

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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Lisa Leggio, Vicci Hamlin and Barbara Carter were sentenced to 13 months probation and 34 days (time served plus \$46,000 in fines per person) for protesting construction of the Enbridge tar sands pipeline. In Stockbridge, Michigan, the same pipeline ruptured in 2010, gushing nearly one million gallons of tar sands crude into the Kalamazoo River—making it the largest inland oil spill in American history.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

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SAVE THE EARTH FROM THE CORPORATIONS!

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Rulers cultivate a fascist culture

EDITORIAL

As technology continues to replace labor in production, the global market is shrinking, resulting in increased competition amongst capitalist countries for market share and control of resources such as oil and gas. This competition can also take a military form. The global economic crisis of capitalism has led to fascism. It is also leading to an increased sharpening of geopolitical tensions between nations and a drive toward world war.

Fascism is the merger of the corporations and the government. This objective process is completed in the U.S. The economic, social, political and cultural features of fascism are also seen in a number of ways: the privatization of all spheres of the public domain; emergency managers replacing elected government officials; the omnipresent Surveillance State; the stepped up wave of police killings; legislation such as “Stand Your Ground” and the Federal anti-protest Trespass law, along with the National Defense Authorization Act that allows the government to arrest and detain a person without charges.

The ruling class is steady working to broaden the acceptance of fascism among the American people—which can only be accomplished by the step-by-step cultivation of a fascist culture. History shows that once society allows one section of the population to be isolated, discriminated against, persecuted and denied rights, the ruling class then moves on to do the same to another section and then another and so on. One latest step in this direction includes the February passage of the “Religious Freedom Restoration Act”—the Anti-Gay Law—by the Arizona State legislature, al-



Young man arrested during the anti-NATO protests in Chicago, Illinois.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

lowing business owners to refuse service to gay people and others on the basis of religious beliefs. The governor of Arizona vetoed the bill, but a fascist culture is still being organized on the issue and continues to grow. Other legislation like it has been stalled or failed in six other states, while such legislation remains alive in five others: Georgia, Idaho, Mississippi, Missouri and Oklahoma.

Culture is a way of life of a group of people—the behaviors, prejudices, values, symbols and beliefs they accept and that are passed along from one generation to the next without people thinking about it. To develop a

fascist culture, the ruling class reaches into history and digs out the country’s most violent, horrific aspects. In America, that history includes the wholesale slaughter and genocide of Native Americans, chattel slavery and racism.

The danger today is that millions of American workers are being cut loose from their connections to the economy and social life of American society. They are impoverished, isolated and attacked, and they are desperate, angry and confused, looking for someone to blame. At the same time they are looking for meaningful answers. These workers are being targeted

by a ruling class fascist propaganda offensive.

Culture is therefore a battlefield in which the ideas of class interests are fought out. We must take the weapon of culture away from the rulers, by cultivating a culture of class unity and caring for one another that embraces a vision that is now made possible through the abundance created by electronic production—a vision of a cooperative society organized around distribution according to need, where everyone has a chance to contribute. Such a society will set the basis for unity and insure that the needs of all will be met forever.

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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.

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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

SAVE THE EARTH FROM THE CORPORATIONS!

COVER STORY

We are fast approaching a point of no return. The weather extremes caused by burning fossil fuels will continue to worsen, causing drought, floods, and more killer storms. Our fresh water supplies are fast disappearing as they are privatized for the profit of a few and spoiled forever with “fracking” chemicals. To save ourselves, our children and the world, we must put an end to the capitalist system. This is possible today.

Capitalism is in crisis. Jobs are being eliminated permanently by computerized automation, creating a new class of workers facing destitution, hunger, homelessness, illness and death. Since corporations must compete to maximize profit for their shareholders, automation increases exponentially, creating an epochal crisis of the system itself. Workers cannot buy and capitalists cannot sell. This demands that corporations must increase the exploitation of both human and natural resources in their quest to remain profitable, to survive.

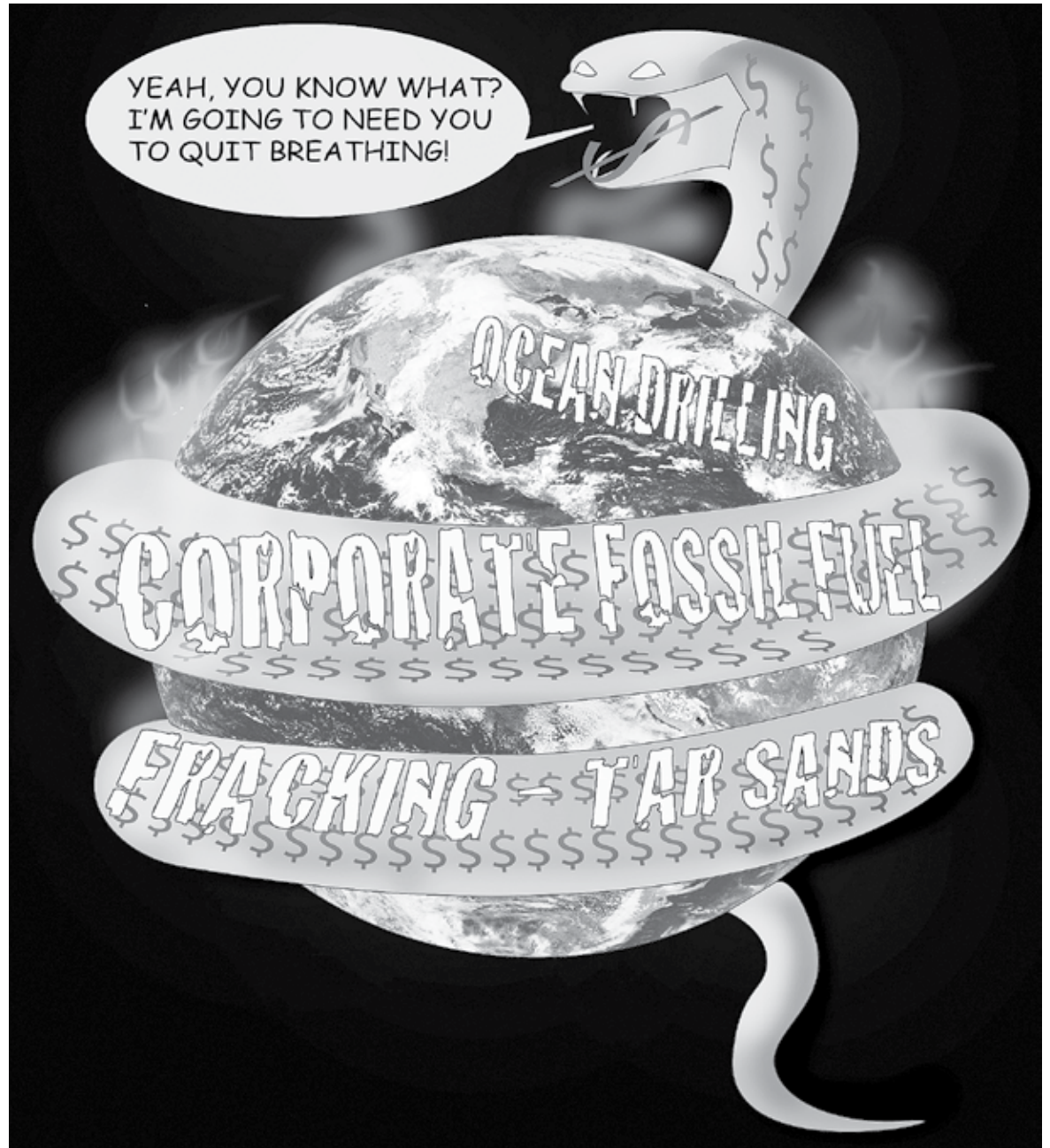
Anything that stands in the way of this process under this system of private ownership of our socially created wealth is removed by the corporate State to facilitate the accumulation of private property for a tiny but powerful global class of capitalists. This is the process transpiring on a global scale today. Our needs as human beings and the very environment we depend on for life itself are sacrificed on the altar of corporate profits and Wall Street speculation.

After WWII, the American

ruling class spent billions of dollars from war profiteering to build an economy and society based on corporations and fossil fuels. Trillions of dollars are now invested in this system worldwide. No single corporation can step back and change its course to benefit humanity and save the earth or it will be swallowed up by another corporation. Corporate leaders understand that they have no choice but to follow the “laws” of private property, putting profits ahead of saving the environment and also the human life dependent on it. Every “solution” the corporate ruling class puts forward only serves their interests while paying lip service to “saving” the environment and creating “jobs.”

All of the wonderful technologies that have the potential to produce a world of abundance while protecting Mother Earth will not be used unless it is profitable for the corporations. Those technologies exist today. But we do not have the political power to organize society around their use. In order to create this new society we need to fight differently than we have in the past. We must recognize that our interests as a class, as workers who shed blood, sweat and tears over generations to produce this social wealth are in direct opposition to the interests of the class of billionaires that own this wealth. We must unite around a vision of a better way, where the interests of humanity, not profits, drive the world economy and society.

Only a cooperative, communal society in which each of us can contribute to the well-being of the other and share in the earth’s bounty can save us now.



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

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Tri-national coalition defends education from global privatizers

By Steven Miller

OAKLAND, CA — At first glance, struggles over schools in México, Canada and the U.S. seem totally separate: Mexicans protesting a national law causing funding cuts and testing of teachers; Canadians protesting an Ontario law freezing teacher salaries; Americans fighting against schools closed or turned over to charter schools. But these attacks all serve a relentless campaign by global capital to privatize public education.

That will be the core message when the Trinational Coalition to Defend Public Education brings activists from these countries together in Chicago, May 9 to 11, hosted by the Chicago Teachers Union. The Trinational was formed when NAFTA became law in Canada, Mexico and the US in 1994, the first broad treaty making public education a commodity for trading on the stock market. This step began the open transformation of public education from a right for all into a form of corporate property.

Education companies can't maximize profits as long as edu-

cation is considered to be a social right, equal and available for all, and provided by government taxes. Something had to change to make education tradable and profitable. The way to do that was to privatize it, which NAFTA helped do. Private profit began to trump the rights of people, and the Trinational was born to meet the challenge.

During 20 years under NAFTA, corporations have deeply penetrated public education across the hemisphere, from pre-school through elementary, secondary and higher education. The corporate agenda today is turning this social right into a market that exceeds a trillion dollars a year. And in those 20 years, the Trinational has become a center for defending public education across the hemisphere.

As education activists fought budget cuts, wage freezes, and rising college fees in each country, the Trinational provided a unifying way to expose the global capitalists encouraging all these attacks. It promoted a vision of public education as key to advancing society as a whole,



10th Trinational Coalition to Defend Public Education conference, held in Mexico City in May 2012. PHOTO/DONATED

versus the corporate vision that says only “get an education to get a good job.”

These governments are planning their next steps in service to global capital. The Trinational

Coalition meeting will deal with standardized testing, the precarious nature of education jobs, student organizing, diversity and equality, technology, and building strong unions. They will face

these challenges with a call for uniting teachers, staff, parents and students from pre-school to university, to defend public education and society's future.

Stop closing our schools!

By Paul Garner

HOUSTON, TX — Houston Independent School District (HISD), the largest school district in Texas, is planning to vote to close five schools on March 13, 2014. Of the five schools, four are predominately African American. This decision comes less than a year after the Texas Education Agency closed the largest African American School District in the state of Texas, North Forest ISD, on the north side of Houston. This school's administration buildings are now leased by 'YES PREP', KIPP and Harmony. These are all Charter schools that submitted a proposal to take over the school district.

Community leaders, teachers and administrators fought closing the school district up to the federal court, where the case was dismissed after the Supreme Court decision to overturn several portions of the voting rights act in June of 2013. The part that called for the department of Justice to review such closings prior to decisions going forward was eliminated, thereby eliminating any chance North Forest ISD had for keeping their doors

open.

One of the five schools now on the chopping block with HISD is Jones High School. Jones has longstanding roots in the Black community and a history of struggling to survive. Jones adopted the first high school Vanguard program in 1977, a program for gifted and talented students, in an attempt to strengthen the school. In 2002, the Vanguard Program separated from Jones to become Carnegie Vanguard High School, only to move further out of that community by 2009 to a location north of downtown Houston. Carnegie Vanguard's new location is in the heavily gentrified Fourth Ward area that has been refurbished to attract new young prominence to the city.

The proposed school closings are scheduled for schools with less than 400 students, a proposal that will save \$1.6 million. But the fact is that HISD just won a bond election to get \$1.89 million to renovate or build 40 schools. The district not only received bond money, but was awarded \$30 million from the Department of Education in federal funding.

As the crisis in capitalism

grows, education is rapidly placed on the chopping block in every city and in every state in this country. North Forest retained 75 of 500 teachers when it was taken over by HISD. Meanwhile HISD had 700 teachers out of approximately 12,000 teachers break their contracts and walk out of their job in 2013. This doesn't begin to address the abandonment of communities that need these schools and their resources the most.

This withdrawal from inner city schools and poor school districts is an expansion of the state's withdrawal from its responsibility to serve all of its citizens. These schools aren't closing because of lack of funds, teachers, or students—these schools are closing because they are not profitable enough. We need a school system and society that places our children before profit. The only way to stop this rampant abandonment by the state of its working, poor and minority communities is to take control of the national school system and ensure every child has access to a quality education.

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Protest at the Chicago Public Schools headquarters. PHOTO/SARAH JANE RHEE

Standardized tests: Chicago opts out and boycotts!

By Lew Rosenbaum

CHICAGO, IL — On February 25, teachers at Saucedo Academy unanimously decided not to administer the ISAT (Illinois Standards Achievement Test), scheduled for eight days in the first two weeks of March throughout Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Drummond School teachers quickly followed suit. More than 400 parents at Saucedo wrote “opt out” letters so their children did not have to take the tests. The movement spread across the city until more than 74 schools and more than 1000 students were involved. CPS and the state Board of Education have threatened to fire teachers who do not give the test, even though CPS will not be using the tests after this year. The results this year will not be used for *anything*.

A wave of testing procedures has become part of public schooling. The Obama administration’s excuse is to prepare students to compete in the global marketplace. But the testing regimes of No Child Left Behind,

Race to the Top, and Common Core are not about improving education or a higher standards. They separate the few to be highly trained, the rest of us are set up to fail, and the testing industrial complex feeds at a trough filled with publicly supplied dollars.

Around the district, teachers counseled parents on opting out and, in some cases, individuals boycotted giving the test. CPS lied about the consequences to students and threatened teachers. Some students were even punished for refusing to take the ISAT! *Catalyst* reported that parent Rousemary Vega “...told my daughter to lay her head down and say ‘I refuse to waste my time on this.’”

What are the combatants taking away from this heroic resistance? Some parents and teachers have recognized that this problem extends beyond a single school. It cannot be ended on a school-by-school struggle. They are coming to see this as a national juggernaut aimed at children in public schools around the country. They have been aroused

by how this testing regime has hurt their children’s education.

CPS will use other tests next year for grading, selective enrollment admissions, and teacher evaluation. This will raise the stakes for resistance. Hope for their future— parents, teachers, students—is being jerked away by forces beyond their control. On March 4, Vega responded to Mayor Emanuel’s “Don’t worry about it” by urging Emanuel to “stop over testing” and “start worrying about all kids.” (The mayor’s children are enrolled in a private school, which does not depend on high stakes testing.)

Government, merged with publishing, testing and other corporations, illustrates the national, class nature of the war on our children. This demands a national, class response., beginning with the objective unity of parents, teachers and students across the school district and across the country. From scattered, defensive struggles, a national political effort can fight to end useless testing, for quality education for all.

The real Common Core: Education for the few

By Todd Alan Price

CHICAGO, IL — The Common Core State Standards were developed by Governors James Hunt and Robert Wise, supported by the National Governor’s Association (NGO) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and infused with a massive amount of capital from venture philanthropy, including the Gates Foundation. The federal government, initially on the sidelines, is now supporting the initiative’s assessments.

Race to the Top, the president’s signature incentive program, requires states that vie for stimulus funds to commit to installing standards like Common Core. States must embrace “value-added measures” for classroom teachers. This means educators teach to the standards and are evaluated based on their students’ achievement scores.

More than 45 states, reeling from economic malaise, “raced” to win the funds, in the process agreeing to deploy Common Core. In spite of the stimulus money (the “incentive” to use these standards), the intense public relations campaign, and high level of political support, Common Core looks ready to implode.

What happened? And why?

Advocates argue that Common Core aligns curriculum with international standards, uses primary sources, aids teachers in scaffolding lessons, equalizes the opportunities among classrooms and students who move from school to school, and focuses on critical thinking, problem solving, and reasoning skills. What’s not to like?

Parents in New York were shocked when their children’s scores collapsed during the first tests. Teachers are now pushing back against the N.Y. State Education Department over a flawed Common Core roll out, which created widespread frustration amongst families, schools and communities. Others question how schools can pay for all aspects of this program.

Now, even the states themselves are worried. The New York Assembly voted to delay some parts of Common Core. The Wisconsin Senate Education Committee tried to replace the standards with their own, using a board of political appointees. Tea Party Republicans who vilified the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), now characterize Common Core as “Obamacare” and government brainwashing.

But the biggest problem with Common Core is the way in which corporations, in bed with the government, are running education reform and in the process, sweeping away the voices of students, teachers, and parents. Gates and his cohorts, in league with the Department of Education, use Common Core to launch the real “race to the top” standards: charterization and privatization of public education, merit pay, and surveillance in the schools.

Under such conditions, it is no wonder the promise of Common Core to create students who will be “competitive in the global job market” . . . rings hollow. When jobs are few, Common Core means racing to the bottom. Wall Street holds all the cards, outsourcing, automating, and engaging in casino capitalism. The goal really is a national curriculum, but with *corporations* at the core of government.

Where will the Common Core lesson plan teach reining in corporatism? Instead of a pre-packaged script, we need to think about a national curriculum, in the interests of the new jobless society, that encourages all to contribute. These are the real questions educators need to address as they oppose Common Core.



Opt out (of standardized tests) protest in Chicago.

PHOTO/GREGORY GOODMAN

Ms. Byrd-Bennett,

I chose to withdraw my child from the [ISAT]... In opting-out of the ISAT, I fulfilled both requirements established by the CPS: written notice to Lane Tech’s principal, Dr. Christopher Dignam, as well as meeting with him in-person.

...forcing parents to meet personally with a school’s principal is, in my opinion, onerous and not warranted. I find it odd, and incompatible, that a simple note written by a parent will suffice in excusing a student-absence yet a personal-meeting with the principal is mandated to opt-out of taking the ISAT.

...by requiring me to meet personally with Lane’s principal it cost me \$104...

Therefore, please consider this email an invoice from me to CPS for my time lost from work due to a requirement that, as far as I can ascertain, is meant to inconvenience and intimidate parents; preventing them from opting their children out of the ISAT.

Robert Peplin



Some of many Chicago protests demanding fully funded schools and no more school closings.

PHOTO/SARAH JANE RHEE

West Virginians seek safe water after chemical spill

By James Fassinger

WEST VIRGINIA — It's been more than two months since Freedom Industries spilled 10,000 gallons of toxic 4-methylcyclohexane methanol (MCHM) and an unknown amount of a polyglycol ethers, known as PPH into the Elk River, a tributary of the Kanawha River, in Charleston on Jan. 9, 2014. Nearly 300,000 residents from nine counties in the vicinity of Charleston, WV were without drinking water after the spill occurred just upstream from the main West Virginia American Water municipal intake and treatment center. State officials issued a 'do not drink' order late in the day after the spill occurred. On Jan. 13, the advisory was lifted but seven weeks later, residents and some businesses still continue to use bottled water for drinking and cooking because they do not trust that the water is safe.

Past experience with government and the failure of agencies entrusted to protect them and their environment over the decades here in the heart of coal country, is at the heart of distrust many West Virginians feel about their government after the spill. Although state authorities declared the water 'ok' to use just four days after the spill and Barbara J. Reynolds, Crisis Communication Specialist for the CDC used the word 'safe' in a TV news interview on Feb. 24, a

State of Emergency is still in effect for nine counties in the state, giving residents little confidence in the actual safety of their drinking water.

One bright spot in all of this has been the WV Clean Water Hub, a grassroots all-volunteer group funded by donations from across the country and tasked with getting residents safe bottled water. The Hub came together as the community joined with established environmental groups like Aurora Lights, Coal River Mountain Watch, Keeper of the Mountains Foundation, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition and RAMPS, when they saw an inadequate response from the state in getting residents clean, safe water. The group has been distributing water to people in seven of the nine affected counties since the first days of the spill, after setting up a Facebook page and putting the call out through InterOccupy for volunteers and donations of water and funds—all of which have been flowing in from across West Virginia and surrounding states. They have so far been able to do what the state has failed to—coordinate home deliveries of free water to elderly, disabled and other residents who cannot get out to pick it up themselves.

As politicians, state and federal agencies, as well as scientists debate 'how safe' the water is to drink, residents continue to struggle with the decision of



Ron "Ripcord" Dixon from Evan, WV, unloads a case of water from a trailer filled with donated water brought in by Century Aluminum retirees from Ravenswood to a Clean Water Hub distribution point in East End, Charleston. PHOTO/JAMES FASSINGER

whether to drink the water or not. Many with children are seriously considering moving out of the state, while others are trying to figure out how they are going to pay for bottled water as long as

they live in the affected counties. It seems that at least for the foreseeable future, until long-term water quality studies can be conducted, uncertainty about whether the water is actually safe to

drink will be a daily fact of life for West Virginians.

Ending the corporate poisoning in West Virginia



Gail Rectenwald sits with samples of tainted water from her well to support installation of new water lines in the area. PHOTO/JAMES FASSINGER

By Andy Willis

CHICAGO, IL — There are two things you cannot get in Charleston, West Virginia today; guaranteed safe drinking water from

the tap and straight answers from officials about the situation. That is pretty much how it was when I lived in the Kanawha Valley 25 years ago when it came to coal related disasters, chemical leaks,

spills, and intentional dumping.

I have stayed in touch by phone, recently getting some observations. I spoke to my old friend who lives and works a short distance from the site of the recent chemical spill that contaminated water for 300,000. Nobody he knows will drink the water from the tap. When it was declared safe he tried showering, broke out in a rash, and developed flu systems. The children in the family bathe with store bought water. The public officials who declared it safe refuse to demonstrate by drinking it.

State Senator and multimillionaire heir to a fossil fuel fortune, Jay Rockefeller, won't drink it and suggests nobody should believe or trust the officials. Having been both governor and state senator over the last 30 years, he should know.

Charleston is a relatively

small city and probably going to get smaller. Like many southern river towns there seems to be a long-standing "good ol' boy" network of frat types who have the reins of power. Many of them like the Freedom Industries owners and managers play fast and loose with safety regulations. They had enough clout to avoid any inspection of their facility since 1991. Yet those types are small fry compared to the chemical and coal giant corporations who have run West Virginia for over 100 years. Manipulating public opinion with threats of job loss and owning elected officials is the way they do business. What smell? Do you smell something? We don't smell anything.

Water is still running foul and discolored in many cases. The water company said everyone would get 1000 gallons free—then charged their bill anyway.

Criminals involved can't seem to be found. Hope that stars can come to the rescue like West Virginia natives Brad Paisley and Jennifer Gardner have faded. Justice is going down the drain.

The people can and will resist as best they can but we need to unite the nation against the corporate poisoners trying to strip regulation further. We need to take over these deadly operations, or in many cases close them down. The engineering and technology for safe plentiful energy exists today. A place like West Virginia could be almost heaven as the song says. That will require a huge political effort in the interest of the majority to take away the power over air and water from the corporate exploiters.

Tar Sands activists vow to continue the fight

The People's Tribune interviews Vicci Hamlin, one of three women convicted of felony charges in their protest to stop the expansion of tar sands pipelines—before the next oil disaster.

People's Tribune: Vicci, tell us how you became involved.

Vicci Hamlin: My husband and I decided we wanted to put our concerns and convictions about environmental justice into action. We were involved in many protests and actions and wanted to do more. We heard about “fearless summer” and sent an email to 350.org. They informed us of an action camp in Stockbridge, Michigan with a group called the MI CATS. Even though it was a three and a half hour drive, and we knew none of the other activists, we were excited and feeling like this would be “special,” and it was.

We fought in the past against many forms of injustice, but climate justice was close to our hearts. It was an incredible weekend, and the decision was made by my husband and I to do a direct action against the

Enbridge corporation and the 6b expansion pipeline. We knew there was a chance of arrest and that one of us would need to be out of jail, the support person for the other. I chose to be the one that locked down with three others. We all believed deeply that if these dirty tar sands weren't stopped, it would be as James Hanson had said, “game over” for future generations and our beautiful planet.

PT: What danger does tar sands extraction pose to our children and humanity?

VH: Grave danger. It emits more greenhouse gases than any other form of production. If not stopped, I fear that my grandchildren and all God's children will suffer and if not die, wish they could!

PT: What was your charge and sentence?

VH: We were charged with a felony charge of assault/resist/obstruct and a misdemeanor charge of trespassing. Three of us decided to take it to trial and were found guilty by a jury on both

counts. Our bond was revoked and we were immediately taken to jail where we spent 34 days. At our sentencing, we were given time served—13 months probation and over \$42,000 in restitution to Enbridge, plus \$746.00 in fines for each of us.

PT: Why did the government come down so hard on you?

VH: I believe they wanted to make examples of us. As I told the judge on the day of our sentencing, “You may believe if the penalties are severe enough resistance will falter and eventually die, but you are wrong!” Also the police force were paid by Enbridge to protect their pipelines and who knows who else?

PT: What kind of support did you get?

VH: So much support. Over 500 postcards each while in jail, both nationally and internationally, plus fund raisers in Chicago, Detroit, New York, Texas, just everywhere. Countless blogs, social media, radio and television interviews, newspaper articles... amazing support!

PT: What is your vision of a new society that cares for the earth and its people?

VH: One that values love over fear—people over profit.



Barbara Carter, one of three women jailed after locking themselves to heavy machinery to protest the expansion of the Enbridge tar sands pipeline. The same pipeline ruptured in 2010, gushing nearly one million gallons of tar sands crude into the Kalamazoo River, making it the largest inland oil spill in American history.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

Global Climate Convergence: Mother Earth Day to May Day 2014

By Sandy Perry

SAN JOSE, CA — A Global Climate Convergence from Mother Earth Day to May Day, 2014, seeks to bring together the scattered movements necessary to secure economic justice and planetary survival. The Convergence is calling for global mobilization and local action, including people's movement assemblies, trainings in direct action, and building legal and financial support preparing for a possible Global Climate Strike to shut down the engines of economic and ecologic destruction.

The Convergence is being promoted by a broad range of organizations, including the Green Shadow Cabinet, California Green Party, Liberty Tree Foundation, Move to Amend, Poor Peoples Economic Human Rights Campaign, North Carolina Green Party, New York Green Party, Workers United, and many more.

One of the leaders is Tim DeChristopher, who recently completed a 21-month federal prison sentence for “disrupting” an illegal federal oil and gas lease auc-

tion in Utah. “It's already too late to prevent a pretty catastrophic level of climate change,” he told Acronym TV, “but the ultimate outcome depends on what we do now. Do we act as an educated and engaged citizenry that is not afraid to hold the government accountable? Or do we act like we are afraid of our own government, and let corporations get to call all the shots?”

“Climate change is not really an environmental issue. It is a paradigm, it is the context of our times. It is a human rights issue that is the context for all our

other battles, for labor, for racial justice, against patriarchy.

“This is about overthrowing the current power structure, and reclaiming our power in a democracy, not appealing to those in power, but pressuring, confronting, or removing those in power. We cannot allow them to act like they are on our side when they profit from the status quo and have a deeply vested interest in preventing change.”

Join the Global Climate Convergence by contacting it at GlobalClimateConvergence.org.



THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CONVERGENCE

Reclaim the Earth

From the editors

We are at a political crossroad. Global warming is real. More and more scientists concur that the world must rapidly move away from a fossil-fuel powered society to save civilization from ultimate destruction. The global energy corporations won't allow it.

The masses of people must take over the giant corporations and run them in the interests of humanity. We cannot allow the earth to remain a plaything for profit in the hands of private individuals.

The environment has become a strategic battlefield against corporate power and private ownership of things indispensable to society. We have to reclaim the earth from the corporations and build a humane economic system where the environmental and economic needs of humanity are met.

American Slaves

Welcome to America
where corporations are people,
money talks, the government poisons
your food, covers up scandals, dumbs
everybody down, lies, and invades
your privacy.

— Keenan Putansu

Gold out West: The rise of 'Silicon Valley Bay'

By Women's Economic Agenda Project (WEAP)

OAKLAND, CA — The orgy of monied interests (the class interests of the one percent) represented by the struggle and negotiation taking place between technology giants, real estate moguls, speculative banksters and state interests represents an attempted reorganization of what we refer to as the Bay Area into a new symbolic location referred to as the Silicon Valley Bay Area.

The struggle to hold technology companies accountable becomes clearer and clearer as organizations like CHAM and Silicon Valley De-Bug in the South Bay, WEAP and SEIU 1021 in the East Bay and San Francisco, work to hold Goliath's like Apple, Twitter and Goldman Sachs accountable for their tax revenue, debt schemes and direct thievery of public property. San Jose, a place once known as the safest city in America is now home to the largest Tent City in the country, right up the street from Cisco and Ebay's campuses.

In the East Bay, years of assault on the Safety Net and increased attacks on public workers continues to take their toll, while unionized and non-unionized workers alike struggle to fight for their human rights. Last year, transportation workers took on management and money in a direct clash that resulted in the first transportation works strike in decades. And while the unfortunate and unnecessary death of two workers forced management to concede to demands, within a few weeks management was back up



Picket line and rally of public sector workers against Bay Area Rapid Transportation (BART) management in 2013. PHOTO/DONATED

to their old tricks, trying to pull out of their agreement on a technicality. Meanwhile, the state legislature continues to shape a law that would not only contest transportation workers' right to strike, but would make reporting "strike advocates" and trouble makers to state authorities mandatory.

In San Francisco, the workers of SEIU 1021, the employees and residents of public housing, and the students, faculty and administration of community colleges all face the increasingly menacing and unrelenting face of the enemy of displacement. San Francisco will see struggles

the likes of which it has never seen, and a city once held as a bastion of liberal thought and progressive politics could soon be the poster child for a West Coast city completely owned and operated by private interests. The workers of SEIU 1021, however, have drawn a line in the sand. They are making clear demands for something beyond a minimum wage. They are calling for a living wage. They are demanding good, quality full time jobs, safety at work, the end of racism and discrimination of all types and the end of corporate giveaways from fat cats who

already have everything.

Whether it is Chevron in Richmond or Twitter in San Francisco, Goldman Sachs in Oakland, Apple in San Jose, or Google extending its tentacles into every corner of the "Silicon Valley Bay," the one percent of this region have played their card. The call has been sounded with the move to the complete privatization of all public infrastructure. Our response must be class based, visionary and organized. Now is the time for revolutionaries to stand and provide the vision, leadership and strategy needed to point the way forward.

Moral Mondays represents a new stage of a growing movement

From the Editors

The Moral Monday movement (see articles on next page) is breaking out all over the South, from North Carolina to Georgia, from South Carolina to Florida. The common banner of the movements is "Forward Together, Not One Step Back." This growing movement represents a growing awareness, a "flashpoint" among the American people that there is something fundamentally and morally wrong with a government that operates in the interests of the corporations while denying access to even the basic necessities of life to the masses. People are moving beyond fighting scattered, defensive battles to a common movement that is going on the offensive to demand a just and moral society and a government that operates in the interests of the people. They are standing together and fighting, not back, but forward.

Alphonso Mayfield: visionary labor and culture leader



Shamako Noble of the Hip Hop Congress interviews Alphonso Mayfield (above), President of the Florida Public Services Union.

Hip Hop Congress: You've mentioned the concept of economic democracy. What does it mean to you and how is it important to the future of unions and the social movement?

Alphonso Mayfield: To me, economic democracy is about two core principles: opportunity and reinvestment. All communities should have the ability to give input into the decision making that directly benefits their daily lives. The current political process can be extremely convoluted and is in some ways intentionally muddled to not address the real issues. You combine that with the probability of issues to become politically polarized and different groups being marginalized for various reasons.

We live in a society that is shifting politically, economically, socially and environmentally. If I were to ask you to clearly describe where we would be in ten years as a nation and as a planet you couldn't. The next ten years

will be potentially the most turbulent in our history. Would we consider an economy where the status quo is making \$7 an hour a bright future? It is hard to raise a family and build a future under those conditions. It is important for not only unions, but also all civil society groups to push for jobs that pay a real livable wage.

HHC: Do you have an example?

AM: As a nation we are transitioning from an industrial economy to a more service-based economy. In the next 20 years there will be more people employed part-time than full-time. From one perspective it means that when kids graduate from high school and college the type and quality of jobs will be ex-

tremely diminished. The type of job that my father, my mother and to a lesser extent I need, to raise a family and retire, is disappearing. Currently, there is no real alternative presented and things are getting worse.

HHC: As a labor leader and past cultural worker, what are your thoughts on the power and the use of culture in social movements, and how can we begin to use it more effectively?

AM: I think, the progressive left has often taken the Hip Hop community for granted. In the same breath, I would say that the Hip Hop community has been extremely ineffective in using its base and capital to ensure outcomes that better benefit our interests. Shamako, if you remem-

ber, the 2004 Hip Hop Congress was a leader in grassroots organizing trying to galvanize voters around the importance of collective action. Our mistake is that many organizations in Hip Hop, including ours, in good faith, let other organizations pimp us and other allies. These shell groups got millions and reinvested none of it. The monies got pocketed and our people were ill served. I would like to think we are older and wiser now, but that's just one example. Hip Hop is a \$10 billion enterprise. Artists often get manipulated and used for their work. In large part it is because we haven't used our collective bargaining power in a way that creates a market that we own, operate, profit and reinvest from. That needs to be changed.

Moral Monday movement for justice in North Carolina

The People's Tribune interviews Melissa Hassard who is active in North Carolina's Moral Monday movement.

People's Tribune: Melissa, where is the Moral Monday movement at today?

Melissa Hassard: The almost 1,000 arrests for civil disobedience from last summer are now going to trial. Two retired judges were brought back to handle all of the Moral Monday cases, and they are returning mixed verdicts. While most arrestees have had their charges dismissed, some have been found guilty. Marches and events are being held throughout the state. The NAACP participated in the protest at the governor's mansion on coal ash. There was a Fayetteville Moral Monday and the next is in Iredell County. When the legislature meets in May, there will be another in Raleigh. The NAACP has also been working on legal and political action responses to the Dan River Duke Energy mess, school vouchers, and voter suppression.

PT: How is the movement building unity to support its goals?

MH: It is deeply moving to see so many groups coming together to support each others' interests. Represented are citi-

zens from every socio-economic status, every race and creed. My favorite protest sign so far: "There are so many issues I couldn't pick just one." Rev. Barber talks about justice, love for each other, respect. The crowd is absolutely in accord.

But so far the large numbers, marches, rallies, protests, calls, e-mails and noise have not swayed the Tea Party-led North Carolina General Assembly. So now the work begins for a large voter turnout this year in elections. The base is energized.

PT: Discuss the unity between the state government and the giant corporations.

MH: Governor Pat McCrory worked for Duke Energy for 28 years. Since he took office, the state's environmental agency has blocked lawsuits over Duke's 32 coal ash ponds, before the coal ash spill that dumped 39,000 tons of coal ash into the Dan River.

PT: What are the people's demands?

MH: That's tough to say without some broad-sweeping idea like "justice." Over 500,000 North Carolinians lost their federal long-term unemployment. That means 500,000 people are no longer receiving federal as-



In February, a broad, diverse coalition of thousands of social justice activists mobilized by the Moral Monday Movement rallied in downtown Raleigh, NC. PHOTO/UNITED WORKERS

sistance because of a decision at the state level. North Carolina was the only state to discontinue longterm unemployment insurance. Additionally, 250,000 cannot get Medicaid because the federal offer to expand Medicaid was rejected. Rev. Barber asked the Governor to reverse his decision and expand Medicaid. It looks like that's not going to happen, though.

There are a lot of issues going on within the state, from all that I've previously mentioned to new legislation affecting our teachers to the Duke Energy coal ash spill in the Dan River. You could say the people are demanding a lot these days.

PT: What is the next step?

MH: Next is a massive initiative to register voters and make sure

voters have their state-issued ID, which is now a requirement to vote because of the new anti-voter laws that passed last summer. There will be a 50th Anniversary of "Freedom Summer" initiative which will be heavy on the voter registration front. And the coal ash spill has become a tremendous issue -- there will likely be an NAACP event in Eden at the Dan spill site.

Moral Monday fights on in Georgia

By Tim Franzen,
American Friends Service Committee

ATLANTA, GA — We were all inspired by North Carolina's launch of the Moral Monday movement last year, and as 2014 approached, many of us in Georgia came to believe that the Moral Monday model could be an effective southern strategy.

Since Georgia's 2014 session began, an emerging coalition has managed to pull off mobilizations at the state's capitol every week. So far, over 30 Moral Monday Georgia coalition members participated in very principled nonviolent civil disobedience.

We are young, we are old, we are black, we are white, we are gay, we are straight, we are men, and we are women. Many of us are very religious, some are not. As a group, we are not aligned with one political party. We have many differences. We are people who would normally not mix, but there is something that has brought us all together for a cause we believe so deeply in that we have been willing to

put our freedoms on the line.

We believe that Georgia has been high-jacked by an extreme radical agenda that our state simply can no longer afford. Year after year we see a budget and tax code that benefits a few at a cost to everyone else. We see the standard of living going down for the overwhelming majority for the benefit of those that already have so much. We see the majority of our state's politicians acting in the interest of big business to the detriment of everyday Georgians.

So we have come together to build a Moral Movement in our state to remind our elected officials who they are accountable to. We believe our state budget is a Moral document, and that all Georgians should benefit from our state's prosperity, not just the rich. We are in a crisis of economic priority, not one of economic resource; we know there is enough to go around.

So far over 30 of us have been willing to put our freedom and public records on the line to bring attention to this extreme radical agenda. We have risked



Moral Monday protest in Georgia. PHOTO/MORAL MONDAY, GA

our freedom because we believe that everyday Georgians are worth fighting for. We believe our standard of living should be on the rise, not decline. We believe there's enough to go around. We believe that the least of these is worth fighting for. We believe that a Georgia that prioritizes education, health care, women's rights, LGBTQ rights, good jobs with fair wages, fair

housing practices, racial justice, and environmental justice is possible and worth fighting for.

Our challenge is to build together, work through all the historic mistrusts that have enabled a small group of the super rich to keep our communities divided. We have passed the point where we can afford to wait. This year's legislative session has seen corporate sponsored attacks

on women, workers, the LGBTQ community, voter's rights, our schools, even churches.

They are trying to turn the clock back on fifty years of human progress. There's a struggle ahead, and it may take years to build the kind of people power that transforms Georgia's political landscape but it is the inevitable task of the time.

City of Detroit retirees' healthcare slashed

By Al Gladysck

DETROIT, MI — ‘When severe cuts to retiree health care are included, former city workers are likely to recover no more than about 30% of what the city says they are owed. The city proposed paying less than one-third of its retiree health-care liabilities to a newly created trust fund over 20 years.’ (Wall Street Journal 2/21/14).

No Jobs, No City

The healthcare of all of us, not just auto retirees is being separated from production to increase corporate profits. We are in a period of economic transformation. Machines that made us more productive are being replaced by machines that can produce for our needs with little or no human labor involved.

In 1950 the population of Detroit was 1,849,568 and there were 296,500 people working in manufacturing with an average income of \$33,962 in today's dollars. In 2010 the population of Detroit was 713,777 and there were 27,901 people working in manufacturing with an average income of \$27,808 in today's dollars.

The population fell by 61%, manufacturing jobs fell by 91%,

income from manufacturing wages fell from \$10 billion to \$775 million (a drop of 92%), and the unemployment rate increased by 349%.

In 1947 there were 3272 manufacturing firms in Detroit. By 2002, there were only 647 manufacturing firms in the city. That is a drop of 80% in manufacturing firms.

Without manufacturing jobs, retail fails.

In 1948, there were 18,242 retail stores employing 114,038 people earning \$3.9 billion in wages. In 2002, there were 2179 retail stores employing 14760 people earning \$576.9 million. This is a decline in stores of 88%, a decline in employees of 87%, and a decline in wages of 85%.

Without retail jobs, wholesale fails.

In 1948, there were 3606 wholesale warehouses employing 45,079 people earning \$1.5 billion in wages. In 2002, there were 611 wholesale warehouses employing 10,153 people earning \$400 million in wages. This is a decline in warehouses of 83%, a decline in employees of 78%, and a decline in wages of 73%.

Corporate Solution

The basis of our social relationship—a job, and the benefits

related to it—are disappearing.

Medicare For All was rejected by Congress and the Administration in favor of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

About 23,000 City of Detroit retirees, with pensions averaging about \$19,000 a year, will have their healthcare slashed by 85%. This is what the state government, in the person of Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr, is proposing to the federal bankruptcy court.

Just as in the case of the UAW Voluntary Employee Beneficiaries Association (VEBA), the city is using an accounting rule to calculate an imaginary liability of \$6 billion to create a \$500 million underfunded VEBA, isolated from city revenues leaving retiree healthcare dependent on penny stocks and junk bonds.

Another Way

We must support a new independent political direction for a new social relationship based on human needs. We need a social relationship based on the production and distribution of healthcare, housing, education, food, clothing, transportation and the general wellbeing of everyone and not for the select few owners of the new means of production.



Demonstrators protest the Detroit bankruptcy at the Federal courthouse in the city. PHOTO/DAYMONHARTLEY.COM

Readers respond to People's Tribune articles

A comment on, “Public Education” by Detra Aikens

“Public education is, indeed, in crisis. What happens outside of school has such a profound impact on what happens in school. And unfortunately, it is very likely that the majority of Chicago Public School students come from a home that is defined as “unstable” rather than stable. Why not shift curriculum to make it more relevant to the children that attend these schools. And I don't mean making it easier, but children can learn better when they can relate to what is being taught. Also, it's tragic that our society is complacent with statistics such as 18% of students are homeless or living in shelters. This statistic is truly appalling!”

— Kristi

A comment on “Tar Sand Oil Transported to Gulf Coast Via Mobile, Alabama” by Kimberly McCuiston.

“Why is it always that the poor will suffer the rich getting richer?”

— Kathryn Wolfe

A comment on, “Maine wants homeless people to go away,” by Diane Nilan

“During the Great Depression my grandmother, the poorest of the poorest of poor, still fed the homeless from her back door. We only had a Great Recession, I'm afraid to say that I am ashamed of the US.”

— Catherine M. J. Evans

A comment on “Unsolved murders, Karrington Penny, and corporate power” by Rev. Edward Pinkney

“It sounds to me like Benton Harbor's leadership needs to be replaced with one that has respect, empathy, and genuine concern for all of its constituents. The current leadership along with its corrupt actors is begging to be replaced.”

— Kenneth Yarbrough

You can read the above articles by going to our website at www.peopletribune.org and doing a search for the title.

How Can We Live Free?

From the moment you are born till the moment you die...
The meter is ticking and you must pay to survive.
The medicine man is no longer free,
Hope you have enough to pay for his fee.
Need a roof over your head?
The price this room doesn't come cheap.
Food for your child?
No chance of finding it in the wild.
This land has been claimed,
Show me the permit to hunt for that game!
Try picking some food off a tree,
Gets you a ticket quick as one two three.
You're tired, you say? Here, take a seat!
Oh wait, rest for a minute and you might get beat.
It's a crime to sit down, a crime to sleep.
It's a crime to be poor and to be in the street.
How can we live, how can we be free,
When they've taken from us all that we need?
Sharing the pie is not so hard,
But they have stolen the biggest parts!
Leaving the rest of us to fight for the crumbs,
Slaving away makes us so numb...

— Julianna Cheng

Interview with California governor candidate Luis J. Rodriguez

People's Tribune: Luis, what is your program to eliminate poverty?

Luis J. Rodriguez: California is the richest state in the nation and the 8th largest economy in the world. Yet it has the worst poverty rate of any state—almost 24 percent. There are close to 9 million poor people, some three million since Jerry Brown has been governor. Why?

“Income inequality” is endemic to the capitalist system. Whether run by Democrats or Republicans, the state is beholden to the wealthy and powerful, who buy up large parcels of land, tear up homes, poison our land, water and air. California is the only place on the planet that does not charge oil companies for “severing” the oil from the land. This alone would result in billions of dollars.

Overhauling the almost \$8 billion dollar prison system—possibly the largest state-sponsored poor people’s housing—will also provide funds. It’s time for the poor and working class to organize in its interests, to make its own policies that ensure everyone can thrive. My slogan is, “Imagine a New California.” Then we organize to make this happen.

PT: How can the 99% fight and get free quality education and health care for everyone?

LJR: Along with material poverty there is the poverty of access. Education and healthcare are necessities—and everyone should have direct and free access to them. Teachers and health care professionals should be adequately trained and compensated. The privatization of these necessities makes them costlier and limited. We must align resources to social needs—everyone should have adequate food, clothing, shelter, and also education and healthcare. This is a public charge.

PT: What is your position on immigration?

LJR: All residents, whether they have documents or not, should be given the same rights and benefits as anyone else. And I would do whatever possible to end deportations. We need to look at the impact of runaway industries, cheap labor markets, and policies like the North American Free Trade Act that have forced massive U.S. mechanized agribusinesses to compete with poor household or community milpas in Mexico or Central America. This drives more people away from their homes and countries. The Green Party of California’s program says we are all interconnected—what happens in California can be a revolutionary example for others. At the same time, we



Luis J. Rodriguez. The slogan of the Rodriguez for California Governor Campaign is “Imagine a New California.” PHOTO/MICHAEL CENTENO

are tied to a global economy. A major aspect of my job is to clarify the links, to unveil the web that has poor and working class people caught in destitution and despair—and to help draw out the direction, strategies and actions that can remove us from these shackles.

It’s time to unite as many progressives, poor and work-

ing class people as possible, around the issues that matter. The Luis J. Rodriguez for Governor campaign is more than a campaign—it’s a movement. In our wake we plan to orient and train new leaders, to set up networks and schools for revolutionary change. We aim to not just organize, but to win.

To find out how to get in-

involved, please go to www.rodriguezforgovernor.org. We need donations of money and time—we are a ground up, grassroots campaign that will not have big corporate donations. Despite the great odds, we are determined to build something new and vibrant in California.

Homeowners fight attempts to brand them criminals

By Chuck Parker and Gerri Watson

DESERT HOT SPRINGS, CA — Fifteen homeowners who have fought foreclosure for five years called a town meeting at the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Ontario, CA on March 8 where they invited a civil rights organization from Compton, CA—the National Association for Equal Justice in America—to come in to help them fight for their rights in a county court system that is shutting them out.

Homeowners gave examples of how court clerks admitted to backdating documents, and how their homes were supposedly sold at auction on dates when no auctions took place. One told how their lender took out a \$100,000 second mortgage on their home, which raised their payment by \$500 per month, without even notifying them. Another, who qualified for a loan modification under the program

offered by President Obama several years ago, found herself worse off because of it, after her payments were bumped up double after a year or so. Several homeowners, including an 85-year-old woman who had lived in her house for 40 years, described how Sheriff’s deputies arrived at their homes early in the morning and demanded that they get out in 20 minutes or go to jail. Four families that were not present in the meeting were removed from their homes at gunpoint. One person had at least 24 guns cocked and pointed at her person. A couple had 18 guns pointed at them. One was a Purple Heart veteran forced out of his home nude, on open display to neighbors on the front lawn.

“They are not satisfied with calling us deadbeat homeowners. Now they are labeling us domestic terrorists for fighting for our rights and our homes,” said Gerri Watson. She described

how her sister, Barbara Bratton, was arrested in June of 2013 on charges of domestic terrorism. She followed one judge’s instructions to go to the county recorder’s office and put her name back on the title of her home. Barbara was probably charged by the Department of Homeland Security because she innocently used a corrective deed template that contained the words, “woman of God,” “sovereign,” and “constitutional rights.” A directive containing that language as an alert was sent out by the FBI in order to target a growing group of individuals calling themselves Sovereign Citizens, with which Barbara has no affiliation, nor subscribes to. Barbara, who had never even been arrested before, has been forced to wear an ankle bracelet for six months, while awaiting trial.

Sadly, these cases are not isolated. Other innocent families and responsible homeowners fear the same while they are



Gerri Watson, a spokesman for the Ontario Homeowners displayed five myths used to discredit and discourage people from fighting foreclosures. PHOTO/CHUCK PARKER

pursuing their cases for wrongful foreclosure, while the judicial system continues to fail and prosecute them. Because of the scurrilous practices of foreclosing mill law firms and services, that people have labeled “Slash

and Burn” crews, the Unlawful Detainer Courts, and Sheriff’s Departments have become the complicit enforcers of injustice and violators of civil rights—trespassing on the constitution.

Benton Harbor under the face of new Jim Crow

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

BENTON HARBOR, MI — The new face of Jim Crow is all across the county of Berrien in Michigan. The prosecutor, sheriff, County Clerk's Office and the Mayor, James Hightower of Benton Harbor, are making it harder and harder for African-Americans to exercise their fundamental right to sign a recall petition and to vote.

In Benton Harbor, an effort has been going on to recall the Mayor and some city council members. Community members say the measures used to stop this effort include intimidation, harassment, threatening and kicking in doors of those who signed the recall petition. The message is clear: Do not recall

anybody we the one percent put in office or you will go to jail. The whole city is under siege today. (This includes economic siege. The bankrupt city claims they are out of debt but they just borrowed \$2.3 millions to pay creditors.)

Voter suppression is a strategy to influence the outcome of an election by discouraging or preventing people from exercising their right to sign a petition for a recall of an elected official. Voting rights are attacked under the pretext of preventing "voter fraud." The rights of citizens of Berrien County or any other county or state to vote or sign a petition should not be denied or abridged by government. The Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution pro-

hibits the federal and state governments from denying a citizen the right to vote based on that citizen's "race, color, or previous condition of servitude".

I want everybody to know the democracy in Benton Harbor, and throughout the country, is being destroyed. It is being destroyed because democracy is incompatible with a system that breeds wars for profit and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a tiny group of billionaires. No section of this ruling elite will defend democratic rights. That task falls to the America's working class.

It is not one thing, it's everything. We are now under the power of the corporations, elites and dictators. Do not allow the corrupt government to suppress



Rev. Pinkney speaking at a protest against the city's Emergency Manager. PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK

our voting rights. We must organize and demonstrate that we have rights. We must fight for a new world where those rights are achieved.

Flint activists put Emergency Manager on notice

By Nayyirah Shariff

FLINT, MI — On March 3, 2014, activists from the Democracy Defense League called out Flint's Emergency Manager, Darnell Earley, and Mayor Dayne Walling, by reading a rebuttal statement after the mayor's annual 'State of the City Address.'

In the statement, the group pointed out the audacity of the mayor going through his charter mandated role while the office of the Ombudsman, a position mandated in Flint's charter as the people's watchdog, has been eliminated by Flint's Emergency Manager.

The statement juxtaposes tax cuts and abatements given to oligarchs such as Uptown Reinvestment Corporation and their shell corporations with increased fees, rate hikes, and millages paid by Flint residents. So far the emergency manager has imposed illegal street light fees, garbage fees, water and sewer fee increases, and raised the renter water deposit fee to \$465. The Emergency Manager has given Uptown Reinvestment Corporation \$880,000 in Community Development Block Grant dollars to demolish a building Uptown illegally purchased for \$1.

Excerpts:

In Flint, democracy is dead. What you just saw was not democracy in action, but a sham. The charter says that the mayor has to give a state of the city ad-



Supporters surround Nayyirah Shariff as she presents a rebuttal to the Mayor's 'State of the City Address.'

PHOTO/STEPHANIE HACKNEY

dress at least once a year... per Public Act 436 (the Emergency Manager law), the Emergency Manager replaces both the mayor and the city council.

Today's speech is a distraction... The real story is between the lines. The real rulers of Flint who meet behind closed doors with (Gov.) Rick Snyder's donors just need a figurehead, and maybe someone to take the heat.

Breaking promises frees up a lot of cash for those corporations. They play with your money just like the banks did. First came hikes in water and sewer fees. The Emergency Manager said it was to cover the cost of water, and Walling didn't have a speech for you then. Turns out, they want to use it as a tax to plug the deficit that Rick Snyder's buddies created.

...And a demeaning and insulting "directive" singling out

Councilman Mays that attempts to "put him in his place" by exerting illegitimate executive power and authority at the expense of the residents he was elected to represent.

Let's not forget crime. Not corporate crime of course. Not the kind of crime that you solve through independent audits or by using the ombudsman, like the charter requires. Not the kind of crime solving that keeps democracy alive...

A rigged, lucrative game for oligarchs is not a democracy...

Flint's democracy may be dead, but the people of Flint have worked miracles before.

The full statement can be read at: www.scribd.com/doc/210264189/The-State-of-Flint-Under-Emergency-Management

Appeal to People's Tribune readers

With tax returns coming in, some of us find ourselves fortunate to have some extra cash on hand this spring. If you find yourself with some extra money and are in a position to share, the People's Tribune will put your donation to work. The People's Tribune offers its pages to those in the movement who want to get coverage of their struggles out to others. At the same time it offers analysis, direction and solutions to the problems our society faces. We tell the truth!

We operate on a shoestring budget, with a dedicated all-volunteer staff. Printing, shipping and mailing costs have continued to rise. As an independent press, we rely exclusively on donations. While donations and sustainers are increasing, they are not meeting our expenses.

Simply stated, we need money. We need to raise \$15,000. Your regular donations, large and small are the only solution. For instance, 26 sustainers at only \$25 per month, plus 60 sustainers at only \$10 per month equals \$15,000 annually.

Please become a consistent, regular donor to the People's Tribune. Become a monthly sustainer now. Donate via pay pal at www.peopletribune.org or send check to PO Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654-3524.

Thanks in advance.

— The Editorial Board of the People's Tribune

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