

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

MAY 2015, VOLUME 42, NO. 5

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Protest against immoral water shutoffs to thousands of Detroiters. Water must be publicly owned and managed in the interests of the people.

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Special Coverage:



Dictatorship in Michigan
See pages 6, 7, and 12

WATER IS A HUMAN RIGHT

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Mothers' hunger strike shows need for class unity

EDITORIAL

"Free me. Free my children. We came looking for refuge and we're being treated like criminals." With this cry, 78 mothers staged a hunger and work strike at the Karnes Detention Center in Karnes, Texas (a private, for-profit ICE detention center run by GEO Group Inc.) Their children's health is deteriorating. They can't eat the food. The water is heavily chlorinated due to the thousands of "fracked" oil and gas wells in the area. Yet they cannot afford to buy food and water in the prison commissary. One bottle of water is \$3, their daily pay. Some are sexually abused by guards. Some are put in isolation rooms along with their children because of their protests.

Fleeing U.S. State sponsored poverty and gang violence in their home countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, where "femicide" (the murder of women) and homicide rates are among the highest in the world, they've been held without bond for up to ten months. Having already established "credible fear" of persecution or torture in their countries of origin, why are these women and children imprisoned here in the "Land of the Free?"

Immigration in the past period of economic expansion served the growing labor needs of industry. In an economy increasingly based on electronic and laborless production, large numbers of workers are no longer needed to fuel capitalist industry.

Today 2.4 billion workers globally are considered "vulnerably employed," unemployed or inactive in a workforce of 3.1 billion, outnumbering those actually working for wages. A growing section of this "global reserve army of labor" is a mass of near or permanently unemployed workers. Capitalism will not care for workers it can no longer exploit.

The immigrant mothers and



Protesters deliver 40,000 petitions to Karnes Detention Center in Texas, demanding its closure and investigation of sexual abuse. Immigrant women and their children are imprisoned at the detention center for seeking refuge in the US. Recently, 78 mothers staged a hunger strike over the deplorable conditions. Defending the human rights of immigrant workers is part of defending the rights of all workers.

PHOTO/ULTRAVIOLET

children, along with a growing section of workers in this country, are being catapulted into a desperate struggle for survival. They are fighting for their basic human right to exist and live free of police terror in a dying capitalist system. Our struggles and theirs are one and the same.

We must not allow our ranks to be divided. Defending the human rights of the most vulnerable workers, which include the undocumented immigrants, and uniting around our common economic needs for survival, are the first steps in creating a cooperative world free from exploitation

and securing the necessities of life for us all. Free the mothers and children! Shut down the detention centers.



Reader facing homelessness supports *People's Tribune*

I really enjoy your paper. I want to donate except I am battling to avoid homelessness. I will try to get something to you soon. Right now, I'm digging in trashcans looking for bottles and cans. Just want you to know that I haven't forgotten you. You're doing a great job. I'd like to help. I get Facebook on my phone and will share articles. Thanks.

— Christine Nemeth, Dearborn, Michigan

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PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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

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

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

The *People's Tribune*, formerly published by the League of Revolutionaries for a New America, is now an independent newspaper with an editorial board based in Chicago.

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE EDITORIAL POLICY: Articles that are unsigned, such as the cover story and editorials, reflect the views of the editorial board. Bylined articles reflect the views of the authors, and may or may not reflect the views of the editorial board.

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

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Water is a human right

COVER STORY

Mark Twain once said “whisky is for drinking; water is for fighting over.” He was only half-joking. Nations have gone to war over water. Today, there is some kind of fight over water under way in almost every country, including the US. Who will control the world’s water, and for what purpose? Will water be a source of life, or a source of profit for the wealthy few?

Less than one percent of the Earth’s drinkable water is readily accessible for direct human uses. Drought, pollution, aging infrastructure, over-use by industry and agribusiness, and population growth are straining the water supply. By 2030, 47 percent of the world’s population will be living in areas of high “water stress.”

The wealthy investors who dominate the world see an opportunity. Ninety percent of the world’s fresh water is under public (government) control. The investors want to privatize the water and make it available only to those who can pay. They see a global market with an estimated value of \$800 billion by 2035.

But millions of us can no longer afford to pay for it. In the US and across the globe, the economic system based on private ownership of the factories and other means to produce what we need is breaking down. The computer and the robot are replacing labor, wiping out the jobs, and the corporations and wealthy investors won’t pay to support labor they don’t need. The corporations and government in the US have merged to create a fascism designed to suppress any dissent and manage the economy for the benefit of the few. The drive to cut government costs and boost profits is part of this process.



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

You can see this corporate fascism at work in Detroit and elsewhere in Michigan, where the emergency manager system has been used to overrule elected local governments and open the door to privatization of water and other assets. In Detroit, thousands of households have had their water cut off because they can’t afford to pay. In Flint, the emergency manager switched the city from lake water to dangerously polluted river water to cut costs. And in Baltimore, MD, 25,000 households are facing water shutoffs.

Some 146 million people in the US, or 48 percent of the population, are living in some form of poverty. Labor-replacing technology has created a new section of the working class, people of every color and nationality, whose labor is no longer needed in the capitalist economy. The ruling class has no intention of providing them with food, water, housing or anything else. These workers are forced to fight for a new, cooperative society, where the means of producing what we need to live are publicly owned. For them, this

is the only way to survive.

In a cooperative society, we could solve the problems and guarantee the water supply while protecting the Earth. We could guarantee water and all the necessities of life to everyone. Water is a battlefield where we can make the need for a new society clear. Water must be publicly owned and managed in the interests of the people. As Bolivian water activist Oscar Olivera has said, “Water is the patrimony of the Earth and the patrimony of humanity. No one should own water.”

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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.

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Help get the People's Tribune out to homeless organizations and places where the homeless gather!

Capitalism is causing homelessness, pushing workers no longer needed into the streets. Now the system is passing laws making it impossible for homeless people to survive.

Order bundles of papers. Send stories and information about arrests for trying to assist the homeless or the criminalization of the homeless. The People's Tribune opens its pages to this fight! Call 800-691-6888, email info@peopletribune.org or write PO Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654-3524.

Months after the closure of the 'Jungle'

Still no place to go for Silicon Valley's homeless

By Robert Aguirre

SAN JOSE, CA — Is San Jose at war with the homeless? This was one of the questions asked when the homeless presented their perspective at the State of the City gathering on March 14. While Mayor Sam Liccardo delivered his report inside, Phil Olmstead, who is homeless, delivered the homeless perspective outside, dressed in a suit. The report spoke to the city's practice of chasing the homeless from campsite to campsite.

The city has a new strategy. Fourteen police officers appeared at one encampment

on Union Pacific property on a Tuesday in March and rounded up twelve shopping carts and a stolen motorbike. They returned on Wednesday, forced residents to sit on the ground, and cited 22 people for trespassing. City contractors posted notices that they would have to evacuate the site in 72 hours. On Thursday, the officers issued 12 more trespassing citations. Finally, when the 72-hour notification expired, city contract workers showed up with water district equipment and the destruction began.

Phil Olmstead was asleep in his tent at the time. He had suffered a stroke four years previ-

ously and had trouble moving his things. The cleaning crew helped him out of his tent and allowed him to carry his backpack and helped him with his loaded granny cart. Phil said he wanted his things not to be thrown away, but police told him if he did not like it to sue the cleaning crew for his lost items. When Phil saw them lift his tent and his bedding and shove it into the compactor truck, he attempted to re-enter the camp to stop them. The officer grabbed him and slapped handcuffs on his wrists as he helplessly watched the last of his belongings crushed by the compactor.

After Phil was searched and

placed in the rear seat of a patrol car, his chest began to feel tight and it became difficult to breathe. When the ambulance showed up to check on him, officers uncuffed him and made him sign a citation, promising to appear in court. He was taken to the hospital for two days for very high blood pressure and a possible heart condition.

When Phil read his Homeless State of the City Report, the audience grew and many were surprised to learn that he was homeless. Homeless volunteers circled about wearing signs that read, "I am an underwater welder, and I am homeless," or "I am a Berkeley graduate and I am

homeless."

Even as Phil spoke, the city was preparing to sweep three other camps within the next 24 hours. The vicious cycle continues as the homeless are hunted down like animals. We continue to ask, "Where do we go?" and they continue to say, "Anywhere, but here." They want to break up any communities and have us hide as isolated individuals, here and there, as long as we are not visible.

Now we have become emboldened and we ask, "Can you see me now?" The war continues.

'It shouldn't be illegal just to exist,' say homeless

Editors note: On March 17, homeless people led a march to Berkeley City Hall to protest a draconian new law that criminalizes many survival activities and greatly restricts where homeless people can sit. On March 19, two workers employed by the Downtown Berkeley Association attacked two homeless men, brutally beating them for trying to defend their property from confiscation. The incident was caught on camera and went viral. A protest rally, press conference, and another march was called by the homeless and street kids of downtown Berkeley, with wide media coverage. Below are the words of one of them. These brave kids have no future under this mean system, but are the visionaries and creators of a new one.

By David Joshua Teague (Ninja Kitty)

BERKELEY, CA — The incident that sparked this protest was when the two private guards started arguing with two homeless guys. Then one of them sucker-punched one of the homeless guys, choked him and knocked him down. The guy who did it got fired but the two homeless guys they attacked were taken to jail.

We are standing up against an ongoing pattern of discrimination. There is a lot of demonizing of the homeless; they're using the homeless as scapegoats, using sweeps and laws. It's already illegal for us to sleep. All we need is a hand up. There are people out here who have Master's degrees in math and science and other things. It's not a matter of intelligence; it's about being given opportunities.

They are using intimidation tactics to move the homeless kids along. It doesn't just stem from the individual ones, though. The shit rolls downhill from the top. We've grouped together for our protection. They take our bags when we have to leave them for a minute. They're trying to force us out to make room for rich people.

It's a cycle—every two or three years they try it, make a new ordinance to make it hard to be homeless. It shouldn't be illegal just to exist.

I've been fighting this battle for nine years. I was homeless at 13. When I was 14 they broke my ribs when they kicked me awake for sleeping on a bench, right here in Berkeley.

This is part of the general gentrification of the area. If you don't have money you can just get out—that is the attitude of the police. It's the same fight



David Joshua Teague, who goes by the street name Ninja Kitty, speaks at a rally, press conference and march against the criminalization of the homeless in Berkeley, CA.

PHOTO/SARAH MENEFFEE

for equality for everyone.

For some reason, society needs a particular people to target. I've noticed the same kind of targeting as in Nazi Germany, of people they want to get rid of. I'm Jewish and I lost relatives in the Holocaust.

They're creating an environment where they can do it again. Look how they demonize people in the media and the movies, whatever group they're blaming. It's already bad enough that it's illegal for me to sleep.



Yolanda Gutierrez addresses the gathering during the San Jose "Homeless State of the City" presentation.

PHOTO/SANDY PERRY

May Day, 2015: The fight is for a new world



In the spirit of May Day, 60,000 poverty wage workers in Chicago and elsewhere take to the streets demanding a survivable wage of \$15 per hour. The imaginative one day “Fight For 15” strikes that demand more back from the exploiters, give us pause to imagine a future world without any exploitation at all.

PHOTO/BOB SIMPSON

From the Editors

May Day, the day when the workers of the world put forth demands and express their international solidarity, is of special significance this year.

One hundred twenty-eight years have passed since the first, massive demonstration in Chicago for the 8-hour workday. The call for international solidarity could only be addressed to the workers of Europe and North

America. The toiling masses in the rest of the world labored in slavery or under the heel of tyrants.

The call for an eight-hour day was an effort to reform society to conform to the tremen-

dous economic growth created by the steam engine. If capitalism was to survive it was necessary to expand consumption. This was done by the expansion of the workforce and an increase in wages—even though the workers had to fight every inch of the way.

During those years, industrial imperialism reached its zenith. Over the succeeding decades, it was overthrown by a combination of war, globalization of production and the market, the ascendancy of finance capital over industry, and then, speculative capital over investment capital. This was made possible by the step-by-step and stage-by-stage application of electronics to production.

As electronics globalized production it also began the process of creating production with little or no labor. Unemployment and poverty grew along with the expansion of production and the concentration of untold wealth into the hands of billionaires.

The website, www.dosomething.org, recently reported: Nearly 1/2 of the world’s population—more than 3 billion people—live on less than \$2.50 a day. More than 1.3 billion live in extreme poverty—less than

\$1.25 a day. One billion children worldwide are living in poverty. According to UNICEF, 22,000 children die each day due to poverty. Eight hundred five million people worldwide do not have enough food to eat. More than 750 million people lack adequate access to clean drinking water. Diarrhea caused by inadequate drinking water, sanitation, and hand hygiene kills an estimated 842,000 people every year globally, or approximately 2,300 people per day.”

The electronic revolution is irreversible. Capitalists survive only by producing more, better, cheaper. This means more and more labor-less production. A corresponding social revolution is inevitable.

The world has entered the first stage of a revolution that will forever end poverty and exploitation by transferring socially necessary means of production into the hands of society. We must continue the fight for concessions—for better wages and working conditions, knowing that the next stage in history was described by the revolutionaries of Paris, who shouted to the world, “Arise! Ye wretched of the earth!”

Chicago elections: A movement, not a moment

By Lew Rosenbaum

CHICAGO, IL — The \$30 million dollar man, Mayor Rahm Emanuel, defeated Cook County Commissioner Jesús “Chuy” Garcia in the April 7 mayoral runoff election. Despite Emanuel’s huge war chest, his combined opposition forced him into a runoff when he won only 45% of the vote. Officially, 586,892 voters turned out for the runoff, just over 100,000 more than for the first round on February 24. Still, nearly 60% of registered voters stayed home.

This election was never about which individual was going to win. No matter who was the victor, each one would have been saddled with policies and laws intended to fatten and protect the wallets of the wealthy club that owns the resources of the Chicago area. This was always an election about what hold the Democratic Party still has on the workers, especially the impoverished and dispossessed section of workers.

In conceding, Garcia praised the promise of working-class unity that emerged from this campaign. Garcia stressed his origin in the Little Village work-

ing-class neighborhood, and that his fight was for working people in every neighborhood, against a machine that reserved all the resources for the wealthy in the downtown “Loop.” Emanuel will point to the fact that he won nearly all Black majority wards. The Emanuel forces were able to manipulate long-standing divisions within the working class to obtain the electoral victory. His message, to Black and white voters, was: “you cannot trust a Mexican-American with the finances of the city; Mexican-Americans are coming for your jobs.” Nevertheless, in many wards, a section of workers is beginning to coalesce and recognize its class interests in the common battle for survival.

The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) spearheaded the challenge to Emanuel. CTU members, along with SEIU, Action Now and others, formed an independent political organization called United Working Families. Some within this formation have no patience with Democrats, while others are convinced that they can push the Democrats “to the left.” Emanuel’s promise to govern by listening, rather than by forcing his will, reflects



The destruction of public education has ravaged Chicago. That was a major factor leading to efforts to oust Mayor Emanuel in the April 7 election.

PHOTO/SARAH JANE RHEE

more form than substance: the Democrats can only betray any promises they can make.

Now the battle shifts. Emanuel will face a strikingly different City Council. There, two Emmanuel opponents were already elected on February 24: David Moore (17th) and Carlos Ramirez-Rosa (35th). In the April runoff, they were joined by: challengers Gregory Mitchell (7th), Susan Sadlowski Garza of the

CTU (10th), Toni Foulkes (16th) and incumbent John Arena (45th). Meanwhile, these pro-Emanuel incumbents were voted out: Lona Lane (18th), Deborah Graham (29th), Ray Suarez (31st) and Mary O’Connor (41st).

The times call on us to do more than fight for what we had. The destruction of public education and housing and the loss of jobs, especially to automation, ravaged Chicago. Jobless people

can’t buy food, and robots don’t go shopping. Neither pay taxes. Something must give.

What is stopping the distribution of the abundant resources to the people is the private, corporate ownership of the socially produced product. The movement that emerges from this election must begin to map out how to provide for people according to need, not money.

Emergency Managers dismantling democracy

The drive to dismantle Democracy as we know it is wreaking havoc all over Michigan (17 municipalities and school districts and counting). A law passed in 2011 authorizes the Governor to dispatch 'Emergency Managers' to cities, townships, and school districts around the state, wielding unprecedented power by replacing the local elected officials. Governing by edict, the Emergency Manager (E.M.) can shred local public employees labor agreements, and sell off precious public assets without approval from the people or elected offi-

cial. The unelected E.M. can even dissolve a municipality and public school district altogether. Public school systems such as Muskegon Heights and Highland Park have been completely handed over to charters through this process. This draconian system has fueled the fight for water rights in Detroit and Flint, against Police brutality in Inkster and the persecution of Reverend Edward Pinkney in Benton Harbor—just to name a few. Now this model is being exported to New Jersey, where the former Emergency Manager of Detroit, Kevin Orr, has

been hired to impose fiscal martial law on Atlantic City.

Hundreds of thousands of workers in Michigan who were once the center of manufacturing life (particularly the auto industry), now find themselves driven out of production especially through technological advances. Now in the brave new world of Emergency Managers, we have no rights that the corporation is bound to respect. As the articles on these pages show, a new dynamic revolutionary social movement is unfolding.

— The Editors

Metro Detroit needs sustainable, just and affordable water rates



Protest against the water cutoffs of thousands of Detroiters last year. Thousands more homes are scheduled to be cut off, beginning in May. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

By Maureen Taylor

DETROIT, MI — The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD, as well as its still-aborning regional successor the Great Lakes Water Authority) is at it again. It has just been revealed

that they are secretly planning to resume mass water shut offs against the poor.

People across the continent and even around the world have demonstrated, blockaded the water shut off trucks, blogged, e-mailed, tweeted and demand-

'Water assistance' is not affordability

ed in every way that the City follow the United Nations Resolution 64/292 of July 2010 on the human right to water and sanitation, and not cut off these essential services to people who lack the means to pay.

Other than pay lip service and lucrative water "assistance" contracts provided for show, the Duggan administration is having none of it. Their plans will fuel the same human rights emergency all over again, but with better optics and public relations this year.

Water affordability means water (and sewer) rates that are affordable. It doesn't mean "free water", nor forcing poor folks into shut off status, then paying non-profits to conduct expensive eligibility proceedings, just so DWSD can take money out of a special account (an inadequate water assistance fund still in the process of development), and put it toward the bills.

The poverty-stricken con-

sumer of such "assistance" is then forced into an unaffordable payment plan, and generally faces the same shut off threat emergency a few months later. That kind of "assistance" is not affordability.

ACLU investigative reporter Curt Guyette broke this story and reported that: "Bill Nowling, who was spokesman for former Detroit Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr, has just been hired as spokesman for the Great Lakes Water Authority during the transition phase.

Nowling said, "The mayor wants to conduct a review of his assistance program for low-income residents, initiated last August, before dispatching crews to shut off service to residential customers en masse in the coming months."

If it's an honest reassessment, the Mayor's study will seriously analyze and base the decision on how much more the rest of us who can afford to pay water and sewer

bills would have to pay in order to keep the bills of the poor below the UN's recommended threshold of no more than 3% of household income. This would avoid repeating this massive assault on the human rights and dignity of the most vulnerable members of our communities.

So far the Mayor and DWSD simply refuse to even study this key empirical question of how much an affordable rate structure would actually cost those who can afford to pay for it. Any study that fails to conduct this basic economic analysis, which would allow us to make the critical policy choice between real affordability and "assistance" that leads to more mass shut offs, is simply a fraud.

Detroit can and must do better. After the pain and restructuring of the bankruptcy, it was supposed to. The world is watching to see if Mayor Duggan and his regional and state water partners will do the right thing.

Inkster Consent Agreement and police brutality

By Brandon A. Jessup

INKSTER, MI — On February 29, 2012, the city of Inkster sealed its fate. That day the city's elected officials signed a Consent Agreement with the state of Michigan, one of its many versions of the state's Emergency Manager and local dictatorship polices. The people advocated against the state's intrusive and usurping legislation that strips common people from their ability to govern themselves; and for the city of Inkster to stand on those similar principles. When facing the barrel of a gun in the midst of a robbery, what good can the bystander do on behalf of the victim? In Inkster's view: there wasn't much.

Like many more communities across Michigan, Inkster's immediate financial reality was to seduce the municipality to consent to an agreement that would impose drastic financial cuts. Soon the city would adopt an auxiliary police force to complement its own shrinking force of 24, down from 60. This force, with help from Wayne County Sheriff Department's SCOUT (Sheriff's Community Organized Urban Team) program, would assist their immediate safety needs. This effort would recruit nearly 45 auxiliary officers to calm the community; one of these officers was Mr. William Melendez.

Mr. Melendez entered the city of Inkster with a checkered past, one that included planting

evidence and excessive force as a member of the Detroit Police Department.

Fast forward to January 28, 2015 when Mr. Melendez would meet fifty-seven year old Mr. Floyd Dent, a two-decade senior of the American auto manufacturing workforce. After pulling over Mr. Dent for a routine traffic stop, Mr. Dent was pulled from his automobile, struck over fifteen times in the head by Officer Melendez as his partner watched in one of Inkster's neighborhoods known for heavy drug activity. The brutality and excessive force weighed against Mr. Dent is inexcusable; the charges levied against him through a judicial process tainted by corruption bring insult to injury. Melendez would

continue to patrol Inkster's streets almost another two months until the dash cam video of his altercation with Mr. Dent made national news, then only being relegated to administrative duty. It is unknown how many more commuters and residents have fallen victim to actions like this from officers like Mr. Melendez.

On April 10, Mr. Melendez was terminated from Inkster's police force, two months after his documented excessive force and brutality. The state of Michigan and Michigan State Police must be held accountable to the social and economic climate surrounding Inkster. The city's shrinking and current patchwork agencies providing public safety duties are a direct result of the drastic cuts

of the municipality's budget under its 2012 consent agreement.

The state of Michigan must take responsibility for exploiting financial distress and majority-minority communities for takeover and receivership. At the local level, citizens must be ready to recall and replace elected officials who place political expediency over good policy. Those who prefer to act without it, foregoing self-determination and local governance, cannot lead working class communities. They are no different than auxiliary officers occupying foreign places.

Brandon A. Jessup is C.E.O. of Michigan Forward Urban Affairs Group

'Folks, it's time to make some noise!'

By Pati Heinz

BENTON HARBOR, MI — The injustices practiced in Berrien County, Michigan are

a long-standing "tradition." The bias of the judicial system and law enforcement has gone unchecked and destroyed many lives.

Martin Luther King Jr., said,

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter." We, as a country have been silent far too long. We must take it upon ourselves to find truths and share them with the masses.

I was fortunate to meet Rev. Edward Pinkney, who taught me many things, including that courtroom watching is very important. It is one of the ways we have a chance of holding courts accountable when they fail individuals.

I've sat through many trials and hearings, and have seen prejudices against those who aren't wealthy, and against non-whites. I've seen people railroaded and sent to prison, with less than circumstantial evidence. Adding insult to injury, several Berrien County judges have been arrested for domestic violence and DUI's, among other charges.

The most recent case to catch my attention is, of course, Rev. Pinkney's, which is riddled with injustices. The other is the embezzlement by Berrien County

Commissioner, Robert A. Wooley, of over \$150,000 from the North Berrien County Senior Center, and a second charge of embezzlement of approximately \$50,000 from the North Berrien Fire Department.

Mr. Wooley was afforded the luxury of turning himself in after the warrant was issued for him. Funny, Rev. Pinkney's home was surrounded by police and a SWAT team, (as if he were a dangerous person) after the prosecutor issued a warrant for him for allegedly changing the dates on election petitions. There has been little media coverage of Mr. Wooley's case, certainly not the character assassination that was committed against Rev. Pinkney! Mr. Wooley even kept his seat on the County Commission, until he pled guilty to the charges.

The judge in Mr. Wooley's case seemed friendly, almost helpful at times—unlike the judge in Rev. Pinkney's case, who often seemed irritated,

condescending, and sarcastic. Pinkney's "charge" was really a misdemeanor that "morphed" into five felonies. Wooley's cases ARE felonies—he's admitted to them—yet the Prosecutor has made a plea deal, dropping one count, and they are recommending restitution misdemeanor in his case. How is that justice?

One man is in prison for 21/2 to 10 years on less than circumstantial evidence. He also happens to be a man who speaks up for the people, and against the corporate fat cats of Whirlpool Corporation (who run Berrien County). He also happens to be an activist for people all across America.

People should not be targeted because they don't agree with the corporate agenda to gentrify their community. It is only by speaking out against these things can we hope to bring awareness and change. Dr. King also said something else I really do believe: "If you want change, you gotta make some noise!" Folks, it's time to make some noise!



Rev. Edward Pinkney

Toxic twins: Emergency Management and Flint River water

By Shea Howell & Tom Stephens

FLINT, MI — As in the mass water shut offs to tens of thousands of Detroiters, the evil kinship of Emergency Management and violation of human rights is on full display in the case of forcing the people of Flint to drink foul, harmful water for the Emergency Manager's political and economic benefit. Outrageous and insane of course, but tragically, this is our reality in Michigan in 2015. The Flint City Council, recognizing the obvious hazards to human life and health from consuming water that is too contaminated for General Motors to use with auto parts in their factories, voted to reconnect to the regional Detroit water system. The Flint Emergency Manager Gerald Ambrose is refusing to do this.

In a press release, Ambrose said that Flint's water is safe to drink and, "It is incomprehensible to me that seven members of the Flint City Council would want to send more than \$12 million a year to the system serving southeast Michigan." Ambrose said, "Flint water is safe." So in the EM's bizarre, perverse "judgment", money is more important than human life and health. One wonders what else about democ-

racy, public health, and simple human decency is also incomprehensible to Mr. Ambrose. It's probably a pretty long list!

This is the predictable, and predicted result of having despotic, unaccountable power-tripping political leaders like Governor Snyder, Ambrose and their Emergency Manager colleagues. And if they think the people of Michigan will stand for it, their thinking is as deficient as their judgment and their empathy for others.

In March, the Flint Youth Theater presented Healing Stories on Racial Equity sponsored by the Flint Strong Stones and the Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion. The primary focus of everyone was the water crisis in the city. Since leaving the Detroit Water System in April 2014, residents have had trouble with their water, rashes, skin irritation, and foul smell and taste of the water. Several speakers brought bottles taken from their taps to show the audience the brown color and sediment floating in it.

Among the most moving of the stories was that told by the mother of an autistic son. He looked forward to his bath every day as a way to calm himself.

IMAGE/GO LEFT AMERICA

Now she has to keep him away from the tub. She explained that if he bathes in the water "he gets sick, his eyes are blood shot. He has a rash and a cough." What are we coming to that such suffering is inflicted by our government, and tolerated by us?

The Flint City Council's move to reconnect Flint to Detroit Water is just good government. The only thing incomprehensible about this situation is why anyone, even an out of touch Emergency Manager, would refuse to act quickly to restore safe water to people.

R.I.P. Herb, you did our city proud

In Memory of Herbert G. Cleaves who fought for, stood with, and helped so many in the City of Flint. We miss his larger than life presence at City Council and School Board Meetings where his public thrashing of the powers that be were legend. They hated to see him coming. He embodied all that was decent, caring, yet courageous and undaunted when he took on a fight. He represented the Gold standard in the pages of Flints' social justice history. R.I.P. Herb, you did our city proud.

Rude Awakening: Protests in LA to stop police murders

By Suzette Shaw

LOS ANGELES, CA — Fired Up! The crowd chanted symbolic chants at the “Black and Brown Lives United, Martin Luther King Legacy March,” which took place on April 4, 2015. The march commemorated the 47th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Pastor Cue Jn-Marie led a die-in acknowledging the 6:05 pm shooting death of Dr. King. The message was about “rude awakening,” symbolic words to Dr. King’s speech “I Have A Dream.”

The hues and ethnicities of those who marched were vast, as well as their walks of life in support of equality and justice. Various faith-based leaders and organizers, community members, labor and immigrant rights groups all came together in solidarity, walking through the streets of Downtown Los Angeles, as police and bystanders observed.

“Brotha Africa” was remembered. His birth name was Charly Leundeu Keunang. He was the homeless man police shot and killed on March 1, 2015. A

video of the killing has since circulated globally. In the foreground of the video you will see a sistah, a homeless woman; her name is Trishwan Carey. Ms. Carey is being held by the L.A. Police Department and the District Attorney. Her bail is set at \$1,085,000. Ms. Carey is the only known witness who was close enough to hear the interaction between Africa and the police, just prior to his killing.

On April 7, 2015, just a couple of days after the MLK March there was another march; “Death by Cop: Remember Me.” There was a rude awakening indeed... Folks showed up and showed out, it was a real rainbow coalition. They came from the west, south, east and north in solidarity; carrying hundreds of cardboard coffins. The Youth Justice Coalition organized this March, bringing awareness to the hundreds of people killed by law enforcement. The family members and loved ones shared their stories, their pain was very real. These families told their tragic stories of how their loved ones were unexpectedly, without cause,



Martin Luther King Legacy March in downtown Los Angeles. The march stopped at the memorial site for Africa, the homeless man who was living in a tent on Skid Row and murdered by police.

PHOTO/LYNN ROSSI

taken from them. Some even continue to speculate to this very day that law enforcement had a part to play in the death of Dr. King.

So, here we are 47 years post the tragic death of Dr. King and many dwelling in the U.S. continue to fight for equality. Most recently is the Walter Scott shooting in South Carolina where a bystander videoed a white police

officer fatally shooting an unarmed Black man in the back. From Trayvon Martin to Emmett Till, to so many updated Jim Crow policies, rules and regulations being implemented, wage disparities, housing... on and on, we are a country still dealing with strife and plight for many.

Perhaps the Honorable Reverend William Smart, Pres-

ident of Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Southern California sums it up best: “Marching has gotten us half way there; we got to keep marching to get us the rest of the way.” The next march is scheduled for April 14, 2015: “Stop Murder By Police #ShutdownA14.”

After Chicago Police shot her son: ‘I’m holding them accountable for his murder’

By Allen Harris

CHICAGO IL — Dorothy Holmes wants to know why. Why, on October 12, 2014, did a Chicago Police detective, George Hernandez, fire seven shots at the back of her son, Ronald “Ronnieman” Johnson, killing him? Johnson was unarmed and had no criminal record.

Most of all, the grieving South Side mother wants to know why detective George Hernandez is still at large and not in jail, charged with Ronnieman’s murder?

On a rainy April afternoon, Ms. Holmes came with her family and activist supporters to protest outside the Cook County annex building downtown and ask State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez those questions. Chicago police officers blocked the building’s doors to them.

What does Ms. Holmes want her to do? “Convict George Hernandez for the murder of my son, Ronald Johnson, a.k.a.

Ronnieman. He was 25 years old with five kids and I’m holding them [the police] accountable for his murder.”

Not far away, on the same day, the trial finally began of Chicago Police officer Dante Servin, who is accused of fatally shooting 22-year-old Rekia Boyd near a West Side park in 2012. Servin was charged with involuntary manslaughter, reckless discharge of a firearm and reckless conduct. All charges against the officer have been dismissed.

And on April 4, in the town of Zion, Illinois, north of Chicago near the Wisconsin line, a police officer chased 17-year-old Justus Howell of Waukegan and fatally shot him twice in the back. His funeral was held on April 10 with a protest planned for the next day.

Deep down, it is capitalist greed for maximum profits that is behind these police murders.

Corporations owned by millionaires and billionaires replace human workers with computers and robots. They throw the unem-

ployed into permanent poverty. As jobs vanish and poverty worsens, millions of people need help with surviving. Instead, the government destroys the social safety net because it will not take responsibility for people who will never work again. It closes public schools because it will not train children who are forever shut out of the economy.

America falls into a deep social crisis. The corporations and the government deal with it by tearing up the Constitution and creating an environment where they disrespect our humanity and treat us as criminals. And so the police kill, beat, tase, torture and harass anyone without justification. That environment is called fascism.

We unite with grieving mothers who, like Dorothy Holmes, hold the police accountable for their attacks on our liberty and our lives. We must fight against these attacks with the understanding that this system must and will be replaced with a new society built on justice for all.



Teen killed by Texas police

Teenager Kristiana Coignard (pictured above), 17, was shot dead by three Longview, Texas police in January inside the police station lobby. The teen, whose mother died when she was four, struggled with mental illness. After entering the police station lobby and allegedly threatening officers with a knife, police chose to shoot her four times.

We have to ask why police killed this girl. Why could they not take a knife from a small 17-year-old girl? This is but another case that shows the spreading police state. No one is immune from police terror. Every case is an attack on the working class as a whole and must be fought.

The underpinning of the rising police state is the changing economy and the mass poverty it produces. Given American history, it could not be otherwise that the victims of police brutality are overwhelmingly minorities. History also shows that as this brutality becomes accepted by the majority, it is inevitably used against everyone.

Freddie Gray died in Baltimore Police custody

By *People's Tribune*
Baltimore correspondents

BALTIMORE, MD — Freddie Gray died on April 19, after being violently subdued, and then subjected to one of the Baltimore Police Department's infamous "rough rides." This is where police cuff your hands behind you and do not restrain you with a seat belt. You are then smashed around the metal van interior as the driver slams on the brakes and makes sharp turns.

Baltimore City recently paid \$200,000 to the family of a man beaten to death by Baltimore City Police in 2012. In recent years, Baltimore City paid over \$6 million to people beaten by police. One hundred nine people died in encounters with Maryland police from 2010 to 2014.

The Freddie Gray case is different only because many people witnessed and recorded his arrest. You could hear him pleading for medical assistance as he was cuffed and thrown into a police van. Forty-five minutes later he was unconscious with a severed spinal cord.

Thousands in Baltimore demonstrated for Justice for Freddie Gray. After the demonstration on Saturday, April 25, spontaneous

demonstrations continued around Gilmore St. and the Western Police Station. The Baltimore big four TV stations replaced Saturday night programming with live coverage of the demonstrators downtown. The media and Black city officials constantly shouted out against the "violence" of the demonstrators. Four thousand people marched peacefully but they concentrated on the small percentage who were violent.

Today there are thousands of men, women and youth in Baltimore caught in modern life: they have to work to live and there is no work. The area of Baltimore that used to hold factories, warehouses and shipyards now is home to sports stadiums, hotels, condos, bars, casinos and restaurants.

Once the gentrification began, aggressive policing was begun to protect the "new Baltimore" business property. Baltimore Police rushed to make over 100,000 arrests a year when there are only 625,000 people in the city. This police terror is reaching broader sections of the population. Two weeks before Freddie's death, Barry Lee Berkenkemper, who is white, died of head and spine injuries in the Aberdeen, MD police station. Christine Abbott,



Thousands march in Baltimore for Justice for Freddie Gray, who died after being brutalized by Baltimore Police. PHOTO/RANDALLART.COM

a 27-year old assistant librarian at Johns Hopkins, was given a "rough ride" in 2012 and sustained major physical damage. She was arrested when she asked police and her guests to quit arguing in her home. Arresting officers tore her dress off, exposing her breasts, handcuffed her and threw her into the van. All charges were dropped against her.

Those who want Justice for Freddie Gray are learning several lessons. We need an organization that will represent us. The Democratic Party controls the Maryland legislature and refused to discuss 17 bills to control illegal police action in this year's assembly. It is not just Black men who are being attacked. They are the first, but women, disabled,

Hispanics and whites are receiving Baltimore police clubs and bullets. Finally, we must find a way to distribute society's wealth equally. How can a person live if there are no jobs? Real leadership must answer these questions and represent all people. The fight for Justice for Freddie Gray is just beginning. We are all Freddie Gray.

Prison inmates held in solitary for 20 plus years

By Anne Leonard

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — Federal District Court Judge Claudia Wilken ruled for an expansion of California SHU Prisoners' Class Action Suit, *Ashker v. Brown*, on February 12, 2015. The case will now include a class of prisoners who were moved from Pelican Bay's Security Housing Unit (SHU) to other California facilities. The prisoners' putative class action challenge, citing 8th Amendment protections against cruel and unusual punishment, was initially filed on May 31, 2012. Soon after, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (C.D.C.R.) began moving some SHU inmates to what is called a step-down program at Tehachapi Prison—where the extreme isolation continues.

More than 500 Pelican Bay inmates have been held in solitary for at least 10 years, with over 78 having served 20-plus

years. Seventy-five percent are actually doing time as gang associates, not as validated members. A gang associate can receive an open-ended sentence in solitary merely for possession of artwork, or waving to another prisoner of the same race. In comparison, the SHU sentence for the murder of a guard is just five years, and three years for murdering an inmate. The only way to leave the SHU is to name another prisoner as a gang member.

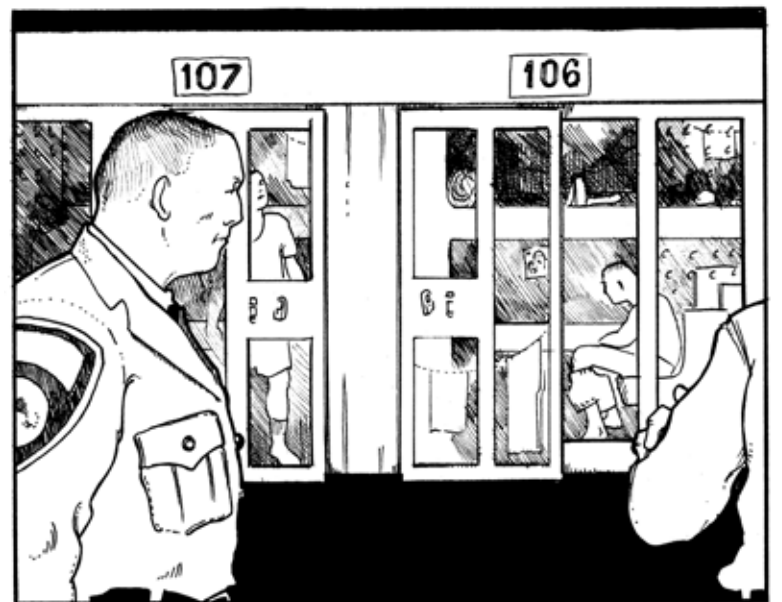
The SHU's 8' x 10' cells have no windows, the inmates are not allowed telephone calls home, are served inadequate portions of substandard and rotten food, and family visits are video-taped. California holds at least 10,000 prisoners in solitary confinement, compared to over 70,000 prisoners held in isolation across the nation.

In 2011, Pelican Bay prisoners presented "5 Core Demands" to the C.D.C.R., in an attempt to revamp a system of incarceration recognized internationally

as torture. The department's lack of meaningful response resulted in three massive California prison hunger strikes. Inmates numbering 6,600, took part in the first hunger strike, running from July 1 until July 22; and 11,900 participated in the second, from September 26 until October 13. A third, from July 8, 2013 until September 5, 2013, involved over 30,000 hunger strikers statewide, and included a work slowdown of 23,000 inmates.

The suit is the work of a coalition of prison legal aid groups, spearheaded by the Center for Constitutional Rights. The ongoing case originated as a civil rights suit filed by Pelican Bay prisoners, Todd Ashker and Danny Troxell, in December of 2009.

The suit contests California's extreme practice of placing inmates in 22 ½ to 24 hour-a-day solitary confinement, for as long as 10 to 29 years. With no consequential review process for the prisoners, *Ashker v. Brown* has



CARTOON/MOLLYKIELY.COM

also cited 14th Amendment due process violations, and was granted class action certification by Judge Wilken on June 2, 2014.

This important legal challenge could not have occurred without the incredible determination and hard work of the

California's SHU prisoners themselves. *Ashker v. Brown* is a key component in the ongoing nationwide prison rights struggle, attempting to institute more humane legal boundaries, in our country's increasingly punitive system of mass incarceration.

Power to the poets: *Brother Mike's revolutionary legacy*

By Adam Gottlieb

CHICAGO, IL — A raised fist holding a pen, with a mic in the foreground: that is the logo for this year's Louder Than A Bomb festival (LTAB). Organized by Young Chicago Authors for 15 years now, LTAB remains the largest youth poetry slam in the world and it is growing. This March it brought together over 1,300 young people from all parts of the city, suburbs, and beyond. The festival symbolizes to many an artistic renaissance happening in Chicago, and—as can be seen from the logo—the spirit of revolution.

This year's logo was chosen in homage to “Brother Mike” Hawkins, an educator at YouMedia Center who mentored a generation of up-and-coming Chicago emcees. Mike died on December 3, 2014, at the age of 38. He is deeply missed and

widely remembered for empowering young people to speak out against injustice. (In one of his poems, he says: “I want to plant seeds in revolutionaries.”) The day after Mike passed, Chance The Rapper tweeted: “He would say, “Power to the People” and Youmedia would say, “Right on!” and know exactly what it meant. Rest in peace Brother Mike”. In honor of this, the theme for LTAB 2015 was #PowerToThePoets.

Indeed, LTAB seems to get more political every year, and the ages at which students address issues of race, gender, and class seems to keep getting younger. One remarkable line I heard this year came from a young man on the Kuumba Lynx team: “We won't win until this game is ours.”

Here is what a few members of the community had to say about LTAB:

“The safe space and the cre-

ative space that LTAB creates is something that isn't really found in education... and it should be... Every kid has the potential to write poetry, to be an artist, but they aren't in spaces that encourage them.”

—Daisy Maass, 15, poet

“It's beautiful how this gathers people from disparate parts of the city... to listen to each other and to develop empathy by hearing each other's stories... I think it's a model for education and what we'd like the city to be.”

— Brady Gunnink, coach

“If it wasn't for these programs, I don't know where my mindset would be—I could have conformed to something that is completely opposite of what I believe in now...”

“I feel like Chicago is in a renaissance right now... I feel a movement coming... I feel it in



The Nilus West High School Slam Team performing at Louder Than A Bomb 2015, at the sold out four-thousand seat Arie Crown Theater.
PHOTO/ADAM GOTTLIEB

my soul that something is creating, stirring up, something is manifesting, and I think that begins with giving power to the poets, power to the children, power to the youth...

“I think maybe in terms of... “American history” we don't see

leaders as the youth... which is obviously problematic.”

— Kaina Castillo, 19, LTAB organizer

Learn more about LTAB at youngchicagoauthors.org

Battling the privatization of schools in Georgia

By Gloria Slaughter

ATLANTA, GA — “What is democracy?” Black, White, Latino protestors at rallies always chant in response — “This is what democracy looks like.” It is an event, a place, and even a school that has a diverse population and also has textbooks, teachers and staff that reflect that diversity. Democracy means that people have a voice in the governance of an entity such as public education.

Educators and others who

believe in public education are battling the privatization of the schools in Georgia. In the legislative session this year Governor Nathan Deal proposed a constitutional amendment that creates a statewide “Opportunity School District.” This would give the state appointed school superintendent the power to fire principals, transfer teachers and change what students are learning at the so-called “failing” schools. The majority of the “failing” schools are in the poorer areas and are mostly schools that are attended

by African American students.

It will go to the voters in a ballot initiative in 2016.

First of all, the criteria for a “failing” school are test scores. Classrooms are no longer interesting and “fun” for many students. Their day is spent with the teachers and students focused on curriculum geared to tests.

Michelle Rhee, the founder of StudentsFirst, spoke before the Georgia House's Education Committee in February. StudentsFirst has ten registered lobbyists in the state and pro-

motes school choice, charter schools and state intervention in failing schools. StudentsFirst paid for the trip to New Orleans by Governor Deal and his five staffers to look at how Louisiana administers “failing” schools.

Also, in this year's legislative session there are bills that promote vouchers that undercut public education. With these bills, the legislators are actually encouraging parents to withdraw their children from the public schools with vouchers that amount to \$4,000 a year and use these tax-payer cash subsidies to enroll their children in private schools.

The Georgia Constitution states: “The provision of an adequate public education for the citizens shall be a primary obligation of the State of Georgia.” Yet, public education has lost \$7.6 billion in the last decade and furloughs for teachers have been administered in order to save money, thus

the school year was reduced to below 180 days in some areas that lacked funds for 180 day instruction.

The Governor's initiative for Education “reform” has four points to it: 1) Direct state management of the school. 2) Shared governance with local school board. 3) Conversion to a charter school. 4) Closure of the school.

Anyone can see clearly that the goal of the “Opportunity School District” is to create more charter schools for profit and privatize public education.

Yes, the public schools need to be improved. All the talk about improving public education is just talk. None of the bills address teacher qualifications, textbook quality, the amount of instructional days and other issues.

This is all about the state taking over the public schools in order to privatize them. This is **not** what democracy looks like.



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

If Mother Earth dies, we too shall perish

By Cailie Kafura

STEVENS POINT, WI — Recently, something wonderful happened. It all started about a year ago when Bruce Noble imagined a summit held to shed light on the black snake that is winding its way through our backyards, in the shadow of Keystone's controversy. Enbridge is this black snake; it severs the state in two halves as it transports tar sand oil that has been extracted from the fragile boreal forests in Alberta, making Wisconsin "tarmageddon" when the barrels per day increase to over one million.

Many people are unaware of this and thus, with the help of Mary Beth Elliot and Carl Whiting from 350 Madison, as well as Elizabeth Ward from Sierra Club, this power team was able to make this idea come to a most magnificent fruition. Filled to capacity with concerned humans from all walks of life, we convened for a day in Madison, WI, complete with speakers from across the nation. Ed Fallon spoke of his Climate March Odyssey that took him from Los Angeles to New York as a means of protest against the pipelines in America.

Jane Kleebe from Bold



A young protestor along the route of a massive demonstration in Washington D.C. against the Tar Sands XI pipeline.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

Nebraska made the journey to bring the story of Keystone to the Midwest as a foreshadowing of what could be in Wisconsin with Enbridge's expansion. One of the most renowned speakers of the evening was Winona

LaDuke. A Native American activist, author, and founder of Honor the Earth, Winona held a presence in the room that had the audience gripping to her every word. As she spoke of fracking as an act of rape upon Mother Earth,

the personified attributes of the environment became a cathartic image of a living being in dire need of rescuing... a message that transcended throughout the entire summit.

As the environment and ourselves are one in the same, if

Mother Earth dies, we too shall perish.

Cailie Kafura is President of 350 Stevens Point, a climate change activist group working to reduce the dangerous levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide to 350 parts per million.

Save the Earth, save humanity

By the Editors

We are fast approaching a point of no return. The weather extremes caused by burning fossil fuels will continue to worsen, causing drought, floods, and more killer storms. Our fresh water supplies are disappearing as they are privatized for the profit of a few and spoiled forever with "fracking" chemicals. To save ourselves, our children and the world, we must put an end to the capitalist system and create a new society based on the needs of humanity. This is possible today. To do so, we must recognize our interests as a class of workers who are in direct opposition to the interests of the class of billionaires that own society's wealth. Only a cooperative, communal society in which each of us can contribute to the wellbeing of the other and share in the earth's bounty can save us now.

100,000 Poets for Change event in Houston

By Dustin Pickering

CLEAR LAKE CITY, TX — If it wasn't for public libraries, I would not be able to network and communicate with like-minded individuals. I live in Texas, which has the fifth worst regressive tax system in the nation, and a lower rate of upward mobility than California. Rick Perry, former governor, endeavored to recreate paradise from laissez-faire mythology. I tire of hearing that greed is good and government is the problem.

Naturally, no one assumes the government will solve human problems. Government only exists to promote justice, including the equality of members and their safety within a free system.

However, in a capitalist system one group or another has to be the scapegoat.

In Texas, anyone who advocates change to the system is a James Dean rebel-without-a-clue, one who wants to topple the rigid authorities to replace them with himself. We are nearer each year to the rough edge of Mississippi in abortion policy. We also provide a host of minimum wage jobs. Former Governor Perry, in

the squeakiest of helium breaths, downplays biology's role in sexual orientation as well as lies about the success of Texas students. Fool me once, shame on you, but fool me twice?

Humanness is lost under capitalist economy where being poor is a sign of incompetence and bad character. Changes to the system will require changes to dominant attitudes first.

In spite of Texas' high brag about being an economic powerhouse built on true Christian capitalist values, there has been little entrepreneurship emerging from Texas. The Republic of Texas with an anti-secular sneer thumbs its nose when asked to abide by the wall of separation. According to the Chronicle of Philanthropy, religion plays a big role in conservative charitableness. Conservatives are the most generous according to a study released by Arthur C. Brooks, and the hyper-religious South gives more.

This lengthy introduction brings me to my purpose. I organized for 100,000 Poets for Change in 2014 to propose alternate views, and the nature of the event and its goals felt

right. I did not get media attention but we attracted a fair crowd at NOKturne, a late night juice and exotic foods bar. The musical entertainment was an old high school friend who recently divorced a famous French singer. The poets included an Iraq War veteran, a gay rights advocate, and a poet from Davis, California who once dated Cesar Chavez's daughter. The group was small and intimate, but fabulous. Those who didn't attend missed a great opportunity to voice their concerns.

I admire the diversity and beauty of thought and even those who are diametrically opposed to my worldview look for change in something... because the world's nature is one of flux, of strife and mutual aid, and a need for stability. All are welcome to my poetry events. Cognitive dissonance does not exist in poetry. The arts are a place where one is free to be oneself and the intimacy of communication heightens a sense of wonder, mystery, and awe.

I live to create.

Dustin D. Pickering is Editor-in-Chief of Harbinger Asylum and founder of Transcendent Zero Press, www.transcendentzeropress.org.

Michigan needs a drink

Throats choke
On privatized
Dust.
Change fills the lake
But there are no wishes
Left here.
The whirlpool swallows
Benton Harbor democracy.
There are no wishes
Left here.
The youth here drink prison
Instead of opportunity,
But that's the new way
America rides.
Michigan morphs into desert
While her little ones
Drink the plasma
From cracked hands.

— Eric Allen Yankee

'We have to educate the people,' says Rev. Pinkney from prison

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

MARQUETTE BRANCH PRISON, MI — I want to talk about the hearing on April 14. It was a major victory for us. We exposed a corrupt system. It showed they will do anything to crush you. They will lie, cheat, even kill, if necessary. We, the people, had the opportunity to actually see them in operation. The judge and the prosecutor work hand in hand with one goal: to keep me in prison for a crime that was never committed.

We're dealing with people, government and the corporations—all working together. It is a true example of fascism. Nobody would believe that they would go to such extremes to keep the people down. It's the rich against poor, the haves against the have-nots.

We must continue to fight this battle until the people understand. We must start educating the people so they will know exactly what to do. This is not conflict. We are at war. We must continue this fight until we win. There are more of us than them.

The problem is we are not educating the people enough so they can stand up and fight for what is right. Even here at

Lakeland Correctional Facility, the people have been beat down so low they can hardly walk around with their head up. The medical conditions are unheard of. Michigan does not have a death penalty, but if you get sick here, you have almost a 75% chance of dying. I can't imagine anything worse than being in prison. The conditions are unheard of. Food has been served with rocks and bugs in it. They have thrown food in the garbage and served it to the prisoners. Nobody deserves the cruel and unusual punishment that the people are receiving.

The poverty in the country and the prison system is going to get worse before it gets better unless the people around the country take a stand and say, "No more."

We must continue to fight for each and every one and educate them on the things they need to know. We only get information that they want to give us. We have to reach out to other sections of the population falling into poverty. We have to get out newspapers like the People's Tribune to help motivate us and take us to a whole different level.

The fight has just begun. We have no intention of stopping. Enough is enough.



Jill Stein, Green Party presidential candidate in 2012, speaking at rally to Free Pinkney outside Berrien County Courthouse. PHOTO/SANDY REID, PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

Oh my friends, if there is one thing we must see today, it is that these are revolutionary times. All over the world, men and women, as never before, are rising up against the old systems of exploitation and oppression. Out of the

wounds of a frail world, a new system of justice and equality will be born.

I speak out against injustice, not in anger, but with anxiety and sorrow in my heart, and above all, with a passionate desire to see our

beloved country stand as a moral example to the world.

We must stand together, Black, White, Red, Brown, and all others.

Rev. Pinkney and the struggle for a new society

From the Editors of the People's Tribune

On the morning of his April 14 hearing, Rev. Edward Pinkney entered the courtroom in prison garb, handcuffed and shackled. His attorney asked the judge to remove his handcuffs, but the judge commented that it was up to the guard and the guard said no. In addition, Pinkney's supporters were warned against showing any sign of emotion during the proceedings. (At a previous hearing a supporter was threatened with removal for making eye contact with Pinkney.)

These were the ominous conditions that set the tone for the sham hearing. Pinkney was denied a new trial; the juror who allegedly lied about her acquaintances with officials who had a stake in convicting Pinkney was let off. Pinkney was ordered to pay restitution for "psychological injuries" to James Hightower, the mayor who the community had sought to oust.

This travesty of justice has many features: the conviction with no evidence, the absence of a jury of one's peers, and felony rather than misdemeanor

charges. This is occurring under fascism, the unity of the courts, police, and public officials with the Whirlpool Corporation, the giant that rules the area.

Rev. Pinkney has been thrown into the bowels of America's oppressive prison system because he is a spokesperson for the downtrodden. As a revolutionary, he understands that today's changes in the economy make a new society possible—where poverty, oppression and racism will end, and where the billionaire ruling class is a thing of the past, but the new society has to be fought for. For this reason, Rev. Pinkney focuses on educating and bringing into the leadership of this struggle the most impoverished workers, those who have no stake in the system and nowhere to go but forward.

At the root of the attack against Rev. Pinkney is capitalism; an economic system based on the private property of a handful of billionaires who control the government. Under capitalism it is okay for people to die from a lack of water, food or medical care, while billionaires profit from private ownership of these resources.

What is new today is that capitalism is a dying system. We see it in Michigan, and in other former industrial states in the "Rust Belt." There, millions have permanently lost their jobs, primarily due to production with computers and robots. Without workers who can buy the commodities the billionaire class owns, the system comes to an end.

It is not possible to go back to what we once had. As Dorothy Pinkney stated at the rally outside the Courthouse, "A system that cannot provide for its people must and can be overthrown and replaced with one that will."

The ruling class strategy is to keep us fighting one another. We have to counter this. For the first time, a section of workers are becoming equally impoverished, regardless of color. If educated, they can be united into a powerful force. The fight to free Pinkney must be taken to these workers, and their struggles for survival must be brought to the struggle to free Pinkney.

Let us emulate the courage and sacrifice of Rev. Pinkney. Let us fight for a new society. Free Pinkney!



Rev. Pinkney speaking at a rally for water rights in Detroit, Michigan. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

FREE PINKNEY!

Contact the Central Coordinating Committee for the Freeing Of Rev. Edward Pinkney at pinkneycentral.weebly.com for more information on the struggle and the ways you can assist.