for their needs to be met, struggle to find a political voice and build power in an America undergoing fundamental changes. They will help us build our independence from corporations and to recognize our collective power as the working class. Combining our efforts with the growing third party impulse is the most important next step we can take to remake America into what we want it to be, a country with a healthy future for all people and our planet.

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.

**PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE EDITORIAL POLICY:** 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.

**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.

**People's Tribune Editor:** Bob Lee

**Editorial Staff:** Bob Brown, Brett Jelinek, Sarah Menefee, Shamako Noble, Chuck Parker, Nelson Peery, Sandra Reid

**Photo Editor:** Daymon Hartley

People's Tribune, P.O. Box 3524  
Chicago, Illinois, 60654  
e-mail: [info@peopletribune.org](mailto:info@peopletribune.org)  
Phone: 773-486-3551  
Toll Free: 800-691-6888  
Fax: 773-486-3552  
Web: [www.peopletribune.org](http://www.peopletribune.org)

**Publisher:** People's Tribune  
ISSN# 1081-4787

**Reach us at:**

**Chicago** 773-486-3551

**Ann Arbor, MI**  
[zetlir@gmail.com](mailto:zetlir@gmail.com)

**Atlanta, GA**  
[atlanta@peopletribune.org](mailto:atlanta@peopletribune.org)

**Carbondale, IL**  
[carbondale@peopletribune.org](mailto:carbondale@peopletribune.org)

**Detroit, MI**  
313-438-6115

**Houston, TX**  
P O Box 231281, Houston, TX 77223-1281

**Los Angeles, CA**  
310-548-6491

**Oakland, CA**  
[oakland@peopletribune.org](mailto:oakland@peopletribune.org)

### WHY THE MOVEMENT NEEDS A PRESS

From the Editors

We are sometimes asked "Why does the movement to build a new America need a press?" The answer has to do with this moment in history. People are struggling just to get the basic necessities of life. Historical forces beyond anyone's control have set the stage for a new society to be built, but from this point on, how things turn out depends on what people think. This means that those of us who are seeking fundamental change are engaged in a battle of ideas, a struggle to win the hearts and minds of the people. If we don't raise the consciousness of the people and unite them around a vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it, then we'll fail in our effort to build a just and free society. To win the battle of ideas, we need a press.

Visit us on the web at [www.PeoplesTribune.org](http://www.PeoplesTribune.org)

# Violence in America reflects a militarized society

## COVER STORY

A little girl sits in a classroom receiving her lesson for the day. Suddenly, through the door enters a man who shoots her teacher and her classmates. In the confusion she lies still among the bodies. When all is quiet, she runs outside, blood soaked, and when she reaches her mother she says, "Mommy, I'm okay but all my friends are dead." The child described the shooter as a very angry man. This account of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Connecticut on December 14, 2012, is from *Wikipedia* and is given by a six-year-old, the only survivor in her class.

As the news shocked the world, the ruling class and their mouthpieces scrambled to sway a public that was asking "why" and searching for answers. Trying not to appear like hypocrites, the professional liars solemnly consoled the victim's families and then presented the problem as one of crazed individuals with too many guns. But isn't it they who have closed down all of the mental health facilities while they arm and militarize not just here, but all over the entire earth?

We spend more money on war and killing than nearly the rest of the world combined. Our rulers dominate the globe with 700 plus military bases in 130 countries. Secret drone assassination warfare has killed more innocent people than the "enemy." A drone strike in Pakistan on October 30, 2006 killed 82 people at a school, including pupils as young as 12, returning to class after a holiday. Our young men and women who join the service hoping for a better life



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

when they get back home, are committing suicide when they return at the rate of almost one per day, haunted by nightmares of the slaughter of the innocent.

And what of the growing numbers of hurting families who have lost loved ones to this kind of violence? Or the hurting and ever increasing destitute and homeless who find death on our streets because of a system that refuses to feed, house, educate and provide health care for anyone it cannot exploit?

The history of the culture of

violence in America rests on an economic foundation, a system of profit. The profit in genocide of the native peoples and theft of their lands. The profit of the human auction block, backed up by the slaver's whip, the lynch rope, and the gun. And with this uncaring system evolved a psychology that says, "I'm for me and the hell with everyone else."

Today, massacres like Sandy Hook are happening more often. Will we be persuaded to further risk the innocent by turning our

schools into prisons, with armed guards, armed teachers, and armed militia outside as is being proposed? Or will we get to the root of the problem and change the economic social system, and with it our psychology, into one that actually cares about all its people. Will we continue along the path of, "From each according to his gullibility, to each according to his greed", or shall we evolve to the higher, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

### Sister/Brother, can you spare \$20?

The People's Tribune brings clarity to the growing movement. It unites the movement around a vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it. It has no paid staff and gets no corporate grants. The paper is financed solely by our readers. We need your support to continue telling the truth.

One-time donations are welcome. If you can spare \$20 a month or more, you'll be a hero. Please make donations payable to People's Tribune and send to P.O. Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654. You can also donate via Paypal at [www.peoplestribune.org](http://www.peoplestribune.org).

People's Tribune  
Editorial Board

## SUBSCRIBE TO THE PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE! ORDER BUNDLES

- Please send me a one-year individual subscription [ \$20 ]
- Please send me a one-year institutional subscription [ \$25 ]
- Please send me a bundle of \_\_\_\_\_ PTs [ at 30 cents per paper ]

### Enclosed is my donation of:

- \$20  \$50  \$75  \$100  \$Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*My check or money order made payable to "People's Tribune" is enclosed. Mail this coupon to: People's Tribune, P.O. Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654-3524*

# DISCARDED AS YESTERDAY'S NEWS

## Women and children in the age of Welfare 'Reform' – It's time to redefine our values!

By Cathy Talbott

CARBONDALE, IL — In her book "Flat Broke with Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform," author and Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies (University of VA) Sharon Hays, writes, "A nation's laws reflect a nation's values. Like all laws, the law reforming welfare operates as a mechanism of social control to deter would-be transgressors and to discipline those who are measured as deviant according to its standards."

Aid to Dependent Children, part of the New Deal legislation in 1935, expanded state laws that earlier provided "mother's pensions" to widows so they could care for their children at home. Based on the "American family ideal of a breadwinning husband and a domestic wife, if the husband was absent, the state would

step in to support the mother and children." (Hays points out, however, that, "In practice, aid was denied to many women who were understood as not 'virtuous' enough to be worthy of the family ideal.")

With the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (1996) under the Democrat administration of Bill Clinton, poor families were no longer 'entitled' to welfare benefits. The new law gutted the welfare system, offering states "more flexibility" to meet targets for moving people off Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and into "gainful employment." The twin political parties of the corporations claim welfare reform a success. After all, after 16 years, the TANF caseload has declined by 60%.

However, as Michelle Chen points out in "How Reforming

Welfare and Gutting Programs for the Poor Became a Bipartisan Platform," the official poverty rate now exceeds its 1996 level, meaning a much smaller share of poor families receive cash assistance from TANF than prior to reform. While the poorest of the poor are women and children of color, the majority of poor have always been white. The myth of the "Black Welfare Queen" was created to garner support for trashing welfare for us all. Today, it doesn't matter what your skin color or ethnic background is. If you're poor, unemployed, underemployed, a single parent or a family struggling to get by, the new "national value" discards the poor altogether, blaming us for the "moral decline" of the nation as we are being thrown onto the trash heap of history by electronic, labor-less production, which destroys our



Child care center for low-income families in Michigan. The poverty rate is growing but a smaller share of poor families receive cash assistance than prior to welfare "reform."

PHOTO/JIMWESTPHOTO.COM

ability to work for wages.

We must not tolerate the further assault on our rights. This is our country. The vision expressed for a new America in the Green Party's New Deal and the community spirit forged by the recent Chicago Teachers' strike will continue to create solidarity. There should be no hungry

children! Education should be free and universal! The homeless should be housed! Our land, water and air should be held in common, kept clean for future generations. We must continue to gather our forces and educate our sisters and brothers for the final battle: We will have a better world for us and our families!

# FOUL WATER AND FRACKED POLITICS

By Tabitha Tripp

This article is in two parts. Part two will appear in the March 2013 edition of the People's Tribune

CROSSVILLE, IL — Driving down a small road in South-eastern Illinois near the Wabash River, we were led to a cornfield

atop a hill surrounded by trees. "Down there. That's where the disposal well was that went bad, and then my well water went bad," said Steve Combs. Disposal wells are where the oil companies dump flow back, processed "water" used in extracting gas and oil.

This was my first exposure to

oil fields and the abhorrent practices of extracting fossil fuels and the subsequent trade-off of pollution for profit. Horrible fumes from flares, open unlined pits of oily liquid, sterilized land where spills have occurred and once potable water supplies now tainted with we do not know what. It is too expensive to have Steve's wa-

ter tested. What once came out of his faucet free of charge, he now has to pay for. He has no recourse and there no "victims' rights" with the oil and gas industry in Illinois, if you do not have proof your water was fine before.

The entire area of Crossville, IL, lost their public water supply a couple of decades ago due to the oil and gas practices. The area now has a water quality of 20 out of 100 in the nation. Looking at the old well pump house, across the field from several conventional oil pumps, I just shook my head. How do we even begin to right these wrongs?

A victim of state practices that protect companies, but ignore citizens and basic human rights, Steve Combs, tried numerous times to get help with his water and was passed off from agency to agency. I took the complaint all the way to the Governor's office in Chicago. I hoped our leading state elected official would follow through, test Steve's water, fine those responsible, and replace Steve's well water free of charge, but no.

The Governor's office handed the complaint to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency who handed it to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources who sent it back to Office of Mines and

Minerals. Instead of fixing Steve's well, the oil company fixed and replaced a different disposal well-head, which a photograph showed to be leaking. No one stopped by Steve's house, no one even called. This was a first lesson in bureaucracy and politics, favors and corruption. As Illinois legislators in the state capitol of Springfield, create 2013's budget, based on income from hydraulic fracking, it gives me no hope of sensibility that any moratorium on fracking will pass in lame duck session.

Asking our state government to seriously look at all the risks; the health effects, the cost to small municipalities bearing the brunt of burden in ways like social services and road repair, before jumping into a Ponzi scheme is a reasonable request. The gas is not going to go anywhere and the market has bottomed out. Why risk our environment for a short boom?

For nearly one hundred years, Southern Illinois has been dealing with fossil fuel, boom bust extraction economies. One would think we would get smart and plan beyond that which leaves our communities devastated, raped and defiled. Is democracy dead?

Contact Tabitha Tripp at [saveourwater@dontfractureillinois.net](mailto:saveourwater@dontfractureillinois.net)



Protest against fracking in Southern Illinois. Crossville, IL, lost their public water supply due to the oil and gas practices. The area now has a water quality of 20 out of 100 in the nation.

PHOTO/SOUTHERN ILLINOISANS AGAINST FRACTURING OUR ENVIRONMENT (SAFE)

# A danger to all: Militarization of US-Mexico border

By Pedro Rios

SAN DIEGO, CA — In less than six weeks, four tragic deaths—three civilians and one Border Patrol agent—have marred the U.S.-Mexico border. In the most recent case, 16-year-old Jose Antonio Elena Rodriguez was shot dead after allegedly being involved in a rock-throwing incident on October 10 in Nogales, Sonora.

These deaths pose a necessary question—who's in charge of those entrusted to “protect the border” of the U.S. and Mexico? Is it the agents themselves who mourned one of their own after two agents opened fire and shot a fellow agent to death on October 2 in Southern Arizona?

Did a lack of leadership and accountability play a role in the death of a San Diego County mother of five on September 28? Valeria Munique Tachiquin Alvarado lost her life, as witnesses say she tried to drive slowly away from the plain-clothes agents who fired at least nine rounds into her car.

On September 3, Border Patrol agents shot and killed Guillermo Arevalo Pedroza while he was celebrating his wife's birthday just south of Laredo, Texas.

Who should be held accountable for his death? And what of the bullet-riddled 16-year-old José Antonio who witnesses say was shot in the back?

These are the latest incidents in a troubling and growing pattern of abuse and use of excessive force committed by Border Patrol agents. They also reflect the latest manifestation of a culture of impunity fostered by the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border.

These tragedies are an inevitable result of the vacuum in leadership and the lack of transparency, accountability and oversight at the Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Since President Obama has been in office, his Administration has failed to appoint a commissioner, and Congress has failed to confirm those placed in temporary, acting roles.

In effect, no one is in charge of the largest police force in the U.S. as they flank border communities. Four lives lost, four families changed forever, and a culture that endangers everyone's safety creeps closer to our door-steps. It's no wonder it appears that CBP seems to be out of control.

As a coalition partner of the

Southern Border Communities Coalition, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has worked with sister organizations across the U.S.-Mexico border not only to highlight these cases, but also to question the culture of impunity that permits border agents to apparently get away with murder.

The death of José Antonio Elena Rodriguez now marks the 16th death at the hands of the Border Patrol in the past two years, and Munique was the first woman and the fourth U.S. citizen killed by Border Patrol agents. Now an agent has been killed by two of his own.

Unless we demand action by the Obama Administration, this vacuum of leadership and accountability for questionable shootings will continue unchecked, further endangering civilians and law enforcement alike and undermining our highest values as a country, especially due process of law, and our collective dignity and humanity.

*Pedro Rios is program director for the American Friends Service Committee's San Diego office, and he is chairperson for the San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium. Contact him at [usmexborder@afsc.org](mailto:usmexborder@afsc.org).*



Witnesses say Valeria Munique Tachiquin Alvarado was killed as she tried to drive slowly away from the plain-clothes border agents who fired at least nine rounds into her car at the U.S.-Mexico border.

PHOTO/ANGELES SIN FRONTERAS

## Black-Latino unity is key to working class unity

### Black History Month



Bridge Crossing Jubilee in Selma, Alabama. The National Voting Rights Museum commemorates “Bloody Sunday” and the Selma to Montgomery March.

PHOTO/DAVID SANDOVAL

By Salvador Sandoval

MERCED, CA — With the start of a new year it is fitting to look back at history to see where we have been to get our bearings as to where we are headed.

U.S. history is permeated by the effects of slavery, and the injustices perpetrated upon the de-

scendents of former slaves and other marginalized peoples. One place where this is evident is in the relations and fate of Latinos and African Americans.

In November 2012, 93% of Blacks and 71% of Latinos voted for President Obama. Many commentators felt this was the deciding factor in his reelection.

Despite having reelected the first ever African American President, Latinos and Blacks face an equally dismal future. The wealth gap of whites to Blacks has grown to 20 times greater, and of whites to Latinos, 18 times greater.

Most of the discrepancy of wealth is due to the housing collapse, and the inordinate devastation of Blacks and Latinos who lost their homes to foreclosures, due largely to predatory real estate and banking practices. Electoral rhetoric and promises to the contrary, the American Dream of home ownership and a “middle class” lifestyle was shattered for one quarter of all Black and Latino families.

The fate and mutual history of African Americans and Latinos run deep in American history. Soon after its independence from Spain in 1821, Mexico abolished slavery, due in large part to the role of blacks, mulattos, Mexican Indians, and mestizos in the fight for independence. This occurred well before the U.S. abolished slavery.

A little known fact of U.S.

history was that during slavery, there was a second underground railroad. It ran to Mexico, where U.S. slaves escaped servitude and melted into or intermarried with the local Mexican population.

Today millions of African American and Latino workers in the U.S. are united by the poverty they share. Unlike previous waves of immigrants from other countries, the more recently immigrated Latinos share the fate of the “last hired, first fired” African Americans. As newcomers and due to language and racial discrimination, they are prevented from assimilating into U.S. society. They come cramped into boxcars or into the back of truck rigs, reminiscent of the slave ships of bygone times coming to U.S. shores, risking death traversing Arizona deserts or at the hands of immigrant agents and vigilantes. They flee the consequences of modern day wage slavery in their home countries, the Wal-Martization of their home markets, and uprooting from their land by the consequences of NAFTA.

Today African American and

Latino workers are being “sold down the river” and discarded and vilified by a system that no longer needs them, though it profited from their labor. However, like the tip of the iceberg, their plight reflects that of a growing number of workers, regardless of color. The capitalist system itself is dying, and what is developing is a struggle for a whole new society, free of poverty and oppression. The key to victory is the unity of the workers, regardless of color or nationality, and cementing the bond between Black and Latino workers is a critical part of that class unity. The rulers, on the other hand, have to break up any motion toward unity.

This is the significance of Black History. It is American history. Just as it took enlisting former slaves to finally defeat the slave system during the American Civil War, so too today this moment of Latino and Black unity points the way to the emancipation of all Americans from modern wage slavery.

# THE PEOPLE WILL RISE UP AGAINST AUSTERITY

**INTERVIEW: SHAMAKO NOBLE**

*The Peoples Tribune interviewed Shamako Noble, the Racial and Economic Justice Organizer for Jill Stein's 2012 Green Party campaign for President. He is also the co-founder and Executive Director of Hip Hop Congress.*

*Peoples Tribune: Why is the Green Party strategic at this time, and what are the challenges it faces today?*

**Shamako Noble:** The Democratic Party has historically positioned itself as the “progressive” choice in elections, but its policies are getting more and more conservative and harmful. The drama over the “fiscal cliff” is a good example. Our movement needs electoral politics, so we are going to have to look for alternatives beyond the two major parties. Right now, the Green Party is the best alternative out there. It has a rudimentary infrastructure and was on the ballot in almost forty states.

However, the Green Party

cannot move forward unless it recruits new leaders at the state and local levels. And it cannot recruit new leaders unless it gets involved in the day-to-day survival struggles of people for the basic necessities of life. The Green Party up to now does not have the reputation of being there on the ground in these battles. The will and the potential are there, but decisions need to be made and the work needs to be done.

*PT: What lessons did you learn in the 2012 election campaign?*

**SN:** The most important lesson was that elections are a critical area of resistance, and the struggle there is intensifying. We cannot say our vote does not count, when the ruling class just spent \$6 billion fighting for it. We cannot say our vote does not count, when they handcuffed the Green Party candidates, Jill Stein and Cheri Honkala, in an empty warehouse for eight hours, just to stop them from participating in a presidential debate.

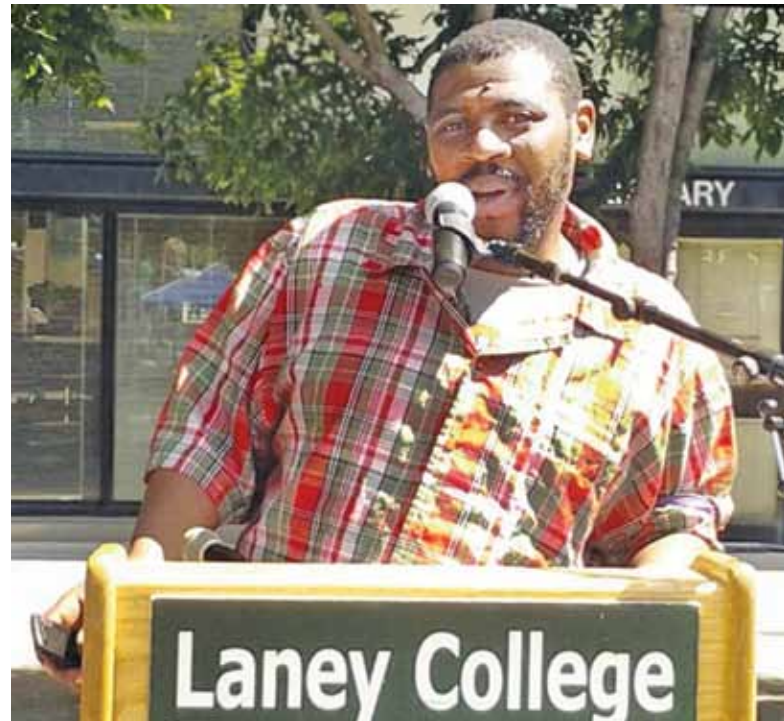
Our campaign was important because it raised the issues of

jobs, human needs, and the environment at exactly the time when Republicans and Democrats were both promoting austerity and fossil fuels. It offered an alternative to the growing merger of the state with corporations.

*PT: Will the Green Party have a significant impact on electoral politics in the near future?*

**SN:** Yes. There is a raging debate in Hip Hop between some artists who are active in the Democratic Party, and others who are open about totally rejecting it. This will only get more intense as people rise up against the austerity policies and school-to-prison pipeline pushed by Republicans and Democrats. The debate on economic human rights is getting sharper, and both the Green Party and Hip Hop are well-positioned to enter it.

Hip Hop Congress this year will be rolling out what we call the Love Movement: love for ourselves, love for our families, love for our communities, love for our work, and love for our planet. We also will be promot-



**Shamako Noble was the Racial and Economic Justice Organizer for Jill Stein's 2012 Green Party campaign for President. He is also co-founder and Executive Director of Hip Hop Congress.**

PHOTO/TAMARA PERINE

ing an initiative called Hip Hop for Health. Both these ideas are under attack by the program of austerity and violence coming out of the two major parties in

Washington, DC. But both are totally consistent with the values of the Green Party. Our work is cut out for us.

## Candidate boycotts debate sponsored by TransCanada

### *Maria Selva for Texas Senate*

**By Maria Elena Castellanos and Sandy Perry**

HOUSTON, TX — Maria Selva, the Green Party candidate in the special election for Texas Senate District 6, boycotted the January 11 debate held by the Houston East End Chamber of Commerce because it was sponsored by TransCanada.

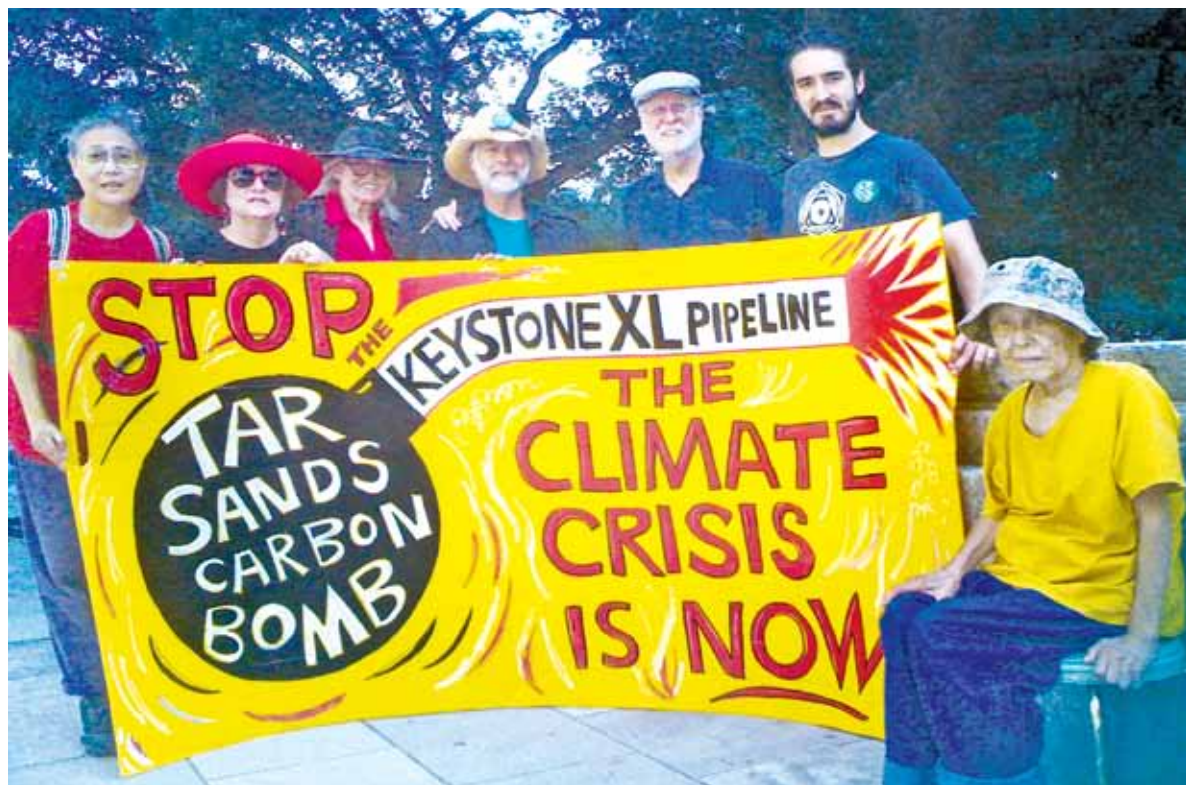
“This international corporation is building the XL Keystone Pipeline, for which it is illegally seizing the land of Texans to bring toxic tar sands oil from Canada for refining,” said Selva in a press release. “Tar sands refining will increase toxic air pollution along the Houston Ship Channel, negatively impacting the health of the people in District 6. The whole tar sands operation, from mining to refining, drastically increases carbon dioxide emissions which contribute to global warming and climate change, and is at odds with the push for clean, safe energy that is one of the principal features of my campaign.”

TransCanada's transparent attempt to influence the election of a State Senator marks a new level in the merger of corporations with the state in our country. It is a deliberate attempt to isolate and intimidate XL opponents like candidate Selva.

Selva's boycott came on the heels of a new report issued by the Natural Resources Defense Council that exposed the entire campaign for XL as one lie after another. TransCanada claimed XL would reduce American gasoline prices and reduce dependence on overseas oil. In fact it will INCREASE prices and INCREASE dependency. It will divert Canadian tar sand oil from Midwest refineries (for American use) to the Gulf Coast, where it will be refined in tax free Foreign Trade Zones and shipped overseas. TransCanada said it would create jobs, but in fact it will REDUCE jobs. An equivalent investment in clean energy generates four times the jobs created by fossil fuel production.

“The pipeline, with all its hazards, contaminants, and refinery pollution would only use American soil in its way to overseas profits,” said Selva. Because of its high carbon emissions, the tar sands pipeline has been called “game over” for climate change. The national direct action Tar Sands Blockade has targeted Texas in its effort to stop the pipeline, including the Manchester community in District 6 where the Valero plant will be refining much of the tar sands oil.

“I have been to Manchester



**Activists from StopXLTarsandsPipeline environmentalists, Green Party, Code Pink, OccupyHouston, and other organizations stand behind a Stop the Tarsands Carbon bomb banner while welcoming Green Party Presidential candidate Jill Stein to Houston's City Hall on October 5, 2012.**

PHOTO/MARIA ELENA CASTELLANOS

talking to community members,” said Selva. “They tell me of the overwhelming percentage of disease and deaths in their neighborhood. And now they will have even more toxic fallout from tar sand oil being refined right there... The other candidates no longer represent the people. The Green Party is now stepping up

to fill that void.”

In addition to defending air and water quality, and the health and safety of District 6 residents, Maria Selva is campaigning on a platform of clean energy jobs, education, health care, safe food, comprehensive immigration reform, youth and community programs, and a Citizens Review

Board to oversee the police.

This campaign represents a turning point in the movement in Manchester and other communities in struggle—a movement that will continue on after the election, until justice is won.

Contact the campaign at <http://mariaselva4txsenate.nationbuilder.com/>

# Michigan Sizzles: Organize, organize, organize—that is the way out!

By Maureen Taylor

DETROIT, MI — As Michigan sizzles—its cities of Pontiac, Saginaw, Flint, and Detroit burn. These cities represent, along with others, the face of industry—past. Gone are the mega-plants responsible for outfitting the world with efficient mass production methods. They are replaced by the new order—technology. What human hands used to be paid for, electronic machines produce faster without wages or benefits. Offshore outsourcing continues, but the foundation of the new economy is built on a new paradigm. The American worker is given a message that is hard to swallow—learn to live on less.

Some have been looking for work unsuccessfully for years. Unemployment rates fall because benefits are exhausted. Where 100 were once needed, today 20 will do. Tomorrow, where 20 were needed, 5 will do. Recent “Right To Work” laws passed in this blue-collar state have sent shock waves from the mighty

Lake Superior in the north, to the free-flowing Lake Erie in the south. Our way of life is changing.

Certain protections afforded by organized labor have been stripped as labor stood silent while it’s ranks dwindled. Remember...”they came for the trade unionists, but I was not one of them so I said nothing. Then they came for the welfare mothers, but I was not one of them, so I said nothing. Then they came for the Muslims, but I was not one of them, so I said nothing. Then one day, there was a knock on my door, but there was no one left to fight for and with me...”

Detroit is surrounded by the largest source of fresh water in the nation. We represent commerce flowing from Canada to the U.S. and on to foreign markets by way of these God-given Great Lakes. Every effort possible to privatize access to water is underway. Using the ploy of economic infusion to help failing communities, we find ourselves immersed in a campaign

to convince us that water is a commodity to be sold. WRONG! Fresh water is to be safeguarded as a common trust for the people it nourishes.

“Right To Work” is the latest salvo and a cover for snatching worker rights away under the notion that our state will be better off if our rights are taken and our standard of living ratcheted down. It is dark here in Michigan, but people of faith never give up as we know the light is there.

The fight for freedom continues! Colleagues in Benton Harbor are in full combat for freedom where Lake Michigan glistens. We are engaged in struggles in Escanaba where Lake Superior rises. We are on the march in Twining near the thumb, where Lake Huron rumbles. Pushbacks against these draconian laws are in full swing in Monroe County where Lake Erie calls out for justice. We are in hand-to-hand combat in Detroit and places close by where the waters of Lake St. Clair refreshes our courage and replenishes our spirit. The heart



Workers protesting the anti-labor “right-to-work” law in Michigan. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

of labor still beats for justice, organized religion still calls out for peace, welfare mothers are demanding housing for all, and students are actively taking hold of society as we start to describe and define what the new society must

look like. Organize, organize, organize—that is the way out!

Maureen D. Taylor is State Chairperson, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization

## I’M NOT GOING OUT WITHOUT A GOOD HARD FIGHT

By Joyce Mills, Ethel long-Scott, Emma Denice Milligan and Sayuri Takagawa.

OAKLAND, CA — In May 2012, The U.S. Courts of Women on Poverty, Western Region, held the first United States’ court in Oakland, California. Since then, participant organizations such as the Women’s Economic Agenda Project (WEAP) has met with community members to discuss how the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will affect the increasingly dire poverty and healthcare.

In Merced, a Vietnam War veteran who relies on V.A. benefits is desperate about his inability to help his wife. She has no health insurance and he worries that healthcare will still be out of reach financially with ACA.

In Oakland, a woman with glaucoma and in a wheelchair since childhood, testifies, “My (eye) Medicaid doctor can no longer see me because my HMO will no longer pay with ACA.” The heat is on. She can’t afford to pay \$400 for the medication she takes and without it she could go blind. “Eye doctors are very hard to find,” she notes, “especially those not afraid of working with people disabled like me.”

While great hopes exist that ACA will meet Californian’s needs, leaders in health reform

say the program falls far short of “Medicare for All” and is not likely to lead there. It will leave an estimated 26 million or more Americans uninsured, including those without sufficient documents to prove citizenship, and will leave many more underinsured.

“ACA accelerates the corporate takeover of medicine,” summarized a presenter. “We face a restructuring of healthcare that leaves private insurers in charge, and those insurers have become a giant tool for investment capital rather than caring about the peo-

ple they insure.”

A young Sacramento doctor noted that forcing people into the current healthcare system will solve neither the doctor shortage nor the corporatization of care. Both already limit her ability to care. “Universal healthcare is a

human right, not a privilege or a profit margin,” another activist noted. “But in America, capitalism, through schemes like ACA, make healthcare an individual issue. We need to shift away from this unstable, unsustainable path.”

The “Resolution on Healthcare for the 99%” passed by the US Courts of Women on Poverty, noted, “One of the largest reasons for bankruptcy is health care and medical debt.” Participants further resolved that poverty and healthy living conditions must be at the forefront of the fight to reform healthcare, and called for the federal government to enact “an immediate transition to a single-payer system.” They called on the government to “provide free, comprehensive, equal care for all... with being human as the only precondition to be eligible.”

Teach-ins like these allow communities to understand the flaws of our faltering system and create a foundation to establish real change. “This economic system is making the rich richer and the poor a lot poorer,” noted one Medicaid recipient. “People will try to put you out of sight, out of mind, but if we keep letting them get away with this they win... I’m not going out without a good hard fight.”



Healthcare protest in Detroit, Michigan. Organizations such as those in Oakland, CA, have met with community members to discuss how the passage of the new healthcare legislation will affect the increasingly dire poverty and healthcare. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

# HOUSTONIANS PROTEST RACIST SLUMLORD



Protest against retaliatory practices against an activist at Rock Springs Apartments in Houston, TX. PHOTO/ALIANZA MEXICANA

By Lucia Gonzalez

HOUSTON, TX — For almost a year, Martina Grifaldo and Monica Rodriguez, President and Vice President respectively of Alianza Mexicana, an organization formed by Mexican origin residents in Hous-

ton, Texas, led efforts to give voice to primarily Latino immigrant tenants in apartment complexes. Monica Rodriguez, herself, lived in one of these complexes, the Rock Springs Apartments, for over four years and had experienced/witnessed arbitrary and unjust actions by

apartment managers.

Residents' rights were constantly violated without regard to housing rights mandated by state and federal law. Perhaps the most notorious was a flyer, posted in different spots of the Rock Springs Apartments, that told residents to "report any African-

American youth or suspicious persons to the office." Monica and Martina went to the office with the complainants about violations and later managers sent Monica notice that her lease would not be renewed in January of 2013.

The flyer and notice of non-renewal of Monica's leasing contract prompted Alianza Mexicana to call organizations and individuals to a protest in front of the Rock Springs Apartments. Shortly thereafter, Monica received a notice of eviction detailed by attorneys for the owners, and Martina was issued a "cease and desist" letter prohibiting her presence on property of the Rock Springs Apartments.

Alianza Mexicana responded by establishing a legal defense fund for Monica and Martina. Asserting her right to a hearing, Monica and her attorney laid their case before a Justice of the Peace Court. Without proof, the judge upheld Monica's eviction because she violated the leas-

ing contract when she went to the leasing office and disrupted the business. In an effort to appeal, Monica submitted an application to be deemed indigent and that she be allowed to appeal without filing a \$2000 bond.

In the meantime, Martina's case is being reviewed by both the Center for Fair Housing and a private civil rights attorney, and another protest was held in front of the Rock Springs Apartments. The coalition formed denounced the violation of rights and called for any potential renter not to become a tenant in a place that continues to violate rights, and most importantly, that retaliates against any tenant that complains. From the point of view of the people still in the fight, the struggle has just begun.

You can call Martina at 832-896-3204 or Monica at 832-885-4798 to make your donation for their legal defense.

*Lucia Gonzalez is an Alianza member*

## CABRINI EVICTIONS: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

By Joseph Peery

CHICAGO, IL — If you receive an eviction notice from the CHA (Chicago Housing Authority) or one of its private management firms, you must know your rights. This could be the deciding factor in whether you remain in your apartment or are thrown onto the street.

The management office can't just tell you to get out verbally—they have to start by giving you a notice. The notice will tell you that they are terminating your lease within a certain amount of days or that they simply are not going to renew it. Management has been writing these notices with misleading language like, "You are hereby required to surrender possession of said premises to the undersigned on that date," hoping this will scare you to just move out. Only a court order from a judge can force you to leave. Before they try and take you to court, you have the right to first an informal and then a formal grievance hearing.

As part of the "One Strike" policy, if alleged criminal or drug activity is the reason for the eviction, the CHA will deny requests for grievance hearings. With "One Strike," no criminal conviction is necessary, just an arrest, even if it is a false arrest and even though as Americans we are all supposed to be "innocent until proven guilty." This is so systematic that police arrest reports now have boxes indicating public housing—yes or no.

Recently, management tried to evict

on the basis of allegation alone, without a police investigation, police report or arrest, and still try and deny the grievance process. Or further, they tried to deny residents the right to be represented in the informal hearings in violation of the Grievance Procedure, manual section XII.C. It reads, "The Head of Household has the right to be represented by counsel or by other persons chosen as the Head of Household's representative and to have such person make statements on the Head of Household's behalf."

If the decision in either one of the grievance hearings is in your favor the eviction ends then and there. If the decision is not in your favor, they still have to take you to court. At this point you need a lawyer. And here lies the problem: CHA residents are too poor to afford a lawyer. So many people are being evicted that legal aid is overwhelmed. In eviction court you do not have the right to be represented by counsel as in criminal court. You can tell the court you are not ready to stand trial because you are looking for an attorney and they may give you a little more time. However, you do have a constitutional right to a jury trial and if you demand one, it cannot be denied. It will give you much more time to get an attorney.

While it's good to know the few rights that we still have left, it is now that we must ask ourselves, why are our rights being taken away in the first place? That question shall be addressed in future editions of the People's Tribune.

## David Cobb and Move To Amend in PA & OH

By Move to Amend

David Cobb, 2004 Green Party presidential candidate and co-founder and spokesperson for the Move To Amend coalition is touring across PA and OH Jan 27-Feb 10.

David will present a basic overview entitled "Creating Democracy & Challenging Corporate Rule." The presentation is part history lesson and part heart-felt call-to-action. David gives a rousing one-hour talk telling the story of the American creation myth and the Constitution as it pertains to the illegitimate rise of corporate constitutional rights, followed by about an hour of facilitated discussion about how to build a movement capable of doing something about it...

All events are open to the general public, and there is no admission charge.

The itinerary is below, and the exact location of all events and local contact info for each event is online at [www.MoveToAmend.org](http://www.MoveToAmend.org)

1/27 Philadelphia, PA  
1/28 Trenton, NJ  
1/29 Allentown, PA  
1/30 Reading, PA  
1/31 Scanton, PA  
2/1 Lancaster, PA  
2/4 Pittsburgh, PA  
2/6 Dayton, OH  
2/9 Columbus, OH (statewide MTA strategy session)  
2/10 Newark, OH

Organizers at the Move To Amend coalition understand that it will take a broad, deep and multi-racial social movement to make real change in this country. Such a movement will have to transform (or replace) existing institutions, including the two corporate-controlled political parties. Done right, such a movement will have the strength and power to replicate the success of the abolitionist movement, the women's suffrage movement, the labor movement and the civil rights movement. So let's get on with it!

*If you want to bring a Move To Amend organizer to your community, contact [barnstorming@MoveToAmend.org](mailto:barnstorming@MoveToAmend.org) or call 707-269-0984*



# Urinating while homeless – Los Angeles cracks down on poverty

By Mark Lipman

LOS ANGELES, CA — It started in the early hours of an April morning, when the Los Angeles Police Department decided to make a sweep of the intersection of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Rose, in Venice, California. Since the implementation of a city ordinance (in violation of 2 separate state laws) to close Ocean Front Walk (the Boardwalk) between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m.—claiming that a city street was now under the mandate of the Department of Recreation and Parks—the homeless population of Venice had been pushed systematically to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. Now it was time for them to leave there too. No rest for the weary, as the old adage goes.

As there is still no legal justification for simply removing people from city streets, the City of Los Angeles decided on the next best solution – harassment. Any unattended belongings would be summarily removed and destroyed (in violation of the 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution).

Among those gathered without access to any other option for housing than a concrete pillow was David Busch. In his belongings was a makeshift toilet, which consisted of a bucket with plastic bags, a shower-sized tent for privacy, toiletries and cleaning supplies.

Although Venice Beach is the second most visited tourist destination in California, public bathrooms are locked at night and no facilities are available for those with nowhere to go or sleep, in one of the richest cities in the richest country on the planet. Basic human services which allow even a modicum of dignity are denied daily to the very poorest among us.

As the police approached David they told him that he must dismantle the improvised toilet—that it was a public nuisance. David refused and was subsequently arrested, ticketed and released on site.

In the days just prior to Christmas, a 12 member jury returned a not guilty verdict, creating a massive public-shaming incident

for the city, drawing a spotlight on the city's policy of withholding basic human services from its own citizens in need.

Unfortunately, even with the public exposure and outrage over the criminalization of poverty, denial of needed services, and outright heartlessness, and after being slapped down by a jury of twelve, city officials trumpeted by City Attorney Carman "I Hate Poor People" Trutanich have doubled down on this insanity by promising to continue prosecuting all those who would dare urinate while homeless.

Shame on you, Los Angeles.

*Editor's note:* As we go to press, a positive development has just opened for us in this front of struggle. California Assembly 5, titled the "Homeless Bill of Rights," was introduced this week by Democratic Assemblyman Tom Ammiano of San Francisco. This bill is meant to keep communities from rousting people who have nowhere to turn, and will add "homelessness" to the list of those protected from



David Busch, arrested for having a toilet in Venice, CA.

PHOTO/VENICE "TRIANGLE UPDATE"

discrimination, alongside sex, race, religion and sexual orientation. This is the best news we've received in a long time as it has

the potential of over-turning discriminatory ordinances all the way up and down the coast.

## CLAIMING RIGHTS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE *Truth Commission documents economic human rights violations*

By Mary Bricker-Jenkins

CHATTANOOGA, TN — Over 150 people attended the December 10 Truth Commission at the public library in downtown Chattanooga, TN. After hearing testimonies documenting a range of human rights violations, several participants and the commissioners established a new group to claim the rights of homeless people, HOPE4Rights (Homeless People for Rights).

Participants heard concrete evidence of violations of the rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948. The particular focus of this Truth Commission was on economic human rights as enumerated in UDHR Article 25—the rights to food, clothing, housing and medical care and "security in the event of unemployment" and other loss of income. A quick poll of the audience revealed that nearly everyone present had experienced a violation of at least one economic right.

Testimonies also revealed violations of civil and political rights, underscoring the "indivisibility" of rights. "Dr. King came

to see that civil rights could not be secured without also securing economic rights," one commissioner said, "and we must protect civil and political rights to claim economic rights."

The right to housing emerged as particularly urgent. Chattanooga has fewer than 170,000 residents (2010 census), but six public housing sites have been demolished in Chattanooga since 1999 and over 5000 people are on the waiting list

for Section 8 vouchers. Recently, over 4,000 individuals, including almost 1,000 children, experienced homelessness in Chattanooga.

The city of Chattanooga provides no shelter beds. Privately sponsored beds are few, especially for families. In those, people testified, they often felt degraded, manipulated, discarded, and trapped in homelessness by policies that interfere with job searches and health care.

Following the Truth Commission, several commissioners and participants—all formerly homeless—created HOPE4Rights to secure the right to housing in Chattanooga. As first steps, they will offer "Know Your Rights" seminars led by poor and homeless people and will inventory vacant properties. They are recruiting allies from "the other side of the desk" who will stand on "the same side of the street" when it comes to human needs

and rights. Joining the national "Homeless Bill of Rights" campaign, the group will promote a city ordinance modeled after the state bill passed in Rhode Island and introduced in California and Oregon.

Chris Brooks of Chattanooga Organized for Action (COA) underscored the need for unity and solidarity in claiming rights for all. "When we look at the numbers of people living in food deserts\* or facing homelessness or being forced to go to the Emergency Room for medical help, we begin to realize that we truly are facing a humanitarian crisis in Chattanooga. This event helps us move beyond the data and numbers and provides an opportunity for our city to prove that the voices of those facing these challenges really do count, and they sound just like you and me."

\* "Food deserts" are places—almost always in poor neighborhoods—where there are no food markets except "convenience stores," "bodegas," etc. People have to travel many miles—if they can—to get to an "oasis" where they'll find a variety of healthy foods at reasonable prices.



From left to right, Commissioners Kendra Sands, Joyce Hardwick, and Felicia Cotton. All became founding members of HOPE4Rights following the Truth Commission. PHOTO/COURTNEY KNAPP

# After Chicago Teachers' Strike: Next phase is school closings

By Lew Rosenbaum

CHICAGO, IL — When the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) voted to end their strike, teachers around the country applauded their accomplishments. The union had resisted the corporate austerity reform program. It developed an unprecedented unity among teachers and working class parents and students. Not merely a feel-good moment, it marked a step in the process from social awareness to class consciousness. But there was a more somber message.

The strike struggle was hemmed in by a thousand legislative strings, limiting bargaining to compensation issues. On the picket lines, teachers talked of the mayoral threats, recognizing that any gains won in the contract would be jeopardized by school closings, turnarounds, and opening more charter schools. Before ink was even applied to sign the contract, Mayor Emanuel told the media he would be forced to close upwards of 100 schools to pay for the contract concessions.

On October 30, 2012, schools CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennet, announced that only “under-utilized” schools would be sub-



School protest in Chicago. The Chicago Mayor told the media he will be forced to close upwards of 100 schools to pay for the teachers' contract concessions. PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK

ject to closure. She also got the state legislature to extend the December 1 deadline for listing the actual schools to be closed to March 31, 2013. She then appointed a commission, chaired by former energy corporation CEO Frank Clark, to hold hearings to get public input about school closings. The CTU opposed the extension because par-

ents, students and teachers would not know until summer where their children would be going to school or whether teachers still had jobs. In a series of hearings in different neighborhoods, Bennet's commission got a unified answer. If Bennet and the school board has any intention of taking into account the response of the community, as union organizer

Martin Ritter pointed out, that message is no school closings, stop the expansion of charter schools!

The city has escalated its campaign. Byrd-Bennet says one fifth of the classrooms are empty. She has proclaimed that not all schools have arts programs because the resources are stretched thin across too many schools.

Consolidating schools would solve the problem, Bennet says, of having 140 schools without libraries.

Here's the story *behind* the story: schools with empty classrooms also have classes with too many students; charter schools draw students from neighborhood schools; the destruction of public housing has driven out thousands of residents; and yet there is one social worker for every 1,100 students. These are issues of common concern. Taking away our education birthright and our jobs makes it clear that we are part of a dispossessed group of the working class for whom capitalism no longer has any use.

On November 2, ten people were arrested as teachers and community groups sat in at City Hall protesting the school closings threat. On December 8, the Grass Roots Education Movement coalition held an education summit and rededicated itself to its own escalated campaign.

The fight against school closings is part of a war to maintain *public* education and achieve world class *public* schools in every neighborhood. The process is building class unity around what kind of education is possible and necessary.

## Humanize our society, particularly our schools

By Gloria Slaughter

ATLANTA, GA — “No Child Left Behind” and “Race to the Top” are educational policies put into place by the government as “reform” measures. Actually these programs were designed to eliminate public education. They were designed to privatize the public school system. Competition and individualism predominates the capitalist society. A “race” denotes winners and losers and “No Child Left Behind” mandated “average yearly progress” of each school. Thus, in both policies, some schools become “failing” schools. The students feel like they are failures, thus there are more dropouts.

Now, with the economy declining, and the dwindling prospect of our youth ever having a job due to the electronics revolution, there is no need to guarantee young people a quality education. Education has always been the basis to prepare students for the job market, but there are no jobs.

In the 1980's the Metro Atlanta schools experienced the missing and murdered children's

situation in which every school was locked down, every teacher and other school employees kept constant lookout on the students to make sure they were safe. It was such a horrible time in Atlanta's history.

Now some schools, particularly high schools, look like prisons with burglar bars and a police officer on duty. The doors are locked from the outside. Are they any safer? Columbine high school had a security officer, yet the two young men were able to kill thirteen.

What causes a person or persons to shoot others? We have become a very militarized society and violence permeates our movies, television shows and other media. Digital games promote violence such as rapes, thefts and killings.

What a terrible thing to have happen in our country when Black teenagers like Trayvon Martin are killed or when little seven and eight year old students and school employees are killed in the Sandy Hook School in Connecticut. In fact, the third leading cause of death of children from 5 to 13 is from shooting.



Michigan schoolchildren.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

Not only are guns plentiful but there is the problem of the lack of mental health practices. Even if a teacher spots a child with severe behavioral and emotional problems, lack of funding prevents help from the school. Too many times the teacher is told that the problem the child has is environmental and so he/she can't be helped. You can't help a child that lives in poverty or faces abuse daily in his/her

home.

Our schools are becoming dehumanizing. Sometimes students feel like a number. Classes are oversized and teachers don't connect with their students. One young man in a California University received an email from his professor who teaches 900 students in a writing class. The professor stated that the paper the student wrote was outstanding and he was sorry that he

would never get to meet him.

We must humanize our society, particularly the schools. We must demand the funding to make schools places where the opportunity is given to all students to reach their potential. An appreciation of all cultures and all histories has to be taught.

We have to make fundamental reforms in education so that every student will have hope for the future.

# Whose Names Are Unknown by Sanora Babb

## Book Review

By Chuck Parker

Sanora Babb offered this explanation for the title of her novel, *Whose Names Are Unknown*. “The title of this book is taken from a legal eviction notice: *To John Doe and Mary Doe Whose True Names Are Unknown*. The time is the 1930’s, the time of the Great Depression and the dust bowl disaster.”

Today we are faced with a world on the brink of financial collapse and unprecedented natural disasters. This book should serve as a dire warning and a call to action.

Historians have called the dust storms that swept over the southern plains of Oklahoma, Colorado, Kansas, and Texas “the most severe environmental catastrophe” in American history. This book dramatizes the human side of this ecological nightmare by focusing on the struggles of several families, including such day-to-day activities as how to get groceries, help needy neighbors, and get work — as well as the more life-threaten-

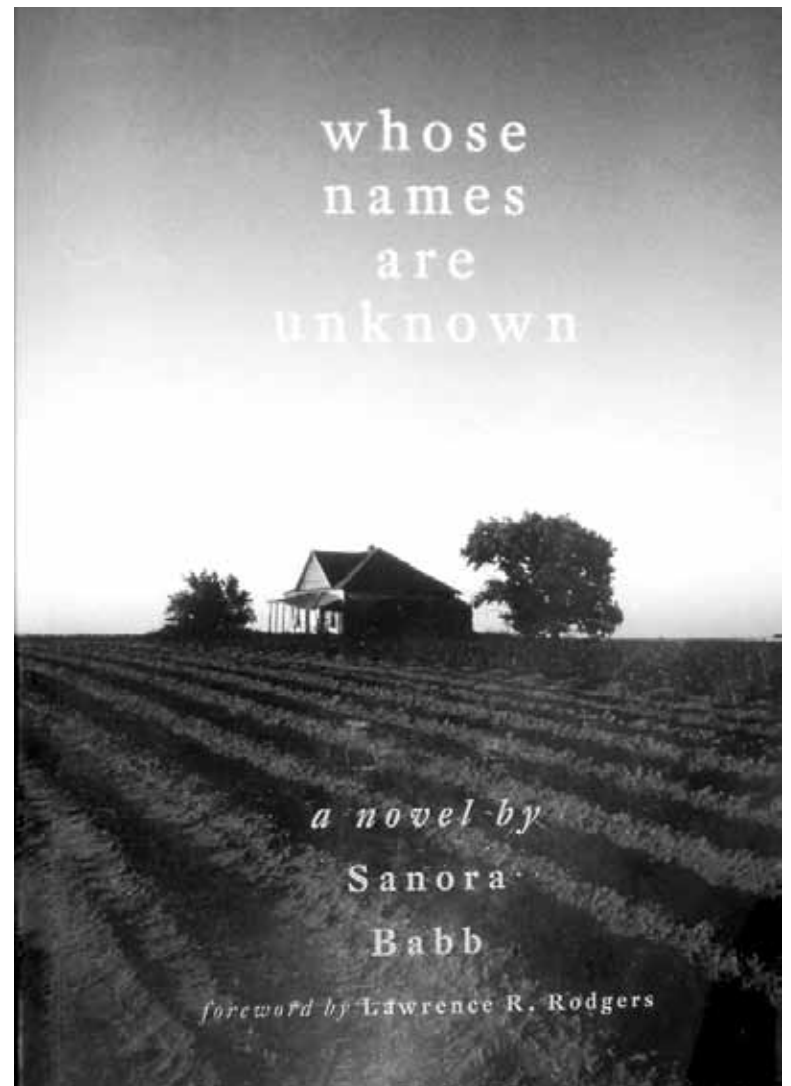
ing crises they endured, such as failed pregnancies, suicides, dust storms, and labor violence.

The book tells how over 250,000 small farmers were dispossessed and forced to set out on the highways in search of work in California, where they worked as migrant farmworkers. Paid nearly nothing, starving, and hounded by hired thugs, they were forced to get organized and strike for higher wages.

The author, Sanora Babb, had lived and worked among these people. Born in Oklahoma in 1907, her family moved around a lot trying to survive. She became a writer and a revolutionary. Later she worked as a volunteer in the labor camps set up by the Farm Security Administration in the San Joaquin and Imperial valleys of California. She kept a diary and began to write this novel. But her boss, Tom Collins, showed John Steinbeck her writings, and Steinbeck hurried to write his famous book, *Grapes of Wrath*, which was published in 1939, just before she submitted her book to Random House. As a result, her book was not published until 2004.

Hopefully, *Whose Names Are Unknown*, will serve as an inspiration to the young writers of today’s generation of dispossessed workers, who by telling their stories, will help uplift their class to build a better world. We must struggle to insure that their works are not suppressed and hidden for generations - like this great book was.

*Whose Names are Unknown* is a revolutionary book, beautifully portraying the courage of the workers, even though their desperate strike was broken. We must embrace the book’s vision that the dispossessed will lead us into a bright future. “South to north the valleys curved in a long green flowering bowl, filled with food enough for a nation, while hunger gnawed these workers’ bodies and drained their minds. An old belief fell away like a withered leaf. Their dreams thudded down like the over-ripe pears they had walked on, too long waiting on the stem. One thing was left, as clear and perfect as a drop of rain – the desperate need to stand together as one man. They would rise and fall and, in their falling, rise again.”



## Vision of Technology

If technology could  
If it were in the people’s control  
It could provide the means  
For industry to work  
Without the stress  
So many laborers endure  
On the assembly line

You were revolutionary  
Technology micro chip  
In revolutionizing industry  
The means wherewith  
Manufactured goods are made  
On the assembly line

I remember a stint at  
Gallo wines  
Where on the assembly line  
Only two workers were needed  
To put the aluminum  
And the corks  
On the champagne bottles  
Because computerized technology  
Did the rest of the work  
Our job, the two of us on  
The assembly line  
Was to make sure the process  
Ran smoothly

Yes, a vision of technology  
Freeing man from arduous,  
Strenuous work

Where the father/mother  
Come home from a hard  
Day’s work  
Only to scream at each other  
And/or at the kids.

Technology, a revolutionary  
Incentive for sure  
Will be a truly revolutionary  
Happening  
When technology  
Is run by the people  
For the people  
Of the people

So difficult for many people  
To envision  
Because of the devastating  
Unemployment crisis  
Technology, in the hands of  
The capitalist class  
Has put society in

Technology, in control of  
A government  
For the people  
Of the people  
By the people  
Will truly liberate humanity

— Yolanda Catzalco  
*Revolutionary Poets Brigade*

# BENTON HARBOR SCHOOLS ARE IN SHAMBLES

By Rev. Edward Pinkney



BENTON HARBOR, MI — The Benton Harbor School system is in shambles.

Some schools do not have heat. Others have no books. Test scores are the lowest in the history of the state. There is no order. When fights break out, the school board sends the students to the slaughterhouse (jail). The schools are the pipeline to jail. Berrien County already has more people incarcerated per capita than only one other county in Michigan.

Benton Harbor, a former industrial town, now has an unemployment rate of over 60%. The town is run by the Whirlpool Corporation. The school district is led by Superintendent Leonard Seawood. Four of the seven board members all vote every time in favor of the superintendent and the Whirlpool Corporation.

On January 11, 2013, there was a big fight at the High School. Police were called. Twenty-two students went to jail. The Superintendent and the School Board are blaming the parents for this deplorable situ-

ation. However, when you send your child to school, the school system has a responsibility to educate and protect the students. The leadership is in denial about its responsibilities, and about the real source of the problem.

The problem is that the children of Benton Harbor are being abandoned by an economic system that no longer has any use for educated workers. Computers and robots are taking over the assembly lines. The corporations will not spend money on workers they no longer need. So the children of Benton Harbor, and children across the country, are being housed in underfunded, dilapidated public schools. For profit corporate-run charter schools are set up, where corporations make all of the decisions about education, while public schools are left in shambles. Charter schools teach children not to question the system or to think for themselves. Public education is being transformed into commercial property. Around \$750 billion is spent on public education in this country. The corporations want that money. Meanwhile, corporate development in the town is creating million dollar homes and a signature golf course for the rich while poor children suffer in underfunded schools.



Teachers from across Michigan gathered in Benton Harbor to protest a public appearance by Governor Rick Snyder, who has slashed the state education budget. PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK

Fights take place almost every day in the Benton Harbor schools and the police are called three times a week. As long as a student is on school property during roll call the city can legally count the student present. This translates into money. The school superintendent wants the money, but does not want to care for the students. Nor do they want to

deal with the parents. Seawood and his four school board members, and the Whirlpool Corporation, have failed the community. Yet the school board recently gave the superintendent a 2-year extension for doing a good job. The teachers were asked to take a 10% pay cut.

As the jobs go, education as a birthright is being taken away.

We are becoming a dispossessed group of the working class for whom capitalism no longer has any use. We need a vision of a new education system where everyone has the right to a quality education. We must demand that the government provide equal funds for every student. We must continue to fight against corporate greed. It is now or never.

“Why are there forty million poor people in America?” And when you begin to ask that question, you are raising questions about the economic system, about a broader distribution of wealth. When you ask that question, you begin to question the capitalistic economy. And I’m simply saying that more and more, we’ve got to begin to ask questions about the whole society. We are called upon to help the discouraged beggars in life’s market place. But one day we must come to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. It means that questions must be raised. You see, my friends, when you deal with this, you begin to ask the question, “Who owns the oil?” You begin to ask the question, “Who owns the iron ore?” You begin to ask the question, “Why is it that people have to pay water bills in a world that is two thirds water?”

*Martin Luther King Jr.*

*Excerpts from his 1967 speech, “Where Do We Go From Here”*

## Early Saturday morning — Tenderloin

stretched  
across the sidewalk  
against a fence  
not, in the coolness of October,  
yet awake  
dark, their clothes,  
their coats  
dark with grime, engrained  
creases on their faces  
pressed to cardboard  
utterly discarded, dispossessed  
the humblest of our nation  
not yet awake  
they must share sleep  
with the shoes of passersby  
they ask of us no questions  
they make no demands  
they keep on living  
just like the rest of us  
just for this little while  
just like the rest of us  
just for this little while

— by Cathleen Williams