

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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DONATION \$1



Thousands rally in Detroit against the water shut-offs to thousands of low-income residents. Speakers hold corporations and bankers responsible and demand that water be turned back on. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

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WATER WARS AND THE FIGHT FOR A NEW SOCIETY

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THEY ARE ALL OUR CHILDREN

EDITORIAL

A humanitarian crisis involving Central American children seeking to enter the U.S. has been in the making for a long time. It only recently exploded onto the news, due largely to intentional coverage by media pundits and certain elected officials. Their purpose is partly to confuse and divide the public as to the causes of their declining standard of living by scapegoating immigrants. Another likely purpose is to shape public opinion around immigration reform in the interests of the corporations.

These predominantly Central American children are victims of decades of U.S.-sponsored war, genocide, the overthrow of democratically elected governments, the U.S.-backed drug trade and “war on drugs,” and the consequent destabilization, poverty, and crime. They have been completing the perilous (up to) 1500-mile journey. They seek to reunite with their families in the U.S. from whom, due to the stagnation of immigration reform, they have been separated. For those who have not made it, their remains are being found in unmarked mass graves or on the properties of ranchers. It is estimated that by the end of the year 90,000 children will be in ICE custody.

Striking to the heart of our morality, the best and worst of America is coming out. Tea Party members, Minutemen, and other self-proclaimed patriots, forewarned of arriving buses, blocked the streets to prevent this so-called “invasion.” Spokesmen claimed the children are harboring communicable diseases and are gang members and portals for drugs to the U.S. In stark contrast was the outpour-



Mother, aged 22, and her child, were transported from Texas by immigration authorities to California. She answers questions at a press conference in San Bernadino, CA, July, 2014.

PHOTO/CHUCK PARKER

ing of sympathy by people of all backgrounds and creeds who offered to take in the children, proclaiming: “they are all our children.”

The United Nations has clearly stated that the children are refugees and thus qualify for international protections. Instead, President Obama seeks to reverse a 2008 Bush era policy favoring Central American refugees, in order to expedite faster deportations to the countries of origin. Mexican immigrants are currently immediately deported. He has requested \$3.7 billion for costs of processing and repressive security measures.

The children are not to blame! These innocent children are coming due to imperialist policies of our government that spread war and destruction in order to insure maximum profits for U.S. corporations.

Increasingly, in this era of high technology, human life has no value to corporations who need less and less labor, whether U.S. or foreign born. But the corporations do need certain kinds of labor, and they want their own brand of immigration “reform” to serve their needs. We must fight for a reform law that serves human needs.

Those living in the U.S. are feeling the sting of austerity measures, job losses, and an uncertain future. Immigrants are not the cause of the problem.

When 87 individuals hold more wealth than half of the world’s population, that is the problem. A global economic system based on private property of the few that has nothing to offer other than displacement, austerity and death is not in humanity’s interests. All children are our children. Let us construct a new society that benefits all of us. We must start by supporting the call to stop all deportations and support family reunification. We are one class.

Be part of this movement!

Donate to the People’s Tribune so we can keep getting the truth out about the children. Order bundles of papers at 50¢ each. Call 800-691-6888 or order on our website at 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

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.

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Deadlines for articles and art: The deadline for articles, photographs and other art is the first of each month for the issue that comes out at the beginning of the following month. For example, the deadline for the June issue is May 1. Articles should be as short as possible, and no longer than 500 words. We reserve the right to edit articles to conform to space limitations.

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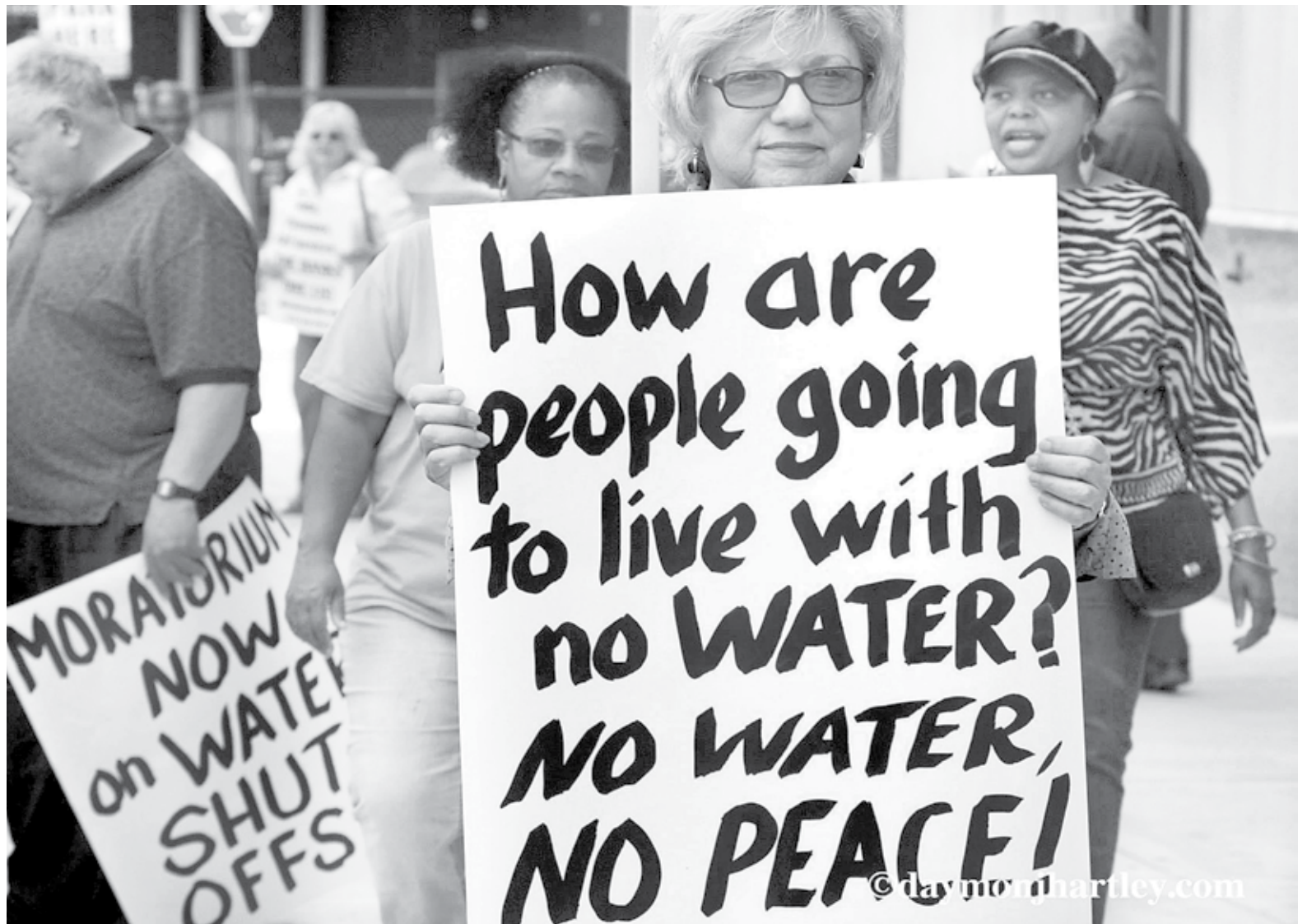
Water wars and the fight for a new society

COVER STORY

Detroit resident Nicole Hill, a single mother, recently told the L.A. Times what it's like to not have water in your home. "It's frightening, because you think this is something that only happens somewhere like Africa," she said. At the time, she had been without water for six weeks.

She is not alone. In April, Detroit set a target of cutting service to 3,000 customers a week who were more than \$150 and two months delinquent on their payment, and began cutting people off. The city plans to cut off hundreds of thousands of people by the end of the summer. The elderly, children, disabled—it doesn't matter. If you can't pay, you get cut off. United Nations officials have pointed to Detroit's water cut-offs as a violation of both international law and human rights. There is something fundamentally wrong with a system that cannot even guarantee people water in their homes in a modern society.

The truth is the economic system based on private ownership of the factories, offices, banks and other means to produce what we need is breaking down. Technology (the computer and the robot) is replacing labor, meaning the jobs are being wiped out, and the corporations and wealthy investors that own the economic system won't pay to support labor they don't need. And as the jobs disappear, markets and opportunities disappear too. The corporations and the elected officials have merged together to manage an economy that benefits these pirate corporations and to suppress any dissent. In Detroit, they want to sell off the Water Department to one of their corporate friends. If they privatize it, water stops being a human need that all have a right to, whether or not you can pay for it. It is another



Protest against Detroit's plans to cut off water to hundreds of thousands of people. Detroit's poverty rate is 40%. The only solution is for water to be publicly owned and distributed according to need. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

er step toward the fascist agenda we see unfolding across the country today, including imposing an unelected and unwanted emergency manager system in Detroit and elsewhere in Michigan.

In Detroit alone, 400,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared. Forty percent of the city's people live in poverty. As jobs and businesses vanished, the tax base shrunk. City officials had to choose whether to provide services to the people or pay the Wall Street financiers who hold the city's debt—and they chose to pay Wall Street. The corporations saw to it that the governor appointed an emergency manager for Detroit that

would be friendly to their needs, corporate attorney Kevyn Orr. He replaced the elected government and reigns over the city as a dictator. His job is to make the city profitable for the corporations again by cutting wages, pensions, services, whatever it takes. Water is on the chopping block too, and the unpaid water bills are seen as "bad debt" that the city needs to take care of to make the system more attractive to Wall Street financiers.

What is happening in Michigan, the heart of the "Rust Belt," is a forewarning of what to expect in other cities. Human rights to food, water, housing or anything else are no longer important.

As Martin Luther King said, "Why is it that people have to pay water bills in a world that is two-thirds water?" Today we can produce an abundance of everything we need. The only thing standing in the way of us ending poverty forever is private ownership of the economy. Either we move to a system where we own the means of production and distribute everything according to need, or we starve (or die of thirst) under private property. A good place to start is to demand that that Detroit turn the water on. Water must be publicly owned and never subjected to private ownership. There is no other way to provide for people.

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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. 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. Send donations to People's Tribune and send to P.O. Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654. You can also donate via Paypal at www.peopletribune.org.

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The fight for homeless rights is a fight for the commons

By Mike Zint

SAN FRANCISCO — For the homeless and the housed. We are, 'First they came for the homeless.'

Our summer of occupation began June 1 in San Francisco. A small number of homeless people began occupying the only San Francisco Staples location. The battle for the commons, the

U.S. Post Office, has begun. For eight days we promoted a boycott of Staples, in protest of the unconstitutional privatization of the publicly owned Post Office, using near-minimum wage

Staples employees with no background checks or training, handling the mail. The Post Office is not broke. They want to break it. So for eight days we said no.

On the ninth day we moved to Senator Diane Feinstein's office. She and her billionaire financier husband, Richard Blum, have connections to Staples and have been pushing Post Office privatization. We held out there for four days against increased police pressure. At that point we went to the Federal Reserve. All hell broke loose. The last time we stayed more than a single night we occupied the sidewalk outside the Fed for nine months.

We were immediately targeted by DPW (Department of Public Works) and the SFPD. Numbering from two to six people, we stood against illegal, unconstitutional assaults by the SFPD. We even recorded a cop saying the Constitution does not cover

protests.

What DPW did was worse. We recorded them using Simple Green, which is toxic (check the Internet), out of an unmarked bottle. They used bleach and pine. They used a water canon mounted on a tanker truck on us. This is policy from the San Francisco city government. It's illegal, unconstitutional and against the Geneva Conventions. The city is guilty of crimes against humanity, which we have documented.

We lasted there one week. Unlike most of the homeless who are forced to endure the torture because they have nowhere to sleep but on the streets, we left.

We are currently protesting at the Staples location in Berkeley, CA. We have been here 19 days. Things are just starting to heat up. The police are acting illegally. We are documenting it. In the day we protest Staples, at night we protest for the right to sleep. The battle for the commons, and our human rights, continues.

You can follow us on Facebook at 'First they came for the homeless.'



Members of the 'First they came for the homeless' and Stop Staples campaigns, at their 24-hour table outside the Berkeley, CA Staples.

PHOTO/SARAH MENEFFEE

DC's family homelessness crisis



This protest against unjust foreclosures is on the way to Chase Bank in Southwest Detroit.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

By Eric Sheptock

WASHINGTON, DC — The depth of the family homelessness crisis in Washington, DC "hit home" for me in mid-October, 2008. At a special meeting, DC City Council members were in a rush to make immediate cuts to the Dept. of Human Services, to avoid even more hurtful "double cuts" later on. There is something fundamentally wrong when the White House and Con-

gress could find \$1.3 trillion to pump into corporations that gambled away billions, but the DC City Council right between them could not even maintain the social safety net.

By March 2009, family homelessness in the DC Metro area had increased 25% in one year. Advocates for the homeless completed a video campaign to convince the DC Council that we needed more shelter. Yet a year later, when they were grilled for

overcrowding homeless families, the DC Council claimed that they hadn't seen the increase coming.

They added 18 rooms to the existing family shelter, and in the fall of 2011 another 118 rooms to the dilapidated and defunct DC General Hospital shelter. Now, less than three years later, the building is falling apart.

The government is presenting itself as a hero for rushing to remove families from the deteriorating shelter when, in fact, it allowed the building to fall into disrepair in the first place. This is strikingly similar to how they remove poor families from public housing: they promise to rebuild and allow people to return at the same rent levels — a promise that is often broken.

For three and a half years, homeless advocates asked DC Mayor Vincent Gray to do more for the homeless in general and families in particular. He responded with reluctance, refusal, and minimal accommodation, blaming homeless families for being "lazy and shiftless" and "gaming the system".

In the winter of 2013-14 the number of homeless families exceeded 700, and were put in DC hotels, recreation centers, and Maryland hotels. Maryland County governments said they didn't

want the District's homeless. DC had to be court-ordered to stop placing families in the rec centers, where they had to go days without showers, sleep with the lights on, and endure a lack of privacy.

Now DC has a budget surplus of \$300 million from fiscal year 2013, and the Mayor wants to put the surplus into a rainy-day fund to maintain the District's AAA credit rating. When the economy goes south, lack of funds is the excuse for denying services to the poor. When times are good, maintaining healthy finances is the excuse for denying services to the poor.

After six years of economic downturn and the spike in the number of homeless families, the administration still conveniently claims to be unaware of the increased need. They get away with this because we the leaders have failed to teach and rally the people to assert their right to remain in the city and to challenge the government's lies. This must change. Let's invest in housing our homeless families. Human life is worth more than a credit rating. Let's stop gentrification, and make it possible for low-income families and individuals to remain in DC.

Prisoners donate to People's Tribune!

If a prisoner who makes pennies an hour can donate to the People's Tribune, so can you! A prisoner writes, "I so love my People's Tribune. I am enclosing \$21.50 in postage stamps. I see your vision. I see the discrepancies in the system; the pain and suffering it causes our poor neighborhoods, forcing parents to sneak around like thieves when it is the elected officials who have their cake and eat it too." Please send your donation today. The People's Tribune gets no funding. We rely on our readers for all our financial support.

— People's Tribune Editorial Board

NC's Moral Mondays movement goes back to the capitol

By Ajamu Dillahunt

RALEIGH-DURHAM, NC — Nine months after weekly protests at the North Carolina Legislature, the Moral Monday/Forward Together Movement is in motion again. Last year, 940 people were arrested. They were outraged by the draconian measures enacted by the Tea Party majority with the support of a Republican governor. Guided by ideology and the financial backing of North Carolina millionaire Art Pope and the Koch brothers, they enacted austerity measures that are devastating the people.

Among the changes is a racist voter suppression law with ID requirements and a reduction in the length of early voting. This is aimed at discouraging Black voters from coming out on Election Day. Other measures included not extending unemployment benefits for 70,000 workers and reducing the amount of benefits and the duration from 26 weeks to from 12-20 weeks. The state also rejected the expansion of the Medicaid program to 500,000 uninsured North Carolinians. There were also attacks on women's reproductive rights and teacher tenure.

The movement is built on the foundations of six years of protest and organizing by a coalition led by the NAACP, civil rights and labor groups.

The weekly protests ended but were followed by 30 local Moral Monday events around the state. The movement has also spread around the country with movements surfacing in Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama and Tennessee. Moral Monday leader, Rev. William Barber II has been the featured speaker at events in other states. The resistance inspires people in their struggles with governments and corporations as capitalism worsens.

Just ahead of the opening of this year's legislative short session, legislators developed a new set of regulations to shut down the impending protest. They added language to the building rules that prohibit making noise and causing a disturbance.

In a bold tactical move on the first Monday of the session, Rev. Barber announced that one time and one time only the demonstrators would remain silent to show the world how the right-wing legislators were willing to silence democracy.

Several thousand lined up outside the General Assembly. The slogan, Repent, Repeal and Restore was the basis for the speeches made by health care workers and family members without healthcare, students and teachers, workers and labor leaders.

Saladin Muhammad a retired



Moral Monday protest in Raleigh, North Carolina against voter suppression laws and austerity programs, June, 2014. Over 900 people were arrested in last year's protests. PHOTO/RAY RIVERA

organizer for the United Electrical Workers Union called on the crowd to "follow the example of the low wage fast food workers and speak truth to power." He ended his speech by asking for a moment of silence for an "African-American labor leader, General Gordon Baker, whose life exemplifies the courage, determination and will of working people to fight until justice is

won."

After the speeches, the participants put tape over their mouths and filed into the General Assembly. They climbed the steps to the Rotunda, some with signs but all silent, and filed out of the building to a short rally. Again, they vowed that would be the last time they would be silent.

Many arrestees from last year's actions were found guilty.

There is a campaign to drop the charges against all arrestees led by the Southern Workers Assembly: www.southernworker.org/email-and-petitions/dropmoralmondayscharges, and supported by the US Human Rights Network: www.ushrnetwork.org/take-action/sign-petition-drop-all-charges-against-moral-monday-arrestees.

For profit prisons: No more Lumpkins!

By John Slaughter

ATLANTA, GA — Stewart Detention Center is a private, for-profit prison run by the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), located in Lumpkin, in rural South Georgia. Hundreds of immigrants are detained there awaiting deportation by ICE, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement division of Homeland Security. In June a hunger strike protested the deplorable conditions. The strike lasted only one day as prison officials launched an attack that included pepper spraying the detainees and putting the facility on a 24-hour lock-down.

The deplorable conditions included food that is several days old; maggots in the food, and the kitchen is roach-infested. Yet it is this or nothing. The air conditioning is cut off at night and inmates suffer in the sweltering heat. The showers have no hot water if they work at all. A

family member told the Atlanta Progressive News, "My husband has to beg for toilet paper. They are screamed at and treated like animals."

Pedro Guzman, a former inmate, told the ACLU, "After 20 months away from home, you lose faith, you feel worthless, this place breaks you. The constant screaming and verbal abuse the guards inflict on the detainees is just made to break your soul and handicap you."

ICE says the food meets federal standards, and state health inspectors have given Stewart a 96% rating. But that only states the obvious: it is acceptable for the State and the private corporations to brutally abuse those whom they deem to be worthless.

Here at Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia, you see the ugly face of the drive for private profit. The detainees and the other prisoners throughout the American penal system

are the throwaways, those who are no longer needed and are being excluded from society. So the exploitation rises to pathological proportions. No human being should be treated this way. As a result, CCA's revenue has risen by over 60% in just the last decade; their stock prices have risen to \$30 from less than \$3. They made more than \$301 million just last year.

The profits are extracted not just from the brutal cuts in resources, but in treating the detainees as a virtual slave-labor force. They are forced to work for \$1 to \$3 an hour at the same time they are being deprived of necessities.

The situation at Stewart is horrible, but we should not conclude that this is just an extreme example, or exceptional. It is a harbinger, an indicator of where this society is going if we do not put an end to a rapacious private property that is gobbling up every basic necessity of life,



Prison guard tower.

PHOTO/RENNETT STOWE

while at the same time more and more of us are losing our jobs or forced to work at below-poverty wages. It is private property, using the State as an instrument of force, that is standing in the way of the workers, the vast majority, who have to fight for survival, but are in reality fighting for a

cooperative society that will distribute to all according to need. Private property and the State must be abolished if we are to go forward.

No more Lumpkins!

'What's the matter with Michigan?'

By Claire McClinton

Editor's Note: The following are excerpts from a talk given by retired autoworker and community leader Claire McClinton of Flint, MI to People's Tribune supporters in Chicago in June, 2014.

Somebody needs to write a book about, "What's the Matter with Michigan?" Michigan and the emergency manager system is what we call, "a corporate coup de tat without firing a single shot." That is what's going on in Michigan.

Only a few short months after our governor got elected, the emergency manager law was passed. He got elected in November and the following March he signed Public Act 4, the emergency manager law. Shortly after that we launched a campaign to repeal the law and overturn it through a ballot referendum. We won! Within weeks, the state legislature passed and the governor signed a new emergency manager law that is not subject to repeal by the citizens of Michigan.

Now, just a little bit about what the law does. The governor is empowered to send emergency managers to a municipality or a school district in order to help alleviate a financial crisis in that particular place.

But these managers have these powers: They replace your democratically elected, local government. When they come to town the mayor, and your city commissioners step aside. Their power is usurped by the manager.

They have the right to change your collective bargaining agreements. Now, the emergency manager can sign a paper and say "Ok your healthcare is gone," just by signing an order. They call them orders, we call them edicts.

Emergency managers also have the right to control and sell off public assets the people have built and maintained for years. Examples are the public park in Benton Harbor; leasing out Belle Isle; taking over the senior centers or the Pontiac Silver Dome. Pontiac had an emergency manager too. The Pontiac Silver Dome is where the Detroit Li-

ons played in the 70's. The Silver Dome was considered state of the art and, at the time, was called the eighth wonder of the world. The public helped build the Pontiac Silver Dome and paid \$55 million to do so. The emergency manager sold it for \$500,000.

Benton Harbor, MI is important in this process because it was one of the first cities to go up under the emergency manager knife. Benton Harbor is home to Whirlpool Corporation. It has a 42% poverty rate and a majority African American population. Benton Harbor was the low hanging fruit that they picked off to get this in motion.

In that sense Reverend Pinkney, the embattled minister charged with vote fraud after leading a campaign against a corporate allied mayor, is the face of the resistance to emergency management.

We have to publicize and shine the light of day on the fascist offensive going on in Michigan. There is nothing to duplicate this model in the country, where you have one individual



The photos on this page show various protests in Detroit: for water rights, against Detroit's dictatorial emergency manager and the effort to sell off Detroit's assets. PHOTOS/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

who can write an order and do all these things.

We love Rev Pinkney. We don't want to see him go to prison.

But we don't want to see fascism take hold in this country. That's why we support Rev. Pinkney.

THOUSANDS DENIED WATER IN DETROIT

Editor's note: Water cutoffs in Detroit are spiraling out of control, reaching thousands of families every week. What's behind this is the attempt on the part of the city and the corporations to privatize the water system. We need a publicly owned water system in America. Below are excerpts from an interview with Maureen Taylor, State Chair of the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, speaking on Democracy Now!

Democracy Now: How many people are having their water cut off in Detroit?

Maureen Taylor: We're told that it's anywhere from 3,000 per month to 3,000 per week. But at our offices at Michigan Welfare Rights, we are getting 30 to 40 calls an hour where people are saying, "I'm afraid that my water is about to be cut off," or, "My water has already been cut off." So, it is scandalous.

In Michigan, it is particularly egregious, because a household that has welfare involvement, and

water is turned off with minor children in a home, means that protective services can come in and take the children out and put them in foster care. It's just scandalous.

This is an orchestrated attack by banks and corporations to enrich themselves. But when our colleagues in Canada suggested we should go to the United Nations, we jumped at the opportunity. And we are expecting the U.N. to come to Detroit, take a look at what's going on here and to make some kind of declarations about human rights violations. This is an outrage.

DN: *There's been basically no federal aid for Detroit. But seeing how banks, how auto companies got big bailouts, and Detroit was left to bleed, it's a city that's four-fifths Black, 80 percent African-American. Do you think racism is at play here?*

MT: Racism is always at play. People of color can never escape the shadow of the plantation. But we are joining this question of Black and white with green. This is about greed. This is about



the fact that there used to be about 1.4 or 1.5 million people living in Detroit. And what was popular here was Dodge Main, Chevrolet Gear and Axle, Huber Avenue Foundry, Lynch Road Assembly, Rouge Plant, the great Rouge Plant. And these factories built something called a "middle class" across the country.

Just where I live in Detroit, 400,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared. They went the way

of technology. The technology that used to enhance labor, now replaces labor. So R2-D2 robots now work at these, quote-unquote, "factories." These dinosaurs are gone. And so those good-paying jobs left with them. And, of course, you have people of color—"let's go get them first," they say. Of course, you have blue-collar workers—let's go get them first.

But this is more egregious. This no-good, trifling, backstab-

bing Kevyn Orr, the emergency manager, is getting a thousand dollars an hour. This man makes \$8,000 in one day; and a family of two, \$5,040 in a year. It's outrageous. And then to come after folks that have lost jobs, that are staying in Detroit to try to help to rebuild and repopulate my city, and then to say, "What we're going to do is turn your water off because you can't pay for it?" We're not going to tolerate it.

Organizing your life around your vision

Marian Kramer shares remembrances of her life with General Baker

Editor's note: A loved and respected revolutionary, General G. Baker, died on May 18, 2014 in Detroit, MI. The vision of a new world of peace and freedom crowned the struggles led by General. Here, Marian Kramer, shares some remembrances on their life together.

DETROIT, MI — One of my most important remembrances is our mutual work. He was active in the labor movement and I in the anti-poverty movement; but we could see these movements merging their plight together. In the early 90s, for example, the labor movement was beginning to experience similar problems as people in poverty, like high water bills. Many came to the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization as we advocated for them. Gen loved the working class and would do anything to help them get through their misery and gain an understanding of the source of their problems. Through teaching, being a student, and fighting in the working class's interest, we were able to

learn and grow together. Not only did Gen agree with the vision of a new cooperative world, he helped to develop the vision statement. He always used it in his teachings. He always taught that we can live in a better world and would go deeply into history and why it was possible today. He understood that the new technology is eliminating human labor, and also creating abundance.

Gen always had papers and books with him. Union sisters and brothers depended on him for his knowledge of where labor is going, and he always encouraged them to study. He set up groups; one was at Rouge Steel. The group studied the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, local papers and revolutionary papers, etc., to understand what was going on in the world. He wanted them to be aware that the local papers were not the only papers.

Gen had the patience to work with folks so they could see why they needed to become a revolutionary. He was a comrade to



Marian Kramer and General Baker in Detroit Michigan, 2013.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

the many women who joined the revolutionary movement. They knew he was a man they could talk to and trust.

Our family life mirrored our vision. We forged together two different families. When I married Gen, we ended up with five daughters. Before we retired, we

adopted our nephew and two nieces, who were all babies. We then had seven girls and one boy. We also have seven grand children. Our home was always open to our nieces, nephews their friends and basketball teams, etc. When we moved to Highland Park, MI, we purchased a home to accommodate all these kids.

Two families coming together is not easy, but we forged together a loving family. All the kids knew they could come over to Granny and Papa's. They always knew the refrigerator would

have a lot food for them. General loved cooking for them and being there for them.

In his final days, General said to our family and comrades, "Carry on the work!" He wanted everyone to understand they are the leaders we have been waiting for, and that it is up to all of us to carry on. Not one person can do it. He was a wonderful and caring husband, father, brother, friend and revolutionary. General will be greatly missed.

Maureen Taylor speaks to the People's Tribune on the access to water

"In Detroit, the desired outcome by the city is to sell off the Water Department to one of their corporate friends. If they privatize it, water stops being a human need that all have a right to, whether or not you can pay for it. It becomes a "corporate commodity" that can be bought and sold and kept away from low-income populations. The corporate takeover in Detroit is slowly dragging the people into madness that will only stop if the nation stands up against this latest assault. It is another step toward the march toward a fascist agenda we see unfolding across the country today, including imposing an unelected and unwanted emergency manager system in Detroit and elsewhere in Michigan."

THE RIGHT TO WATER

The denial of water to thousands living in Detroit is unconscionable. Water is the most essential requirement for all life—nothing can live without water. To withhold water from people living in a city located between Lake Huron and Lake Erie, two of the largest bodies of fresh water on the planet, exposes capitalism's naked disregard for human life. Water must be publicly, not privately, owned. Read our cover story about the Detroit water situation on page three.

— *The People's Tribune*

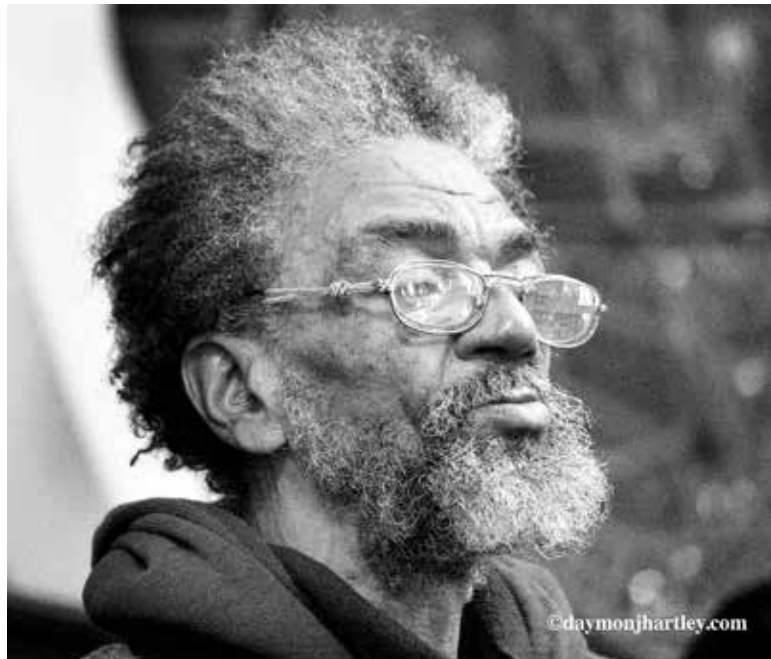
Read more about the Rust Belt:

On page 12, read about the dismantling of democracy in Benton Harbor, MI and the story of Rev Edward Pinkney.

Speakers for a New America

Invite speakers to your city who are fighting the corporate dictatorship in America's Rust Belt. Contact Speakers for a New America at 800-691-6888 or email info@speakersforanewamerica.com

'Healthcare for Some' is the strategy of the few



A participant at the Martin Luther King Day celebration in Detroit, MI. He is one of many who are waiting for "Healthcare for all."

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

By Al Gladysck

business does not support any healthcare system that will.

DETROIT, MI — Business in this country has always supported healthcare for some of us when it benefits business profits. It never benefited all of us and

In 1789 the Federal government established the Marine Hospital Service for sick and injured seamen. This healthcare service grew out of the need for

the owners of merchant ships engaged in foreign trade (for instance, cotton produced by slaves to British textile mills and finished textile goods to the United States) to keep their hired crews healthy. It was funded by a payroll tax on those crews to fund the construction of a series of publicly owned hospitals in the major ports to provide healthcare for those crews, but more importantly to isolate and treat contagious diseases.

Its name was changed in 1902 to the "Public Health and Marine Hospital Service," and again in 1912 to just the "Public Health Service," and its primary mission became the isolation and treatment of contagious diseases.

The Civil War caused hundreds of thousands of casualties, a healthcare and a political crisis on the level of a contagious disease. This led to construction of the racially segregated National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS) in 1865 for long-term care of those

veterans. It was renamed the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in 1873. Between 1865 and 1930, 11 National Homes were built and eventually became the basis for the Veterans Administration (VA) in 1930. The implementation of the Medicare program in 1966 propelled the elimination of all official forms of racial segregation in hospitals. But, today there are 350,000 veterans waiting for healthcare from the VA.

After WWII, the federal government excluded from income and Social Security taxes the cost of medical insurance provided by private employers to their workers. The purpose was to provide employers with a healthy workforce to meet the profitable demand of rebuilding the productive capacities of Western Europe and Japan.

From the early 1980s and beyond, western Europe and Japan turned from a profitable market to global competitors. This was the beginning of the drive for productivity through labor re-

placing technology (robotics) rather than labor expansion and intensification, which marked the previous 40 years.

The need for a healthy labor force declined and the tactic had to change. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is the tactic for transferring the responsibility for medical insurance from the employer to the employee in order to increase profits. It is about reorganizing healthcare for the corporations.

Healthcare for All is the strategy of the many

Healthcare for All is not a reform of Healthcare for Some. It is a strategy to establish a healthcare system to meet the healthcare needs of everyone in this country. Healthcare for Some is incompatible with that. The Republicans and Democrats will not fight for Healthcare for All because they are controlled by the corporations. It will take an independent political movement and the end of a system based on the profit of the few to achieve Healthcare for All.

What is the value of a human life?

By Women's Economic Agenda Project

Editor's note: This is a brief look at the impact of the Affordable Care Act on American lives.

OAKLAND, CA — The positive discourse in liberal political circles surrounding the Affordable Care Act (ACA, popularly called "Obamacare") sharply contrasts with the increasingly negative impact of the law on many Americans. The ACA is part of the politics of austerity, designed to ration health care for everyone except the 1%. It leaves out too many people, shortchanges too many others, and does not recognize adequate health care as a human right. It also guarantees that even more public dollars go to shore up extraordinary private health industry profits. This public money would be better spent giving health care to those the ACA left out. Then the country could see how the economics of abundance—not austerity—would benefit everyone.

In Northern California, The Women's Economic Agenda Project (WEAP) works with labor and the community to help the public see the problems with

the ACA, which has been lauded as a progressive reform. The ACA is often attacked as government control when in reality it's corporations taking over our government to profit from our illnesses.

WEAP's "Train the Trainer" sessions are open to everyone in an effort to make policy education accessible. At a recent WEAP training, testimonials of poor care under the ACA were given. One problem is that the ACA pressures to increasingly privatize health care have destroyed old safety net systems like community clinics. People spoke of very limited choices where families can get care, of fewer clinics for special populations like battered women and the mentally ill, of bureaucratic barriers finding help for a special needs child, of rural populations having very limited access to health care.

One young woman said going from county care to private insurance under ACA is so expensive that she is better off paying the fine for not signing up. Another said her local pharmacy cut her off because Medi-Cal (California's Medicaid program) privatized her care to a



Protest in Detroit for Medicare for all.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

corporation that decided "for business reasons" to drop her pharmacy. As WEAP director Ethel Long-Scott said, "just because you have health insurance doesn't mean you have access to healthcare."

Most of the \$965 billion public dollars ACA allocates go directly to subsidize private insurance companies, according to OnLabor.org's Jack Goldsmith. This increasing privatization

of previously public programs shifts the focus from people to profit. The Affordable Care Act is just one example of privatization where corporations pocket profits at the expense of the people. The reconstruction of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina was also a highly privatized profit grab where recovery was slow and painful, and people were left indebted to corporations for years to come.

Healthcare needs to be refocused on the people, not on profit-making institutions, because the Human Right to healthcare requires putting people first, not profits. Nationalizing health care for the people and not the corporations is imperative. Expanded and improved Medicare for all!

Stifling dissent – Chicago style

By Leslie Willis

CHICAGO, IL — “Unreal. I am heartbroken and speechless. It

is abhorrent to put a child and family through this!” says Nellie Cotton. In trying to get proper nursing care at school for her



Nellie Cotton introduces herself at the Bad Ass Moms picnic in May. She is part of an education movement in Chicago that is coming up against powerful corporate interests.

PHOTO/BOB SIMPSON

son, who was recently diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes, Nellie’s efforts were answered by threats from the Chicago Public Schools administration and an investigation of her and her family by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Nellie (a member of Chicago’s Badass Moms group) takes being a responsible parent to heart, organizing petition drives and protests to express her views on school policy. Why is this conscientious mother under attack? What toes has she stepped on that would warrant this venomous response by CPS? The truth is Nellie is part of a huge movement for democracy taking shape in Chicago and across the country – a movement that is coming up hard against powerful corporate interests.

Voices of opposition are getting louder and more persistent. People are protesting the practice of starving our public schools of funds, then denouncing these same schools as failures, so they can then be replaced by prof-

it making charter companies. Teachers and parents stand together at every meeting of Chicago’s appointed school board to oppose this policy. Parents stage sit-ins and even erected a tent city to protest their opposition to “turn-arounds” (a euphemism for putting a school on the chopping block). Even principal’s are speaking out.

“Every time these officials misinform the public about the impact of their policies, we need to follow them with a press conference of our own to set the record straight,” said Principal Tony Lavariere in response to a budget that pulls resources from the classrooms and tries to cut teachers pensions, only to turn over \$20 million to Supes Academy. This is the same for-profit business that the CEO of CPS, Barbara Byrd-Bennett, previously worked for.

Protesting such corruption runs smack into a wall of resistance erected by Mayor Emanuel’s administration. This is why a recent Chicago Sun-Times poll

found that only 29% of voters would vote for him today. It is bad enough that we can’t exercise any democracy in this city. On top of that, teachers and principals are threatened with being fired, and outspoken parents like Nellie Cotton are in peril.

But Chicago leaders do not stand-alone. From Benton Harbor, MI, where Rev. Pinkney is under attack for opposing a legal dictatorship and the privatizing of his town, to those getting arrested as part of the Moral Monday movement sweeping the South – the upsurge for democracy is swelling. What these assaults tell us is that even our voices can no longer be tolerated.

It is definitely time to choose a side. One side strives for a new world, where people are educated and cared for in a cooperative society. The other side demands our last drop of blood to transfuse their dying system. If we choose what is in our best interests, we’ll take the side of humanity every time.

Forward together: The fight for public education

By Lew Rosenbaum

CHICAGO, IL — Gale, Gresham and Dyett are three Chicago Public Schools. All were saved from the “to be closed list” last year. Dyett and Gresham are on Chicago’s South side, an area devastated by destruction of industry and the jobs they once provided. Public school assets have been turned over to charter schools, further reducing the number of school children. In the Spring, CPS voted to turn Gresham over to the private Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) to run the school. More recently CPS rejected a community-researched proposal to keep Dyett open. CPS CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett and Alderman Will Burns both discounted community outrage, vowing to go through with their plans.

Gale, in far north in Rogers Park, is also situated in an economically devastated zone. Charter schools have affected enrollment in Gale: one charter school, under investigation by the FBI, has a campus in the neighborhood. It drains 8th and 9th graders from Gale. This spring, the Chicago Light Brigade brought public attention to lead paint in classrooms, a faulty fire alarm, a heating system so bad that children could not stay in cold classrooms last

winter, and security cameras that do not work – to mention a few items that need to be addressed. Publicly embarrassing for the alderman, these dangerous conditions led to media attention that further forced CPS to make plans to address these problems. Plans are not actions; we await the results.

The CPS budget has just been announced. Gale will lose another \$300,000 added to the \$300,000 it lost last year. All city schools are losing an average of 2.3% of last year’s budgets. Schools that were promised extra resources (last year they “welcomed” students from closed schools) are losing an average of 5%.

This attack is not new. When it started, many thought that we could reason with CPS. If we showed them the error of their ways, they would reform.

We’ve learned some lessons. First, as one parent at Gale put it, “They just don’t care about us.” They listen to our protests and then they do what they had planned to do anyway.

Second, this is not a failed plan. CPS is accomplishing exactly what it has intended, starving public schools, privatizing education, and shifting resources to selective enrollment schools for the elite. Traditional public schools are losing mon-



Community activists hold a rally to save Dyett High School in Chicago, but the alderman refused to listen.

PHOTO/BOB SIMPSON

ey, yet the city finds \$60 million for the new selective enrollment Barack Obama College Preparatory High School.

Third, CPS actions follow an economic convulsion: in the past, education always held promise for future economic security. Now, in the automated robotics era, schooling leads to crushing student debt, not jobs.

Today we live under conditions of the complete merger of corporations and the state. We cannot expect our “leaders” to return us to democracy and prosperity any more than they will bargain with us for better schools.

Any opportunity, like the gains we have made at Gale, must be pressed throughout

Chicago, recognizing that only parents, students and teachers—the working class—have the interests of the children at heart. These are steps that can be taken for us to begin acting in our own class interests for a national solution for full funding.

Fresno, CA: The Forgotten City

By Sally Dunn

FRESNO, CA — The fallout: Financial Institutions, the near demise of the housing market. All are related to the new epidemic: SLUMLORDS!!!

Although this problem has been around for ages, it appears to be on the rise in Fresno County! Properties are sold dirt-cheap to investors who are buying blind! Not knowing the responsibility of maintaining the “investment,” roaches and vermin are the types of infestations that honest rent paying citizens are left to deal with. There is no city help and awareness of the squatter issue. If squatters get caught with a shopping cart they are fined. We blame the city for not appropriately dealing with it. Landlords are clueless as to how to handle maintenance issues!! OR THEY FLAT OUT JUST DON'T CARE—which seems to be the issue most of the time.

City offices to help—NONE!

Any type of help from the City, which would be Code Enforcement and City/Public



“Tenants Together for Renter Rights” protest at the State Capitol in Sacramento, CA.

PHOTO/DONATED

Works, seems NON EXISTANT. Calls to the Health Department are never returned due to the budget cuts (which is what I was told.) My question is, how do budget cuts affect Safety and Public Health? If these types of conditions continue, there will be a health epidemic, which will be related to the unsanitary and deplorable conditions.

Blind eyes: I can drive down the street on any given day and

see Public Works, Code Enforcement, Law Enforcement turn a blind eye to the horrible street conditions which are plagued by urine smelling sidewalks, unwanted and or dumped furniture—it’s basically just a wasteland. Why has our beloved Fresno turned into a third world country, why?

Resources to help: Tenants Together for Renter Rights, an organization for Renters rights

(statewide.) But this organization cannot do it alone. Let’s make a pledge to help rid our beloved cities (statewide) of slumlords and return our cities back to the glorious “Golden State” they used to be. If you would like to take part in the pledge, please contact Simone Weldon-Rhodes at Tenants Together (Regional Organizer) at Email: SWHA-LENR79@gmail.com

dream

I dreamed my young
homeless friends
were squatting a FEMA
camp
making it no longer a
prison
but a decent place to
live
sharing their food and
dreams
as they do in the alleys
and streets
humanizing this mean
land

a young soldier outside
its walls
looked longingly in
at this future built in
hell
by our new arising ones

— Sarah Menefee

NYC climate convergence and peoples climate march

By Sandy Perry

SAN JOSE, CA — An unusually broad cross-section of organizations is calling for the largest climate march in history in New York City this September 21. Their plan is to challenge Ban Ki-moon’s special climate summit at the United Nations to take

meaningful action in the wake of its notorious 2009 failure in Copenhagen. “This is an invitation to change everything,” said the organizers, who include unions, environmentalists, and diverse social justice groups.

A New York City Climate Convergence is also being organized from Sept 19-21 in coordi-

nation with the march. Its intention is to supplement the action with development of strategies for the system change necessary to actually reverse the destruction. Through political education, planning, and movement building, the NYC Climate Convergence will work to focus its energy on real solutions.

“The root of the problem is an economic system that exploits people and the planet for profit,” leaders said. “It is a system that requires constant growth, exploitation, warfare, racism, poverty, and ever-increasing ecological devastation to function.”

Above all the NYC Climate Convergence will have to address the urgent question of how to advance the political independence of the movement. The government of the United States is without question the most powerful protector of the fossil fuel industry in the world today, and the government is shielded by the corrupt two-party system. Abysmal climate records by both Republican and Democratic-led governments over the past decade and a half are proof that a new political approach is necessary.

President Obama’s recent incremental curbs on coal plant emissions are a case of too little, too late. As Bill McKibbin pointed out, they are mainly “mopping-up action” after victories already won in court by environmental organizations.

The administration’s failure to address other aspects of the fossil fuel industry is glaring. “Reducing carbon pollution from coal does not make fracking, tar sands oil, deep water and Arctic drilling OK,” said 2012 Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein. “The climate is spiraling into runaway warming. Obama’s promotion of cheap dirty fossil fuels makes coal regulations just window dressing on a disastrous policy.” Stein has called for a Green New Deal to create some 25 million jobs to help meet human needs and transition to a carbon-free economy.

The NYC Climate Convergence is demanding:

- Millions of jobs in renewable energy, conservation, and public transit.
- A just transition from fossil fuels and nuclear power.
- New food, water, and sanitation systems.
- An emergency transition to a new kind of economy.
- Tax the rich and slash the military budget.

A mass movement for ecological and social justice is necessary but not sufficient. It is time to unite and organize the independent political expressions of that movement.



Children leading a march against climate chaos in Richmond, California in 2013.

PHOTO/SANDY PERRY

Rainbow Gatherings: A new world birthing

By Adam Gottlieb

CHICAGO, IL — Since 1972, annual “Rainbow Gatherings” have been held in U.S. National Forests during the first week of July, bringing together thousands of people every year in one of the most fascinating Utopian experiments in history.

The annual U.S. National Rainbow Gathering is the oldest and largest, usually attracting (according to some estimates) over 20,000 people. The movement has since spread around the world, with smaller Gatherings taking place at regional, national, and international levels.

Decisively unofficial and non-hierarchical, Rainbow Gatherings have been organized over the decades through incredible collective efforts to create temporary intentional communities where all can eat, have access to water, receive medicine, and participate in abundant music, art, yoga, meditation, prayer, educational workshops, and more.

One unofficial philosophy of “Rainbow” is to view all people as Family: to treat everyone with love, respect, and kindness. Walking in, one is greeted with the words “Wel-

come Home,” “Lovin’ you,” “brother,” “sister,” etc. By necessity, there is a strong ethic of collectivity through sharing resources and volunteering service.

For me, the most amazing thing about Rainbow Gatherings has been to see with my own eyes people actually doing their best to live according to the universal moral principle: “from each according to ability, to each according to need.” What’s more, to experience the abundance, love, and magic that is possible when people trust each other enough to share.

However, there are many problems facing the Rainbow Gathering community, which can be summed up by the fact that the model is unsustainable. This is primarily because it relies upon the capitalist market economy for its necessary foods, tools, and materials. Beyond this, there are a range of problems concerning the environmental footprint left by the Gatherings, such as damage to vegetation and disposal of human waste. Despite sincere efforts on the part of individuals to “leave no trace,” Rainbow Gatherings – especially larger ones – inevitably leave a tremendous impact on the land.



At U.S. Rainbow Gatherings in Montana in 2013. July 4th is observed with a morning of silence where people assemble in a meadow, form a circle, and, at noon, chant “OM” as a prayer for World Peace. PHOTO/ROSEMARY CURTH

Finally, there is the risk of bumping up against the State: Gatherings always attract a large police presence, and conflicts with law enforcement occur often and threaten to increase as police forces around the country intensify.

The Gatherings, however, continue to grow. Why? There are many reasons, as Gatherers come from all walks of life. However, one thing they generally have in common is that they are in

one way or another disillusioned by the existing society – which at Rainbow Gatherings is typically referred to as “Babylon.” The growth of this ideological “New Age” movement indicates a shift in social consciousness toward questioning capitalism.

Indeed, evidence that society is in upheaval is everywhere. The key thing to understand about this is that jobs are being irreversibly eliminated by new labor-replacing

technologies. As electronics drive down the value of labor, more and more working-class people are forced into economically unsustainable situations. For the first time in history, the practical necessity – rather than simply the moral imperative – for a society based on sharing has emerged.

Whether or not you believe in prophecies, a new world is being born.

The struggle for affirmative action

By Raymond L. Smith

Editor’s note: This is part two of a two-part article.

NORTH LITTLEROCK, AR — In an effort to revamp the centuries of discrimination in education and employment that existed between Blacks and whites, affirmative action became a federal project. Arthur Fletcher, political activist and consultant, created the idea. In time, affirmative action was expected to “level the playing field” by helping minorities acquire positions that had traditionally excluded them. If a Black person or other minority applied for a position, and that person had the same qualifications as a white person applying for the same job, then the Black person or other minority would be given preference. This program produced a reasonable amount of success; however, it was never completely effective. Whatever diversity now exists can be contributed to the affirmative action legislation.

Support for affirmative action

began to wane in the late 1970’s. Some called it reverse discrimination, but if one were to put reverse discrimination on one side of the scales of justice and put the realities of slavery and its aftermath on the other, the scale would overwhelmingly show the greater importance of affirmative action. It was the only plan to help America right the many ghastly wrongs that had kept a huge segment of the population as less than second-class citizens.

It has been said that if one does not remember the lessons of history, history will repeat itself. If so, this nation will begin to lose the gains it established

with affirmative action. In June 2007, the United States Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, said that schools cannot assign students to schools based on the skin color of the students, but they were vague about assignment by race. They did not rule that race cannot ever be considered for school choice. This ambiguous ruling will be challenged, no doubt America’s epilogue for equal rights in the job market and in schools must continue to have positive results. Opponents of this historic moral commitment are constantly attacking. The American public must be vigilant to ensure equality so that this battle will not be fought every generation.



People’s Tribune Radio podcasts are available at peopletribune.org. Listen to leaders in the forefront of the struggle for a new America.

Memphis Sanitation Strike (February 11, 1968)

...everything that is responsible for creating something out of nothing is a kind of poetry; and so all the creations of every craft and profession are themselves a kind of poetry, and everyone who practices a craft is a poet.

—Plato, Symposium.

Garbage is a kind of poetry and trash has a stubborn persistence to multiply like cash for capitalists.

In 1968 in Memphis refusing to pick up the garbage was an act of black resistance.

“I Am A Man!” Not a piece of garbage to be bit by dogs and shot with rifle cartridges.

The wages of sin get recycled-but history’s pages will condemn the bosses’ hands moist with lotion.

Our hands are rough and calloused. And the strike is a kind of poetry we write...

A poetry in motion.

— Daniel Klawitter

Judges rule evidence is not needed to bring activist to trial



By Rev. Edward Pinkney

BENTON HARBOR, MI — The good ol' boy club in Berrien County, MI Courthouse, is usually male, white, of European descent, and lives in St Joseph, Michigan. Judge Charlie LaSata, Judge Sterling Schrock and Prosecutor Mike Sepic, led by the Whirlpool Corporation, are all working together against me and the community. The community must take a stand.

I am charged with five counts of vote fraud in a community effort to recall Benton Harbor Mayor James Hightower, a puppet for the Whirlpool Corporation, which controls Benton Harbor.

With absolutely no evidence, I was bound over for trial. Judge Sterling Schrock and Judge Charlie LaSata both stated that you do not need evidence in Berrien County. In addition, the judges are trying to rush the trial, hoping my attorney will not be ready for trial.

Rev. Pinkney and others protest Gov Rick Snyder and Public Act 4, Michigan's dictatorial emergency manager law that gave absolute power over all aspects of city government to appointed managers.

PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK

Mark Goff, a forensic document examiner with the Michigan State Police, testified at the hearing held to determine if there was enough evidence to bring me to trial. His testimony was limited to his opinion that the dates next to the signature on some of the recall petitions had been changed. He testified that the changes were made with ink other than the ink that was used to write the original dates next to the signatures. However, he testified that he could not determine who made the changes, or when they were made. His testimony essentially provided a basis to find probable cause that someone changed the dates, but provided no evidence regarding who did it or when it was done.

There is absolutely no evidence that the five petitions alleged to have altered dates were exclusively in my possession. The state's handwriting expert could not say who altered the petition. There is no evidence that I was the only person who had ac-

cess to or who had an opportunity to change the petitions. There are no admissions or confessions. There are no witnesses to any alterations.

Every person who signed the petition stated they had signed the petition on the date that is on the petition. If the dates were altered, they were altered by the person who signed the petition. There was no crime committed.

This case illustrates the rise of a fascist government in Michigan. In Berrien County it is led by the blood sucking Whirlpool Corporation and its local puppets: Judge Sterling Schrock, Judge Charlie LaSata, Prosecutor Mike Sepic, County Clerk Sharon Tyler, and Benton Harbor Mayor James Hightower.

This is not a thing of Blacks against whites. It is rich against poor, the haves against the have-nots. Corporate fascism is here now. We must stand together and fight this police State. Together we stand. Divided we fall.

Funds are urgently needed to fight this attack. Donate to the Pinkney defense at bhbanco.org

Property rights

By Mark Lipman

LOS ANGELES, CA — Many raise the issue today that “You can't tell someone what they can and cannot do with their property.” However, this is not true. We do it all the time.

For common sense and the safety of our larger community we set limits all the time. From speeding through crowded intersections to littering, 90% of our laws deal with property and the proper use of it. Where property rights end is when they infringe on the civil rights of others, and the community rights of us all.

There is a reason we speak of scale and size and scope, of neighborhood characteristics. These are what make up our collective experience and quality of life. This gives us a common thread of our history and culture. Each time a bulldozer rolls down the street, we lose another little bit of our heritage and soul.

Too often these days, those with big wallets think they can just waltz into an existing community—trampling on the rights of families who have called a place home for generations—and just do whatever they want... because they have money.

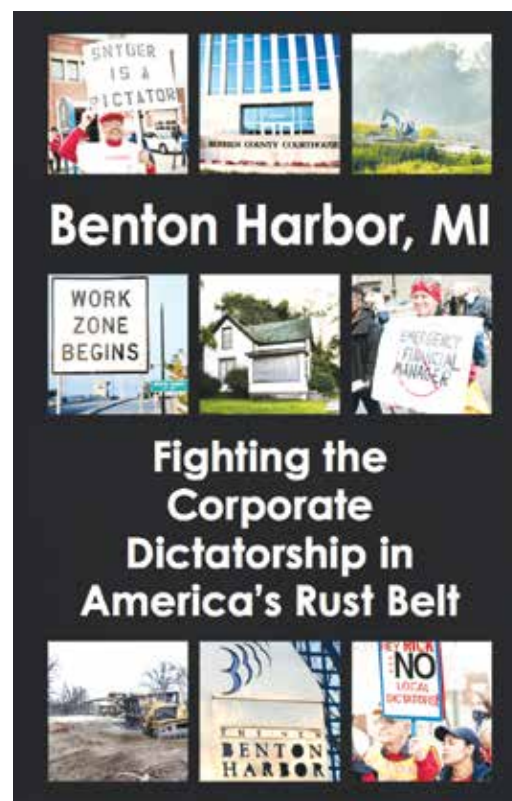
They buy off politicians who puppet remorse and crocodile tears every time a mom and pop shop, or community center,

is forced to close its doors due to speculative investment, or a local resident gets an eviction notice due to no fault of their own, saying there's nothing they can do, that “You can't tell someone what they can do with their property.” But it is they who write the laws and hand out the corporate subsidies and tax breaks to the very ones responsible for the gentrification we see today—clearing the path for the destruction of our neighborhoods, with our tax money.

In response, I say, “No.” Just because someone has money and owns property doesn't mean they can just do what they want. With property also comes responsibility.

With that too comes accountability to the people of our local communities. If the system is rigged, then it's up to us to rewrite the rules. If our selected officials are either unwilling or incapable of taking the necessary steps to protect our existing communities, then they need to be replaced with people who will.

No more sitting down. No more being pushed around. The people have rights. Our neighborhoods and communities have rights. It's about time those rights be respected.



Benton Harbor, MI: Fighting the Corporate Dictatorship in America's Rust Belt.

Order copies of this new pamphlet today. \$4 each, or \$3 each for five or more. Donate via PayPal at peopletribune.org or send to PT, PO Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654.