



National march for justice in Ferguson, MO., against police killing of Michael Brown. Protesters demand that the officer be charged with murder. PHOTO/SARAH LEWISON

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THE PEOPLE CONFRONT THE MILITARIZED POLICE

Also, read about 'Water Wars' on page 5



Protesters in Ferguson, Mo., demand the arrest of the police officer who killed Mike Brown.

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Ferguson: The impact of class on race

EDITORIAL

The murder of Black, unarmed Michael Brown by white Police Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri, created a massive national and international response. The police would not allow the parents to claim or cover the body and Michael Brown's corpse lay unattended in the street for over three and a half hours. When demonstrators gathered to protest the killing, they were met by armored military personnel carriers, camouflaged, masked police carrying automatic rifles, rubber bullets, snarling K-9 dogs, clubs and clouds of tear gas. The scene was more reminiscent of the Sharpsville massacre in apartheid South Africa than in "post-racial America." The worst of something old and a frightful vi-

sion of something new emerged in Ferguson.

Pundits of all political outlooks rushed to examine the murder and the response. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's editorial, published in Time.com describes the unrest in Ferguson as not just about racism, but also about class warfare. Others declared this was simply resurgent fascist racism.

What are we dealing with—race or class? The answer is both. The real world does not exist in logical boxes, but in fluid, struggling, constantly transforming opposites that move a process forward. Racism is an ideology justifying the super exploitation of the Black worker. Racism must be fought to create the conditions for class unity.

The basis of the historic race versus class discussion was created when slavery became almost totally Black and the free

workers almost totally white.

The fact that both sectors were workers was forgotten. Karl Marx reminded the white workers who were struggling against their semi-slave-like exploitation that "Labor cannot emancipate itself in a white skin, where in the Black it is branded."

After the Civil War, the counter-revolution against emancipation institutionalized the color division in the working class. In the main, the Black worker was consigned to service and agricultural labor and the white worker to industry.

The Roosevelt era labor reforms guaranteed the right to industrial union organization. There was understanding that there would not be southern trade union organization. This meant that most of the Black workers would be excluded from unions. Social security and mini-

mum wage did not cover service and agriculture, explicitly excluding most of the Blacks, bribing the white worker and hardening the color division in the class. The hard fought battles for labor unity could not be won so long as such economic and political inequality existed.

Unity can only be achieved when white and Black workers are equal. Electronics applied to production, and the ending of human labor, has finally created the elementary conditions for such unity.

Ferguson expresses that without a fight against racism the workers cannot rise out of poverty. Without a fight against poverty they cannot destroy racism. As one demonstrator said during the Freedom struggles, "Why fight for the right to buy a cup of coffee in that restaurant if I don't have the quarter?"

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.

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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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The people confront the militarized police

COVER STORY

The militarization of the police in America has reached frightening proportions. We are practically living under an open, fascist police state, and more people must take a stand or things will only get worse.

The heavily armed military-style units that turned out to confront protesters in Ferguson, Mo., after the police execution of Michael Brown are just one of the latest examples. The people dare not show up in the street to raise their voices without running the risk of confrontation with what amounts to a local army.

The militarization of local police departments began in the 1980s and escalated radically after 9/11. The “war on drugs” and the “war on terror” created the justification to turn local police forces into armies of occupation and instruments of terror. Local police across the country acquired tanks, helicopters, machine guns and armored vehicles, among other things, some of it donated by the Pentagon and some of it bought with \$35 billion in grants to state and local police from the Department of Homeland Security.

Police SWAT teams are now dispatched on such routine missions as serving warrants for nonviolent offenses. SWAT team deployments escalated from just 3,000 in the early 1980s to 50,000 a year now. More than 120 SWAT team raids occur in America every day, often resulting in deaths or serious injuries. Demonstrations against police violence or for jobs, decent wages, health care, etc., are often met with tear gas, billy clubs and rubber (and real) bullets.

Government repression marks the last stand of an eco-



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

omic system based on the private property of the billionaires and that is unable to provide jobs, livable wages, food, water, housing, health care or a safety net for tens of millions of people. Jobs are automated or shipped overseas, and the wealthy owners of industry and finance will not pay to support labor they don't need.

Labor-replacing electronic technology has created a new section of the working class—a new class—that has no future in an economy based on wage labor. Their needs can only be met in a cooperative society where

the people own the means of producing what we need to live and where everyone has the necessities of life. That means the people forced out of the system are a threat to the ruling class. The same automation that is eliminating jobs could give us a world of abundance if the people controlled our society.

The legacy of discrimination and racism that came out of slavery left the bulk of Black workers in those jobs that were eliminated first by labor-replacing technology, so they are at the heart of this new class. Thus the Black workers are suffering the

worst of the attacks by the police. But make no mistake: They are moving toward an attack on the entire working class and the whole of society.

The police are becoming a law unto themselves, standing above the people and dictating to them. But the people are beginning to open their eyes to this. We must fight every attack on our liberty, and do so with the understanding that we are fighting for a new society, for the world of peace and freedom that electronics makes possible.

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Flint, MI: Vote while you still can!



Protest against Governor Rick Snyder in Flint, MI. PHOTO/ANTHONY FOCUSINGONTHEKIDS TURNER

By Bob Mabbitt

Editor's note: Nearly 200 protestors mobilized by Flint City Councilman Wantwaz Davis, including people from local unions (UAW, MEA, SEIU), community activists, and residents alike gathered at Flint's Farmer's Market on Friday, September

the 12, 2014. They held a demonstration opposing Michigan's current Governor Snyder's campaign fundraiser.

FLINT, MI — Under Michigan's Emergency Manager law, the city of Flint is run from Lansing, the state capital. Flint's city council, mayor, and charter

have no power. Residents have no voice. All local decisions are made by Gov. Snyder and carried out by an Emergency Manager he appoints.

This is dictatorship and it is dangerous!—not simply dangerous to our fundamental rights, but dangerous to our very health.

Financial emergency “fixes” cause health emergency crises

The United Nations has declared “safe, clean, accessible, and affordable drinking water and sanitation” to be a human right. Water shutoffs and unsafe water deny this right and put entire communities at risk of disease and other health complications.

The recent multiple fecal contaminations of Flint's water supply (triggering boil water alerts) are the direct result of the decision to abandon the Detroit water supply for a new Lake Huron pipeline. Independent auditors commissioned by the State called this a “major risk” and said Flint and Genesee County residents would be better off staying with the Detroit regional authority, but Governor Snyder's Emergency Manager pushed the plan through anyway.

Now everyone is paying high water rates because those fees are the security for bondholders in the new pipeline deal underwritten by J.P. Morgan Chase and UBS. That's the “comeback kid” in action!

Our public health at the expense of our public wealth

Through Snyder's Emergency Manager, the State of Michigan handed private Flint

corporation, Uptown Reinvestment, \$5.65 million in grants and low-interest loans to create “an emerging health and wellness district” downtown. Flint's Emergency Manager also awarded Uptown a 12-year, \$1 million tax abatement and \$880K in federal community development block grants for the project that:

- Privatized control of the once-public Flint Farmers' Market.
- Gifted publicly-owned Genesee Towers to Uptown for \$1.
- Setup Michigan State University's Public Health program as Uptown's tenant in the old Flint Journal building.

If State resources exist for “public health districts” that benefit wealthy private interests, Governor Snyder can allocate resources to address actual public health emergencies arising from soaring water rates, water shutoffs, an unsafe water supply, and the theft of local democracy.

**Lower Water Rates Now!
Stop Water Shutoffs Now!
Safe Water Now! Restore Democracy Now!**

Contact us at DemocracyDefenseLeague@gmail.com

New school year: Teachers and parents turn to politics



Chicago students march for an elected school board in August, 2014. PHOTO/SARAH JANE RHEE

By Lew Rosenbaum

CHICAGO, IL — Now that school is back in session, principals wait to the end of the first 20 days to calculate their enrollment. Schools that show a drop in enrollment below last year suffer further budget cuts. At

opening, Gale school was down 40 students from last year. After 20 days, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) could cut another \$200,000, meaning the loss of teacher positions and possible combining of classes and grades.

Despite these funding cut-

backs, and despite money transfers to privately run charters, CPS students in traditional public schools are improving faster than students in comparable charter schools. Gale has been on probation for poor academic performance, but the school is leading, or close to leading, all the other nearby neighborhood and charter schools in growth, despite losing \$300,000 last year.

To add insult to injury, CPS ended its citywide contract with its unionized janitors. CPS contracted with Aramark, the 23rd largest employer in the Fortune 500, with revenue of close to \$14 billion. Schools have reported a decrease in janitorial staff with this shift. In many cases teachers and parent volunteers had to scrub the schools to get ready for opening.

Anxiety is intense. At the first Gale School Local School Council (LSC) meeting of the year, LSC members and others objected to a facility where stu-

dents' lives are at risk because fire alarms don't function properly. What will happen, they asked, when the heating system can't keep children and teachers warm this winter? CPS claims it has removed the lead paint in the school, but no effort has been made to monitor either teachers or students exposed to lead.

What's true about one school is likely true throughout the system. I talked with one former CPS teacher who left her job after 15 years, partly for safety reasons. CPS again and again ignored health and safety issues such as asbestos; other teachers throughout the system routinely complained about it.

CPS won't listen or act, and that's why so many teachers and parents have turned to the political arena to get answers. School by school battles have not worked, because the cause is systemic. The first step is electoral: independent candidates stand a good chance of winning aldermanic battles in a number

of Chicago wards. Once in office, they will be blocked by a city facing bankruptcy.

Chicago Teachers Union president Karen Lewis has filed to run for mayor. Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel has a plummeting approval rate. Should she win office, will Karen Lewis be free to take on the Wall Street thugs who are dictating the municipal workers' pension crisis?

The mayor and aldermen are all Democrats. Any challenge to the established order can become a challenge to the Democratic Party, as they maneuver to corral their base. The February election will give us a glimpse of how the electorate sees the possibility of independence and how deep the fissures are in the Democratic Party itself. Let's get in this campaign and make it part of a battle for a new society.

Water is a human right!

By Maureen Taylor, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, and Dr. David Apsey

DETROIT, MI — As fundamental economic changes unwind in Detroit, measures created to harm the poorest section of working families are offered that challenge the basic laws of humanity in a way that has shocked many across the globe. In February through April 2014, the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department started shutting off water at the residences of low-income families who were at least two months delinquent, and \$150 in arrears. Over these last seven months, some 17,000 households were targeted and the number of those still without water, unable to manage

a payment arrangement to restore them, is a close-kept secret. The rise of technology has gutted the urban workforce along with the rise of banks, who have openly packaged deals leaving the City hemorrhaging, with properties families cannot afford, has caused a level of pain no one has ever experienced.

To add injury to this engineered insult, the Director of the Detroit Health Department was sent a letter asking that they state what medical problems might surface should water be disconnected at thousands of Detroit addresses. Only the Nurses Union out of Los Angeles found the courage to speak out on what dangers lie in such practices. The following information

clarifies just what dangers can be found if water is turned off.

Water is necessary for human survival. The human body cannot survive past three days without water. This is why children cannot live in a home with no water service. What about the adults? Here are a few of the symptoms of dehydration which all develop before three days without water. Extreme thirst. Extreme fussiness or sleepiness in infants and children; irritability and confusion in adults. Very dry mouth, skin and mucous membranes. Little or no urination—any urine that is produced will be darker than normal. Sunken eyes. Shriveled and dry skin that lacks elasticity and doesn't "bounce back"

when pinched into a fold. In infants, sunken fontanels—the soft spots on the top of a baby's head. Low blood pressure. Rapid heartbeat. Rapid breathing. No tears when crying. Fever. In the most serious cases, delirium or unconsciousness.

We do not need this debate in our society, especially in Detroit with fresh water surrounding us on all sides and potable water available from the tap at a low cost for all. Those who can pay should pay, those who cannot pay need a water affordability program on a sliding fee scale at no more than 2.5% of annual income. Those in arrears must be contacted personally since many lack the means of contacting the Water Department. The U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency recommends that families spend no more than 2.5% of their pretax income on water and sewage but, after the recent price increases, some Detroit residents pay 20% of their pretax income for these services.

Society is here for cooperation and development of human beings and to release us from immediate survival needs so we can improve ourselves with culture and education. Depriving people of access to water constitutes a crime against humanity and will cause preventable deaths and destruction of families in our beloved Detroit—Mayor Duggan: Turn The Water Back ON!



Protest against water shut offs to thousands of low-income Detroit, MI residents. The march ended up in Highland Park, MI, which is also suffering from skyrocketing water prices and shut offs. People throughout the US and world are morally outraged at the denial of running water to families simply because they cannot afford to pay. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

'Water needs to be provided to all based on need'

Editor's note: The People's Tribune's Joseph Peery interviewed Marian Kramer, Co-Chair of the Highland Park Human Rights Coalition.

People's Tribune: Tell us the problems faced by Highland Park residents from corporations attempting to privatize your water.

Marian Kramer: We've been involved in this fight to maintain Highland Park's water as a public utility since 2001. Highland Park, MI, pays the highest water bills in the country. We are paying not just a water bill, but sewerage treatment supplied by Detroit as well, which is the biggest part of the bill, and can

be as much as three times that of the water. You can't drink the water without sewerage treatment.

People are in danger of having their children taken from them because they can't pay their water bill. We also face the danger of them making the water bill part of the property taxes that put people in danger of losing their homes.

We found out that Highland Park used to pump water for 50,000 people that lived here. That was the population of Highland Park at one time. When we confronted the Emergency Financial Manager, she said that we still had to pump water for 50,000 people even

though only 10-12,000 people live here now. So the cost of that was on our backs. We were paying for a bunch of 'ghosts.' We were also paying for all those plants that closed and left. They didn't pay for the water bill when they left.

You have to understand that water is today's gold. The corporations want the Great Lakes. If they get Detroit and Highland Park water they get the key to privatize the Great Lakes.

They are trying to regionalize the water in Highland Park right along with Detroit. Corporate people are going to be on the Regional Water Authority Board working in the interest of the corporations. They're not going

to regionalize it for our benefit. They are going to regionalize it in the interest of the corporations. If that doesn't work for them, they can still send in an Emergency Manager and override everybody to privatize the water.

PT: What is the lesson about the struggles around water privatization?

MK: If they can get away with this nonsense, changing laws and all that type of stuff, without the public having an opportunity to have any say-so in the process, then they can come to your neighborhood and do the same thing. This is just the stomping ground of what they want to do

on a national level.

PT: What is the solution?

MK: They are moving to privatization, we've got to move to nationalization of the water. Nationalization is the opposite of privatization. In other words, keep it public for the benefit of the people and under our control. The only way you can do that is to nationalize it, not in the interests of the corporations or the banks like they did with our moneys that bailed them out. Nationalization has to be under the control of the public and in our interest. Water needs to be provided to all based on needs rather than ability to pay.

The Mike Brown rebellion has begun

By Tef Poe

Editor's note: Tef Poe is known as one of the best rappers telling the story of St. Louis. We are reprinting excerpts from his complete article published at blogs.riverfronttimes.com.

ST. LOUIS, MO — My body is fatigued as I type this. At this point I have been out in the streets of North County for what feels like an eternity. I am confused and dazed by what has taken place in my city ... Mike Brown was shot down like a dog in the street, and the Ferguson police refuse to give us answers. His killer remains free, uncharged and shielded by the badge... we've all watched Mike Brown's parents grieve.

We have protested for justice and encountered a cruelty that resembles the brutality of the Jim Crow demonstrations in the 1960s. President Obama gave an address recently, and even he tacitly endorsed this treatment by referring to us as "violent protesters." I have seen men and women, both black and white, beaten and rounded up like cattle. I've seen officers forcefully push the barrels of assault rifles into the faces of the people they

have sworn to protect. A bold, trigger-happy army occupying the streets of Ferguson. This is not a normal police force. This is a completely militarized group of wild cowboys. They lack discipline and have even aimed their guns at the media.

Missouri is one of the most racially backward places in the United States. The scales of

power in my city are completely unbalanced, and the poverty gap is irrefutable. St. Louis County stays afloat through the revenue collected from speeding tickets. These tickets stockpile and turn into warrants. Black people and poor white people are arrested for petty offenses on the regular. Black people in St. Louis have been stomped to the ground like

roaches but are expected to simply pull ourselves up by the bootstraps. As a young black man I feel defeated. I feel as if everyone has failed us.

Prior to this I disliked the police, but I wouldn't say I hated them. Now, that has changed. Why? Because I feel as though they hate us... Originally I did not know nor think that the death

of Mike Brown would become such a horrifically historical moment. But now my eyes have witnessed armored vehicles and body-armored soldiers in the streets of a suburban community that I once considered home. We are fighting the militarization of our neighborhood. If we fail, then this agenda will spread to other cities with a high minority populations, such as LA, Chicago, Memphis, Baltimore, New York and Detroit.

...you have to understand the feelings associated with seeing your hometown go up in smoke ... I never imagined I'd one day see armored vehicles on these grounds. North County has suddenly turned into the Middle East...

Once a person gets over the initial fear of dying or going to jail, there's essentially nothing the police can really do to you. At this moment, many of the young men and women in Mike Brown's age bracket are not afraid to die. We are also not afraid to sleep in a jail cell if it means we are pushing the agenda of justice further.

The Mike Brown Rebellion has begun, and I believe we will win.



Curfew is lifted in Ferguson, but the "State of Emergency" is still in place with the right to detain and arrest people for nothing. PHOTO/JACOB CRAWFORD, WECOPWATCH

Interview: 'Hands Up United' in Ferguson, MO

Editor's note: The People's Tribune's Sandy Reid interviewed Taurean Russell, a spokesperson for handsupunited.org who was in the front lines of the Ferguson uprising, and was targeted by police and jailed because of his organizing.

People's Tribune: How did you get involved?

Taurean Russell: I was just a regular person before this happened. I'd go to Black things and try to think about conscious things that affect oppressed people. What brought me out was seeing the tweet with Mike Brown's dead body. It was shocking to see police officers standing over a dead kid. There were babies and young kids, elementary age children looking at the body. People compare it to a public lynching. The police were trying to say: "This is going to happen to you next; this is what we're here for."

I heard Mike Brown's mother

say "Why did they kill my son?" She was crying. I tweeted out and asked people to meet me at the police station. A little over 100 people were there. I made a statement that Black people have been done wrong in this country for 400 years, and they can't make 400 years right in one night. Every day since then I have been protesting and strategizing and coming up with demands. I've interviewed five witnesses. People are in fear for their lives. One witness said that Officer Wilson stood over Mike Brown and shot him in the head. The police were going to peoples' houses, offering money and free rent for video of the shooting. One girl traded it for rent.

PT: Speak about the support you are getting.

TR: Palestinians came in and showed us how to make homemade gas masks. You don't have to be Black to know about

militarized police. Fast food workers from the Show Me 15 came and protested with us. They know there's something about being poor—that some kind of hierarchy has to keep you in place. Whites from the community came out; even a white business owner. She's not one of those people who have the "I Love Ferguson signs."

Most people who support Mike Brown see that as a slap in the face. Do you support the police chief or the Mayor—the ones who are covering up the execution?

PT: Speak about the poverty in the area.

TR: Three of the poorest zip codes in the state are here. They have the worst schools, the highest poverty and public assistance rate. People vote for the same people and get the same result, whether Democrat or Republican. People say if we come



Police in Ferguson confront protesters. PHOTO/WECOPWATCH

out to vote and sign others up that this wouldn't happen. But those who did vote don't vote in police officers. We do vote for the prosecutor but he's a Democrat, so that doesn't do us any good.

PT: Can people unite?

TR: There's a trick of racism. It tricks Blacks to believe they can be full participants in the system, and it tricks whites, especially those in poverty, that

one day they can become part of the system, but they can't. One person might make it, but what about the whole community that you left?

PT: What's the next step?

TR: We're discussing whether the Department of Justice has the right to try our case; whether to take it to the United Nations; and whether we just need to take it to people who are our allies.

Food strikes – One struggle

Fast food workers help point the way

By the People's Tribune
Editorial Board

Fast Food worker strikes are sweeping the nation. City after city documents the impact of minimum wage workers taking a stand. The fight for fifteen movement, funded and organized by SEIU, has brought workers out in major cities like Atlanta, Boston, Charleston, Hartford, Miami, the Bay Area, New York and Philadelphia. Recently in Taco Bells, McDonalds, and KFC's all over the United States, workers walked out on the job, participated in coordinated civil disobedience and were arrested in city after city.

Over the past few years, we've seen the rise of many low-wage worker movements. The workers describe the harshest of economic conditions. There's little to no health care and irregular hours with little to no control over one's life. Management is abusive. The fast food workers strikes have resonated deeply with a population that is tired of working 60 hours a week only to need rapidly diminishing public

benefits to survive.

As soon as the strikes emerged last year, articles began to pop up about European fast food chains replacing thousands of workers in a single technological stroke. In fact, most recently the *Business Insider*, along with various other publications, covered the invention of a hamburger-making robot that can produce over 360 sandwiches an hour! Indeed, we can imagine what type of abundance technology like that could produce for hungry families without the barrier of capitalist ownership of the socially necessary means of life. We can also imagine how many workers in this industry are going to permanently lose work and their livelihood as technology replaces labor.

The situation of the fast food workers—the low wages, the just-in-time scheduling, the threat of being replaced by robots—is a harbinger of the future for all workers. Labor-replacing technology is eliminating jobs and driving down wages worldwide. The fast food workers are part of a global section of the working



Fast food and other low wage workers rally in New York for \$15 an hour wage. Strikes took place in dozens of cities with 400 arrests nationwide. PHOTO/MICHAEL FLESHMAN

class that is forced to confront an economic system that can no longer meet their needs.

The same technology that is wiping out jobs and driving down wages could end poverty forever if the people owned and controlled it in a cooperative society. In such a society the neces-

sities of life would be distributed to all based on need, not money. The computer and the robot spell the end of economies based on private ownership of the means of life. We cannot fix a dying system. If we keep the vision of a new society in mind as we fight, that will keep the struggle

on course.

In pointing the way forward, Jeanina Jenkins, a McDonald's employee in Ferguson, MO said she believes the police brutality protests will be on the minds of many striking fast food workers. "We're fighting for the same thing, basically," she said. (MSNBC)

Industrial bust leaves cities plagued with poverty



One of many protests in Ferguson demanding justice for Michael Brown. PHOTO/BOB SIMPSON

BY Cathy Talbott

CARBONDALE, IL — Ferguson, Missouri, like many other working-class communities across the country, has undergone many changes since the industrial boom era of post WWII. Once a thriving community, it is now plagued with poverty much like the town in which I reside 100 miles southeast of St. Louis. Home to Emerson Electric, a \$24 billion multi-national corporation just down the road from the

neighborhood where Michael Brown faced his executioner, the St. Louis suburb has a history of racial and income disparity which has carried over into the post-industrial present. As the tax base dwindled, those who could, both Blacks and whites, fled to areas with better funded schools and services. Much of the northern area of St. Louis County mirrors Ferguson. Unemployment and underemployment is rampant, with nearly 50% of Black men in their twenties unemployed in

many communities.

When the community gathered in protest following Michael's murder, the militarized police response evoked a righteous defiance especially among the youth who are fed up with the daily police occupation and harassment of their community. Calling the protesters "f---ing animals" and launching tear gas into their peaceful demonstration only strengthened the youths' resolve to take back the streets. "Enough is enough" was their battle cry.

Revealed through interviews of residents, it is now known that the second source of revenue in Ferguson is from petty fines and fees, especially traffic tickets. In 2013 alone, \$2.6 million was collected, nearly twice the amount of the two years prior. In north St. Louis County, this is the norm with upwards of 40% of revenue annually from such fines. It is a vicious cycle that keeps the poor in a constant state of stress and despair.

But this is not unique to north St. Louis County communities. It

is happening everywhere there are communities of poor underemployed and unemployed working class families of all ethnic backgrounds. Here in southern Illinois, police departments are making more stops, issuing fines and collecting exorbitant fees to enhance revenue. One local police department accepted federal grant money which requires officers to write more citations, a slippery slope for sure. What has followed is increased harassment and abuse, especially of the poor, students and the homeless.

"To Prison For Poverty," from Brave New Films, documents the system that allows private probation companies to profit from charging excessive fees to

low-income people who can't pay in Georgia and Alabama.

Whether jailed or kept in a state of poverty and fear trapped in our communities, we are at the mercy of predatory corporations and the police that protect this system. We must open our eyes and see that the same system that executed Michael Brown in Ferguson is the same system that killed many others who are deemed expendable human beings by a system that no longer needs our labor.

Let us unite with the youth in Ferguson and around the world who are saying "Enough is enough!" Let's take back our birthright and create a world of sharing and caring for our brothers and sisters!

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'DC for the People' campaign of Eugene Puryear



Editor's note: Eugene Puryear, DC Statehood Green candidate for Councilmember-At-Large, talks to Tim D'Emilio of the Peoples Tribune about his candidacy and the D.C. for the People campaign.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Washington D.C. has seen a major boom over the past decade, becoming one of the hottest cities

in America. It also has become one of the most unequal. A study in 2012 estimated that the top fifth of D.C. income earners had average earnings that were 29 times higher than that bottom fifth! That was good enough to make D.C. the third most unequal city in the country. Almost 20 percent (18.4) of District residents live below the poverty line; when including those living just at or just above the poverty line, it jumps to 24.1 percent.

Looking at the 2013 annual averages, "official" unemployment in D.C. last year was 8.6 percent. If we look at what perhaps is a more meaningful measure, the U6 rate, which measures as unemployed all those not looking for work, and those forced to work part-time, that

rate stood at 14.1 percent. The rising cost of housing in D.C. is turning formerly poor neighborhoods into playgrounds for the rich. Gentrification has resulted in a median monthly rent of more than \$1,400!

The D.C. for the People election campaign I am waging is a response to this state of affairs. The District government is completely beholden to capitalist interests, particularly in the real estate sector. Poor and working people have no consistent advocate on the D.C. Council.

The campaign has two main goals. First and foremost to win, which is a well-recognized possibility even among the media and our opponents. One of the key strategic weaknesses of movements of the poor and oppressed

people in the District is lack of an advocate for progressive legislation such as the \$15/hr. minimum wage, building affordable housing, keeping down the cost of childcare, defending public education and taking on the effects of mass incarceration.

By joining the Council my goal is to advance whatever legislation possible, but to also use each piece of legislation as a point of organizing linked to broader strategies to achieve social change. In addition, it is to expose the backroom dealing where powerful interests subvert any pretension of democracy.

This leads to our second main goal which is movement building. We'll use the campaign to bring together people from diverse movements and increase

the operational unity between the interconnected struggles of those marginalized by local elites.

Actual social movements that overturn powerful forces are not just about one tactic or method of struggle, but the strategic unity of the various tactical fronts. The D.C. for the People election campaign is fighting to win every gain for working and poor people possible, while facilitating a broader movement to overcome their exploitation. Together we can make it happen! To get involved, visit EugenePuryear.com or call the Campaign HQ: 202-556-1651

Ferguson and the country's struggle for basic needs

By Al Gladysck

DETROIT, MI — *Time.com* published an opinion post by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar entitled "The Coming Race War Won't Be About Race." It says, "Unless we want the Ferguson atrocity to also be swallowed and become nothing more than an intestinal irritant to history, we have to address the situation not just as another act of systemic racism, but as what else it is: class warfare."

The *Huffington Post* published a post by Lawrence J. Hanley, who is International President, Amalgamated Transit Union in D.C., Member of the AFL-CIO's Executive Council, entitled, "The Hidden Violence" which added, "As Abdul-Jabbar said in *Time*," "Rather than uniting to face the real foe—do-nothing politicians, legislators, and others in power—we fall into the trap of turning against each other, expending our ener-

gy battling our allies instead of our enemies."

Both authors have identified the class content of Ferguson, MO., and consequently the class content of the struggle in this country.

This class content is global. Underlying Ferguson is the qualitative change in how things are now produced, not just here but worldwide. Since the "microprocessor" was applied to production, starting in the early 1980s,

we still talk about more jobs, but in fact, jobs are lost permanently as human labor is eliminated in the workplace. In addition, 44% of the people working in this country today are paid the minimum wage. So if the solution is more jobs, they will be more minimum wage jobs. The solution is producing for everyone's human needs instead of producing for the profit needs of a few billionaires.

In this respect, Mr. Abdul-Jabbar raises another key point: He says, "The U.S. Census Report finds that 50 million Americans are poor. Fifty million voters is a powerful block if they ever organized in an effort to pursue their common economic goals. So, it's crucial that those in the wealthiest One percent keep the poor fractured..."

The road to class unity is the struggle for our basic needs. The fight for food, shelter, running water, education, healthcare, immigration rights, etc., are all part of the struggle for the future of all of us. Currently, who gets the necessities of life is based on who owns the means of life, not on who needs them. Society must own the giant productive processes, the robots and the computers, and distribute the world of plenty to all based on need.

What we lack is the independent political movement to make the transition to the future that the microprocessor requires. Will that future benefit all human beings or will it be another class system that will benefit the few?

The Gleam

in memory of Billy Watkins

"There's a gleam comin' through,"
you said that day
with your arm held up
and your eyes fixed
straight

We, your comrades, felt
what you could see
and we knew it was true

"There's a gleam comin' through,
and if you don't see it,
then you must be blind
or something."

Something is changing.

A light at the end
of the tunnel,
a peace,
a word so fragile,
only the bravest dare
speak it:

Hope.

That was you,
dear comrade,
dear friend.

- Adam Gottlieb



Feeding the hungry in Detroit, due to the massive plant closings and retooling. A new study says millions of Americans are living on less than \$2 a day (Luke Shaefer and Kathryn Edin).

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

Our Walmart leaders attend union conference in Brazil

By Chuck Parker

DESERT HOT SPRINGS, CA — For Marilola Ledesma and Graciela Blancas, their recent

trip from California to a union conference in Sao Paolo, Brazil proved to be a voyage of discovery. What they found was Walmart employees in all these

countries enjoy the protection of union membership, and the benefits of union contracts. Some of the benefits include medical insurance for the workers and

their families, full 40 hour work weeks, free uniforms, half of their lunch hour is paid, and the cashiers can work sitting down. They even have burial insurance, and a medical clinic in the store!

When they shared copies of the *Tribuna Del Pueblo* (sister publication of the *People's Tribune*) with their compatriots from Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and South Africa, it became a voyage of discovery for them too. These workers were surprised to find that Walmart workers in the U.S. do not have a union, and do not enjoy any of these benefits! They were also surprised to find that there were so many other problems in the U.S. which they thought was a paradise where everyone was well off.

Marilola and Graciela were sponsored by the Our Walmart Organization which organized the international conference for Walmart Employees. They attended seminars which taught them new ways of organiz-

ing, and thinking. Graciela and Marilola said that various points of view were offered, so they could choose what they liked and reject what they didn't.

Their hosts in Brazil were two large Brazilian unions, the UGT (Uniao Geral Dos Trabalhadores) and the CUT (Confederacao Nacional Dos Trabalhadores No Comercio E Servicos.) These unions invited them to a spirited rally with the slogans displayed on large banners and flags, "JUSTICE AT WALMART" and "WE STRUGGLE AGAINST: DICTATORSHIP AT WALMART, MORAL HARASSMENT, AND ANTI-UNION PERSECUTION."

They agreed it was a wonderful experience, and an inspiration to continue their struggle. They will be attending a conference during September at the headquarters of the United Farmworkers Union in Keene, Ca. where they can share what they learned in Brazil.



Workers rally against Wal Mart in Sao Paolo Brazil.

PHOTO/MARILOLA LEDESMA

Poem reflecting on the 'Trail for Humanity' walk



Walkers and supporters of the Trail for Humanity 350 mile walk from Merced to San Ysidro, CA, in support of undocumented children and women crossing the border. PHOTO/EDWARD CASTRO

By Valeska Castaneda

MERCED, CA — It starts in the pit of my stomach. Then I feel it fiercely grow. It starts pulsing and transforms into a powerful ache that moves like water through the rest of my body and refuses to end until I have walked my last steps of the day.

Something deeper is moving us all now, and I honestly feel it is the prayers and thoughts of the community, even now as I write this, there are hundreds praying for our health and safety. That's the only explanation I have. I've walked 19 days straight and still have no blisters and today we were supposed to end our 15 miles in Sylmar, California, but

we decided to walk an extra two miles to be greeted by the community of Pacioma, ending at 287 miles, showing the world how deep the will of humanity runs when it refuses to be silenced. In Lak'ech Ala K'in, (You are my other me. If I do harm to you I do harm to myself. If I love and respect you I love and respect myself.)

Valeska Castaneda, mother and one of the organizer's of the Trail for Humanity. They walked 350+ miles to support the plight of undocumented children/ adults crossing the border. They marched from Merced to San Ysidro, CA.



People's Tribune Radio podcasts are available at peopletribune.org. Hear from people at the forefront of the struggles for a new America.

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It is October and the *People's Tribune* begins its annual subscription drive which will run through November 15. If you are a subscriber, we ask you to renew your subscription now. If not, please become a subscriber now.

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The corporations are tightening their fascist grip on all of U.S. society, with a developing Surveillance State, police brutality and killings, criminalization of refugee children, emergency manager laws that replace government elected officials, cutting off people's access to running water and the privatizing of the public domain.

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Thanks in advance.

—Editorial Board of the *People's Tribune*

Memorial for Ernesto Garcia



Chicago's Logan Square Ecumenical Alliance brings together community members and others to memorialize Ernesto Garcia, a homeless man who was beaten to death. PHOTO/ANDY WILLIS

By Andy Willis

CHICAGO, IL — Ernesto Garcia was beaten to death, by two men while he tried to sleep in an alley. Ernesto Garcia was homeless. That was the only reason he

was beaten to death.

Mr. Garcia came from Guatemala to Chicago searching for a better life. He was beaten to death in the street. He was a few days shy of his 60th birthday. People who knew him in the Lo-

gan Square neighborhood liked him. They were planning his birthday party. They said he was a gentle person.

Fifty people led by the Logan Square Ecumenical Alliance came to the neighborhood

square to grieve. They mourned Ernesto Garcia and they mourned what is happening to our community—to our country. As people struggled to keep their candles lit against the wind, the symbolism of those tiny fragile lights was understood by all.

These Logan Square churches participate in food banks and meals for the growing number of homeless among us. Yet no one could quite visualize Ernesto Garcia. Some one must have liked him, to plan a celebration of his birth. There was no photograph. No one knew of a family. Ernesto Garcia had left nothing when he left the world, but his life and death meant enough to bring 50 people together for contemplation and prayer over his fate and ours.

The economic system we live under has less and less need for the Ernesto Garcia's of this world. Billions of paupers roam

the earth who are now redundant in a economy driven by market manipulation and robotic production. The wealth belongs to a tiny few and they are not “sharing” no matter what their religious traditions tell them.

A homeless prophet once instructed that humans could only know God in how they treated the least of these. By that measure we have the right to worry. Our sacred duty is to build a new society to share the abundance that technology makes possible. Deciding to make sure no one dies like Ernesto Garcia will involve changing the fundamental laws and rules of society. It will involve a revolution. The memorial program for Ernesto had three specific sections: mourning, solidarity and revolution. To this disappeared one we make our pledge—not one more!

Action necessary everywhere to be true to the gospel

By Rev. Bruce Wright

ST. PETERSBURG, FL — Actions are the Gospel and in my words I have always tried to back them up by actions. I do not buy the Spiritual immaturity argument as an excuse for not telling the truth as ministers. What Jesus did was revolutionary; he challenged Imperial and religious power. To call Jesus Lord was to challenge Caesar, the lord of the Roman Empire.

It is not immature to challenge power or your congregation to action; it is the height of maturity to do so. I have always tried to speak truth to power as

an experienced denominational clergy person. Challenging your congregation to join in resistance is the call of the Gospel, and the prophets.

Dr. King did this and without the Churches participation actively, not passively, the Civil Rights movement could not have moved forward. Jesus was not a reformist. Why do we imply that revolution is violent? It can become that only because of the violence of the government and the police brutally oppressing African people, Latino people, Indigenous people, and the poor and homeless.

The community of believ-

ers can talk all they want about justice, but action must follow to truly represent the Gospel. Reread Matthew 22, Isaiah 10, Isaiah 58. God has a preferential option for the Poor clearly throughout the scriptures.

Most preachers are cowardly because they do not want to lose or offend donors, especially those with money. “It is easier for the Camel to go through the eye of a needle, then for a rich man to enter heaven...” “You cannot Serve two masters... God and Mammon...” “Take up your cross and follow me...”—all said by Jesus.

Why must we always be apologists for cowardly preachers, and Christians in general? The police in Ferguson, under the cloak of prayer, at every press conference, spin falsehoods. Where are the preachers challenging this misuse of prayer?

I have witnessed and been a victim of excessive police aggression. They routinely brutalize, harass, beat, mistreat the poor. Unfortunately until you have experienced it you will not see. More people have been killed by the cops than American troops in Iraq during the same time period.

Police brutality is real! They have assault rifles, machine guns, tear gas, rubber bullets, tanks, armored vehicles, and helicopters! This is a war on the poor, and courage must be had to speak the truth. Cops who cover up for other cops and don't speak out are just as guilty.

And, I know no one likes the analogy between the US and Nazi Germany, but the Germans were supposedly amongst the most enlightened and they let it happen to not only Jews, but other minorities, political dissenters, people of color, the gypsies (homeless of that day), mentally ill, and the Gay community.

Certain Nazis weren't allegedly cruel, but watched others commit murder and stood by. In a court of law they would not be considered innocent bystanders. They would be held accountable too. Can we do no less than what the prophets, Jesus, and even decent humanism have called all of us to do?



The homeless protest in front of City Hall in St. Petersburg, Florida. PHOTO/CHRIS ERNESTO, ST. PETE FOR PEACE

ACT

In the name of those washing others' clothes
(and cleaning others' filth from the whiteness)

In the name of those caring for others' children
(and selling their labor power
in the form of maternal love and humiliations)

In the name of those living in another's house
(which isn't even a kind belly but a tomb or a jail)

In the name of those eating others' crumbs
(and chewing them still with the feeling of a thief)

In the name of those living on others' land
(the houses and factories and shops
streets cities and towns
rivers lakes volcanoes and mountains
always belong to others
and that's why the cops and the guards are there
guarding them against us)

In the name of those who have nothing but
hunger exploitation disease
a thirst for justice and water
persecutions and condemnations
loneliness abandonment oppression and death
I accuse private property
of depriving us of everything.

—Roque Dalton (*El Salvador*)
Translated from Spanish by Jack Hirschman

Howie Hawkins: A Green New Deal for New York



Supporters of the Howie Hawkins for NY governor campaign protest fracking.

PHOTO/HOWIE HAWKINS FOR NY GOVERNOR

Shamako Noble of the People's Tribune interviewed Howie Hawkins, Green Party candidate for Governor of New York at the recent Green Party national gathering.

Shamako Noble: Why did you decide to run for Governor?

Howie Hawkins: The Green Party asked me. I ran in 2010

and received 60,000 votes. That was enough to get a ballot line, and that was our first goal. The second goal was to move the debate, which we did in 2010. We got the ban fracking issue on the agenda, and also progressive tax reform, revitalizing the public sector, and a bottom up, wage-led development policy. The third goal was to build the

Green Party at the grass roots, so we have more local organizations across the state, and the fourth goal was to get 5% of the vote. That would be the biggest vote for an independent left party in New York history. We are already at 6% in the polls right now and we think we can go much higher.

A quarter of the voters out

there are looking for an independent candidate, and if we can win their votes, then we can replace the Republicans as the second party and the alternative to the Democrat, Gov. Cuomo. Gov. Cuomo's corruption is a national and even international issue now, so that changes the ballgame.

SN: What are your feelings about the Green Party nationally moving forward at this time?

HH: I am very encouraged. I came here because our campaign is really national. It can really open the door for Greens to have a similar impact elsewhere. We are running on a Green New Deal for New York. We are talking about the economic human right to jobs with a living wage, to good education, affordable housing, affordable transit, and a public health care system. We call it a Green New Deal because we have got to get to 100% clean energy fast if we are going to avoid catastrophic climate change, and that is a full employment program.

SN: Please talk about the "Socialist-Green Alliance" that was

one of the workshops where you spoke.

HH: We talked about Kshama Sawant's victory in Seattle. The Greens supported her in Seattle, and she came to the Left Forum in New York and did a fundraiser for me, so we already have a Green-Socialist Alliance. The attempt of human to dominate human extends into nature as well and creates our environmental problems.

What we need is a social system that harmonizes with nature on the basis of reharmonizing human with human. We need to be organizers, not just mobilizers. It is less important what our name or label or program is, but to stand with working people speaking and acting for themselves. As Eugene Debs used to say, if a Moses comes along and could lead you into the promised land, then somebody else could come along and lead you out.

After the election we need to get people involved in organizing our local Green Party groups, so we can be active between elections as well as during elections.

My web site is howiehawkins.org

Billionaires pit young against the old

By Marilyn Daniels

DETROIT, MI — Wall Street financiers are targeting young people with a warning: "The older generation is stealing your future!" They generate continuous "educational campaigns" (such as "The Can Kicks Back") that claim "the burden of entitlements" is responsible for ruinous cuts in education, research, and job opportunities.

Since the devastating capitalist crisis of 2008, neither young nor old trust the Wall Street "solution" of converting Social Security into a privatized, individualized, "investment-based" pension system. We've seen the stock market reduce the employer-based retirement system to shreds. Pensions have been cut or eliminated entirely. Even constitutionally-protected workers pensions are being "legally" gutted.

There's more to it than capitalists' lust for privatization! Wall Street is also trying to drive home the message, "The money's not there." This is ideological preparation for a crisis ahead. They want youth to believe "there is no other choice" but to cut essential benefits. Young people have no way of knowing

their parents' and grandparents' generations were fed nearly the same line thirty years ago. We were told that the World War II generation was set to go on the generous gravy train of Social Security, but the Baby Boom generation would "break the system" and maybe wreck the country.

Congress devised the fix of nearly doubling the FICA taxes! The Baby Boom generation has paid a whopping 12.4% of payrolls over decades. We expected this would make Social Security totally solvent. It did! Unfortunately, over decades Congress transferred massive FICA revenue surpluses toward funding of year-to-year general expenditures (including wars and corporate welfare.) By means of "inter-governmental borrowing," they've taken trillions of real dollars out of Social Security and other federal trust funds. They've left only IOUs from one part of the government to another. There is no remaining pool of dedicated Social Security funds in reserve to draw on, only the taxes that come in each year.

Politicians of both parties still hide the crisis they've created in Social Security. They generate ongoing confusion. Re-



Protest against cuts to workers' pensions in Detroit.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

publicans call Social Security a "Ponzi scheme." Democrats insist there's nothing wrong that minor tweaking won't fix.

Here lies the threat: Any repayment to the Social Security Trust Funds rests on the "full faith and credit" of the U.S. Treasury to re-pay itself. Do we really think they will be able to pay back *trillions* of dollars to Social Security, given that 40%

of federal funds spent every year is borrowed? The promise of Social Security is only as good as the economy. The capitalist system will need to diminish all social programs—even Social Security.

Young workers are vulnerable because their incomes, savings, and retirements will be much lower than past generations. Many are already burdened with

debt. Still, polls show that even young people who don't think Social Security benefits "will be there for them" support Social Security and oppose cutting it! Our young people have a different sense of morality than cynical billionaires. They believe in caring for seniors, the disabled, and the orphaned.

Standing together for a new America

By Rev. Edward Pinkney



BENTON HARBOR, MI — The USA proclaims itself the “land of freedom,” but the reality is we live under the world’s most corrupt legal system. It has rigged courts, bribed judges, phony trials, extortion by lawyers, and over two million prisoners. You can be sent to prison and even put to death with absolutely no evidence. The truth is hidden by America’s corporate owned media, and by Berrien County’s media. They are afraid to tell the truth about Michigan’s Emergency Manager system where rule is without the consent of the governed.

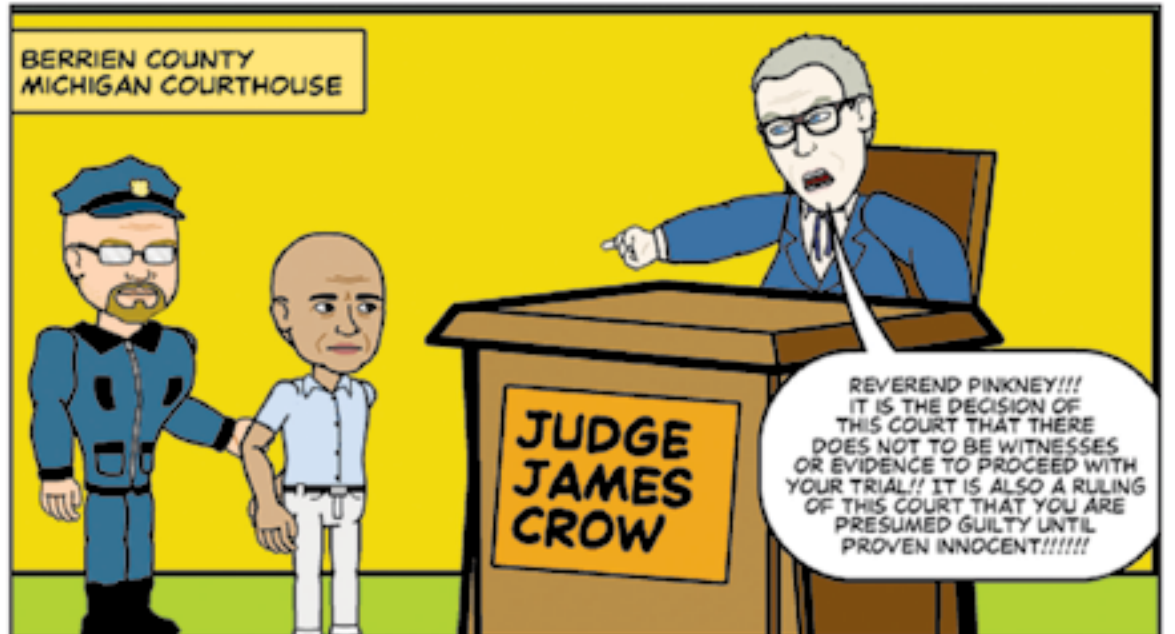
Benton Harbor now has four Emergency Mangers. They are called a transitional team. Appointed by the governor, they are the direct representatives of the corporate giant, Whirlpool, that runs Benton Harbor. This “team” can overrule decisions from the democratically elected city council. They can sell off public assets to private interests. The team includes two former Whirlpool employees, one county treasurer, and a member of the State Treasury Department. This is what fascism in Michigan looks like—the merger of government and the corporations.

Within this dictatorial political environment, the Benton Harbor community exercised their democratic right to recall a corporate (Whirlpool) allied mayor. With absolutely no evidence, I was charged with voter fraud and bound over for trial. This attack was intended to stop the community’s recall election from going forward. In a hearing to determine if there was evidence to take me to trial, Mark Goff, a forensic document examiner with the Michigan State Police (who is nothing but a hired gun,) testified that changes to the election petitions were made with different ink. But he could not determine who made the changes, when they were made, or whether the person who signed the petition changed it. His testimony provided no evidence against me. However, Judge Sterling Schrock, Judge Charlie LaSata and Prosecutor Mike Sepic all stated that you do not need evidence to go to trial. The government is counting on an all white jury that may be motivated by something other than the truth to convict.

Soon after, in a momentary victory for the people, Judge John DeWane ruled that the contested mayoral recall election should be placed on the November ballot based upon the First Amendment’s political core Freedom of Speech. The issue boiled down to admitting 21 du-

COLORADO SPRINGS COMICS

BY ED BILLINGS



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plicate signatures that had been invalidated based upon a faulty practice by the Berrien County Clerk’s Office. Attorney John LePetrie said, the Berrien County clerk, “armed with \$20,000 in funding from the County Board, appealed (that ruling) with support from two major law firms and the Attorney General’s office, representing the Secretary of State and the Bureau of Elections.” The Court of Appeals reversed Judge Dewane’s favorable ruling, and it was essentially upheld by the state’s Supreme Court. This scenario once again shows the unity of the govern-

ment and the corporations.

Democracy has been stolen from the people. Water rights have been stolen. Poverty is growing. We, the people have

nothing in common with the billionaires, their corporations and government. We must stand together for a new America.

Attend Pinkney trial!

Trial begins October 27 at Berrien County Courthouse, 811 Port St., St. Joseph, MI.

Donations for defense urgently needed. Send to:
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Benton Harbor, MI 49022

Michigan corporate dictatorships spread across the country



A dozen people are arrested at the labor protest at a San Francisco Apple Store.

PHOTO/STEVE RHODES

By Women’s Economic Agenda Project

OAKLAND, CA — The corporate agenda that has captured both major political parties and deprived working people of their basic rights is most fully developed in the state of Michigan. But it is taking shape in different ways in California and elsewhere. That agenda’s goal is maximizing profits by transferring public worth into private hands and ravaging the rights of workers. The excuse used is austerity: workers must sacrifice to help corporations make more money.

The corporate agenda has stripped basic democratic rights from large numbers of Michigan residents, including more than half the state’s African Americans. In the name of austerity, Governor-appointed Emergency Managers take all financial and operational decisions away from the elected

officials that citizens voted for. And a growing number of Detroit residents are losing the human right to running water because they can’t afford their water bills.

In California, the global corporate agenda is using other tactics to achieve the same goals, making sure corporations get the highest profits possible at the expense of the rest of us. Businesses are trying to use the state to shift millions of dollars away from pensions and wages and into paying off corporate debt.

Stockton, California was the largest U.S. city to file for bankruptcy until Detroit filed in mid-2013, and San Bernardino was the second largest. Both of these California cities first tried to protect retiree pensions. But as business interests ramped up the pressure, and Detroit retirees twisted in the wind, those initial protections were whittled away.

Stockton now proposes con-

verting \$544 million in lifetime retiree health benefits into a \$5.1 million one-time payment. That gives workers just under a penny for every dollar promised them. And a judge’s ruling due any time now could declare Stockton’s pensioners no more worthy of protection than any of its other debtors. Such a ruling could encourage other California cities to file for bankruptcy to cut worker pension costs.

San Bernardino stopped paying into California’s public worker pension fund for about a year. While it is once again making payments, it has refused to make up \$13.5 million worth of back payments. A court-imposed gag order prevents a proposed settlement from being publicly disclosed.

The equivalent of Michigan’s Emergency Manager system runs San Francisco City College, once the state’s largest community college. Its original 85,000 enrollment has shrunk in the 15 months

since a commission threatened to yank its accreditation. The threat had nothing to do with its quality of education and everything to do with its budget, including pension and health care costs.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, home of Silicon Valley millionaires, corporations are fighting against a livable minimum wage. Business lobby pressure watered down minimum wage proposals in Berkeley and Richmond, and killed a state legislature proposal to raise the state minimum wage.

These are just a few examples of a push toward a national corporate dictatorship. Corporate leaders have a plan to secure their profits by using the power of the government to enforce austerity on the working class. Workers need a counterplan to put the tremendous abundance from the microchip into the service of all society.