



Protest against tax foreclosures on homes in Detroit, Michigan. Millions of families nationwide, unable to pay their mortgages and property taxes, face homelessness as speculators gobble up their homes. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

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HOUSING IS A CURE FOR HOMELESSNESS

[Read story on page 3](#)

Nationalize healthcare – guarantee care for all

EDITORIAL

You have to be rich to get good health care in America. One in three Americans say they have trouble paying medical bills. Even the relatively few people who have good-paying jobs and insurance can barely afford to go to the doctor, and a brief hospital stay can bankrupt a person. People have lost their savings and their homes to medical debt, or been forced to cut back on necessities like heating oil and groceries to pay medical bills. The question is simple: Is good health care to be a commodity sold for profit, or is it a basic human right to be guaranteed to all by society?

By one estimate, nearly 45,000 people die in the US each year because they don't have health insurance. Even with Obamacare, at least 33 million are still uninsured, and millions more are underinsured. Among those who got insurance in the last 12 months, 39% can't afford routine expenses like doctor visits and medications. Among the uninsured, 78% say they cannot afford routine medical expenses.

Our healthcare system in the US evolved as a way to keep workers healthy so they could be available for work. But in the last 40 years, the economy has been transformed by the computer and the robot, which are permanently reducing the need for workers, so the healthcare system is being cut back and made more profit-oriented. Obamacare accelerates a process that was under way of reducing both the quality and quantity of care available to workers, privatizing public health insurance programs like Medicare and Medicaid, raising prices, forcing smaller hospitals and clinics to close, and shifting more costs to the workers.

Today, billions are made in profits from a healthcare system that more and more people



This five-year battle for a trauma center on Chicago's Southside was sparked after a young man, waiting for a bus, was shot. He had to be transported to a hospital 10 miles away and died.

PHOTO/SARAH JANE RHEE

simply can't afford. At the same time, new life-saving treatments are being developed every month, but only those who can afford to pay get access to them.

Labor-replacing technology means that, more and more, we can no longer circulate commodities like healthcare based on money changing hands; the technology is eliminating jobs and people with no jobs have no money. The technology will get more and more capable, and there will be fewer and fewer jobs. In the end, we will have to move toward a cooperative society where the people, not a handful of billionaires, own the means of producing what we need, and everything, including healthcare, is distribut-

ed based on need.

We can take a step in that direction by doing what most other advanced countries have done: create a publicly financed health system that nationalizes every aspect of healthcare—doctors, pharmaceutical companies, hospitals, emergency services, etc.—and that guar-

antees high quality healthcare to everyone. Healthcare is a human right, and should be available to everyone who lives in our country, including the undocumented. The struggle for a single-payer government-run insurance system that guarantees health coverage for all is a first step toward nationalizing healthcare.

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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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Housing is a cure for homelessness

COVER STORY

In a movie to be released this September, “99 Homes,” real estate shark Rick Carver relays this message to an evicted suburban homeowner: “America doesn’t bail out the losers. America was built by bailing out the winners, for the winners, by the winners. Only one in a hundred are gonna get on that ark, son. Every other poor soul is going to drown.”

Since the foreclosure crisis began, 5.5 million homes have been lost nationwide. And the crisis isn’t over. Florida, for example, has 300,000 pending foreclosures and 500,000 delinquent loans. In Florida alone, thousands of homeless individuals, couples and families with children, live in cheap motels, cars, campers, and tents as well as doubled and tripled up in homes.

But it is Michigan that clearly illustrates that this crisis cannot be resolved without a radical break with a social system that guarantees necessities like homes only to those who can pay.

Once the industrial capital of the world, today new labor-replacing technology in the form of robots and computers is destroying the industrial economy and the society built around it. Hundreds of thousands have lost their so-called ‘middle-class’ jobs that in the past supported a stable tax base.

In Detroit alone, 62,000 homes face foreclosure, due to delinquent property taxes and exorbitant water bills placed as liens against homeowners. One hundred thousand more Detroiters could become homeless, left gazing back at row

after row of boarded up homes. Thousands more face water shut-offs as rates are raised to unaffordable levels. Meanwhile, speculators gobble up properties for pennies on the dollar, jacking up rents and gambling that new developments will increase their value. Detroit is being redesigned for the affluent of all colors.

Michigan’s Emergency Manager System, put in place by corporate backers, guarantees billions of dollars to corporations and turns over public assets to private interests. Neighborhood after neighborhood has been destroyed. Schools are closed and then turned over to private corporations, which open ‘charter’ schools for profit. Some public parks are now privately owned and guarded by private security ‘cops.’ “If you can’t pay, you can’t play” is the new motto.

Meanwhile, formerly productive workers and their families fight for their human rights to housing and water. They join a growing class of workers worldwide who cannot compete with robots and computers. Michigan proves that the tiny class of billionaires who own the economy, the nation and the world, will not support those workers they no longer need.

An economy based on competition and the private property of billionaires created this situation. Today we must fight forward to a vision of a new society built on cooperation. Production by robotics necessitates that we join together in the interests of our class, the working class. The capitalist class is operating in its interests. The new class of workers formed from the ashes



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

of the industrial society can take us into the future where we “rig” the nation to benefit all. The first

step is to demand that the government give everyone a home.



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

From the Editors

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. Who's next?

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.

'I'm not ready to give up!' A victory for the commons and for homeless rights

By Mike Zint

Editor's Note: Mike Zint, of 'First they came for the homeless' and the Berkeley Post Office Defense, spoke at a victory celebration there, where he has been the main organizer of a 24-hour vigil in defense of the commons and for homeless rights. Because of the ongoing campaign to save the historic old Post Office building from being sold to a real estate company owned by California Senator

Dianne Feinstein's billionaire husband, financier and former slumlord Richard Blum, a judge stopped the sale and slowed down the push to privatize. These words were transcribed from a video of Mike's speech. [Sarah Menefee, for the People's Tribune]

BERKELEY, CA — What we have here is an occupation, a fight for the commons, a fight for homeless rights. We have a literature table, we have a free box, we



A homeless man sitting in the park is ticketed by a San Francisco cop. We must fight the rampant, petty criminalization of people abandoned by this economic system and demand that the government provide homes for people. PHOTO/NEIL FITZPATRICK

have a community garden. Here in Berkeley a lot of things are happening with the homeless situation. The community is really upset about the development of the Berkeley area, they don't want the big buildings and high rents, they don't want the post office to be turned into a hotel. These are things the people are going to have to continue to fight.

People need to understand that Charlie, Karma Bear, me, Lilith have dedicated six months

of our lives to maintaining this 24-hour occupation. We are not ready to break this vigil down yet because we have the right to exist. We have the right to shelter. Our species is the only one that denies shelter to members of its own species. If we don't have these tents health issues pop up. I'm not ready to give up. I think this is a beautiful building. I think that it's worth fighting for. I think the post office is worth fighting for.

The future is really not look-

ing good in our country. Our government is taken over by corporations, lobbyists run everything. It's money, profit before people, and we need to put the message out that paper is not more important than people. Berkeley has led the way in the fight to save the Post Office. There are other post offices in jeopardy. And you guys show the country that they can do what we've done. We can win this. Thank you.

Illinois poverty increases and the children pay the price

By Cathy Talbott

CARBONDALE, IL — One thing we know for certain here in Southern Illinois is that times are hard! Good paying jobs have all but disappeared. Part-time minimum wage and contingent jobs are on the rise. Poverty, while always an issue here, is worsening. Of nearly two million people in Illinois, 15%, live at or below poverty, back to 1960 levels. Nearly half of those live in extreme poverty.

Poverty rates are higher here than in the state as a whole. Child poverty rates are even double the overall rate in many counties.

Jackson County, for example, home to Southern Illinois University, has a 29.5% poverty rate, a 34% child poverty rate while having one of the lowest unemployment rates of any Southern Illinois county, 6.2%.

Up to 16.2% live in poverty in neighboring Williamson County. Child poverty is 25.1% and unemployment 6.7%.

Alexander County, home to Cairo, a historic river town at

the convergence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, has an unemployment rate of 7% with an overall poverty rate of 33% and a 53.2% child poverty rate.

Minimum-wage workers would have to work in excess of 60 hours/week to afford a two-bedroom apartment in all of southern Illinois. Homelessness is on the rise. Over 3000 children are counted as homeless in southern Illinois.

While there are differences in the demographics, i.e., racial and age disparities, the bottom line is that poverty crosses the color line and the children are paying the price.

As the fifth largest state, Illinois has the fifth largest economy at \$721 billion, larger than many independent nations. Where once bustling industrial towns built on the expansion after WWII existed, abandoned factories and mines stand as monuments to a dying economic system. Many have been consolidated and production moved to states where the latest technology has replaced workers on the

lines. Workers who have little to no money cannot buy the things they need for themselves and their families to survive.

New austerity measures promoted by both Democrats and Republicans further threaten the future of our families and children. Austerity is a code word for turning public resources into assets for the corporations, destroying what's left of a shredded safety net.

In response, new organizations are forming to address this widening gap between the haves and the have-nots. It is becoming clear that the need far exceeds the available charity. Alternatives to the "poverty as usual" programs are being explored. Multiple organizations are educating the public on the LaSalle Street tax. It would place a small transaction tax on the Chicago exchanges where trillions are traded annually. This could bring in billions to state coffers yearly, eliminating the pension and school funding crises alone.

While we must fight for concessions from the millionaires



Carolyn Boaz with grandchildren at the Herrin House of Hope thrift store. She takes care of the grandchildren while her son works three jobs to support them. PHOTO/CATHY TALBOTT

and billionaires who own the economy, we need to do so with a vision of a future which eliminates poverty and homelessness forever. That vision is the public ownership of the things like

vacant housing that our class needs for survival. Only a new society built on cooperation can guarantee our children have a future in which they thrive!

International Social Movements Gathering on Water and Affordable Housing

Dear Readers,

On pages 5, 6 and 7, we bring you voices from the unprecedented and inspiring International Social Movement Gathering on Water and Affordable Housing, held in Detroit Michigan in May. We will continue our coverage in our August edition.



Monica Lewis Patrick, We the People of Detroit. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

In this conference, people came together to share experience nationally and worldwide on the struggle to make access to clean water and housing a human right.

Michigan, and the “Rust Belt” in general, is a harbinger of what is to come to America if we do not act.

Detroit, Michigan, for example, once known as the “auto capital of the world,” is now devastated by automation, plant shut downs, and the resulting permanent unemployment.

Rather than provide for the needs of impoverished and

displaced workers, the rulers have put unelected corporate-backed Emergency Managers into power in Michigan cities to oversee the transition from a state in which workers once thrived to one that cares only about banks, speculators and profits.

Capitalism will not provide for workers it no longer needs. That is why the masthead of the People’s Tribune says: *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.*

Please use the People’s Tribune as a vehicle to help build this movement, to create a vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it.

Write for the People’s Tribune. Donate. Order copies to get out in your community. Email info@peopletribune.org for more information.

— The Editors



Sylvia Orduño, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

Assault on poor galvanizes response: A new world is necessary



Maureen D. Taylor standing alongside other participants at the Gathering. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

By Maureen D. Taylor

DETROIT, MI — As State Chairperson of the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, I am reminded that in the State

Capitol in Lansing stands a bronze statue of seven year-old Helen Keller, blind at birth, memorializing the moment of her historical enlightenment with her teacher, Ann Sullivan. This

story, made famous in the Oscar winning movie “The Miracle Worker,” was trying to convey the essence of what words meant to a child born without hearing or sight. The bronze statue captures that moment Helen put her hands under the pump while her teacher, Ms. Sullivan, used hand-to-hand sign language and spelled out the word W-A-T-E-R to her. Helen finally understood the relationship between the word and what that word represented.

June 1 marks the day the powerful Helen Keller passed away, so it is ironic that in June of this year we are celebrating not an age of enlightenment, but instead we are witness to a period of human darkness that will stain this State for years to come.

It is not necessary to recount the economic climate that residents of Michigan have been struggling through since the recession of 2005 and beyond. Entire cities and communities scattered across the State continue to reel from the loss of finan-

cial foundations built by so many years of fruitful employment. In the US Census of 2010, it was reported that Michigan was the only state to have lost significant population. In Detroit we know this fact all too well, as do all elected officials who purport to represent the residents.

Over one million residents of Detroit have left this City, leaving us with just under 800,000 to fill the void created by such a dramatic population decline. Factories that were the backbone of financial stability for millions of families have been slowly phased out. Computers are taking the place of the American working class, and that trend is best seen here in Detroit and in surrounding factory-based counties. Technology that used to enhance labor today has replaced labor, leaving in its wake the skeletons of neighborhoods all over Wayne County.

We are slipping into darkness, shoved into this draconian condition marked by a false and divisive narrative, which covertly

suggests Detroiters have resources, but because of our criminal leanings we don’t want to pay water bills. Poverty is criminalized as the poor are held responsible for not having enough money to pay rising utility costs. The economic profiles of low-income families are completely overlooked. Consequently, we learn nothing from past civil uprisings, or the current uprisings in cities across the country.

Our calls for relief are mostly ignored. Our tears go unnoticed, and our prayers have been unanswered. We have hope, and try to hold on, but this latest assault against the most vulnerable is galvanizing responses that no one here wants to consider. A new world is necessary.

Editor’s note: In the next (August) edition of the People’s Tribune, Maureen Taylor will discuss the next steps that the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization and the People’s Water Board are taking in the fight for water rights.

Voices from the Gathering

“The movement toward national and state legislation for water affordability, accessibility and safety is one of the human rights issues of our time. We have a committee of 25 lawyers working on this legislation. This conference was the kickoff. Why just try to fix something here in Michigan? Baltimore, Atlanta, California have now become issues as well. The corporations are trying to take over water, the new gold.”

— Attorney Alice Jennings, Detroit, MI

“We have to go to on the offensive. We have to begin calling for nationalization of water and housing, nationalization of education and healthcare. The government nationalized the auto industry a few years ago, but they channeled the money right back to the capitalists. This time, nationalization would mean that the profits would be for the whole of society and we would lead it. We have to demand this to have a better future.”

— Marian Kramer, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization

Please turn to pages 6 and 7 to read more voices from the conference.

VOICES AND FACES FROM THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS GATHERING ON WATER & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

“In 2012 the city stopped sending out water bills. Now residents are getting water bills for thousands of dollars. The bills are attached to your property taxes and you can lose your home. Now they want to dissolve the entire city of Highland Park, absorb it into Detroit, so we have no say so. All this was done behind closed doors. I wasn’t an activist or a politician. I had to do something. My goal was to wake up people. I started a newsletter, joined with other people fighting the same fight. I went to places where people were as mad as I was. If they weren’t mad, I made them mad. In our community we passed out newspapers, blew horns, waking people up, letting them know what’s coming and that this is our fight if, in fact, it’s a world fight. This fight will not be won through the avenues that most people think. I wrote letters. I talked to senators, Conyers, etc., and they didn’t respond. If they don’t want to be held accountable, they need to get the Hell out of there. The people will win this fight.”
—Eban Morales, Highland Park, MI Human Rights Coalition



“In Mexico, we have a 22-year process of privatization of water. My feeling here in Detroit is there is a fascist war against all people. Detroit is an example of the future of the planet. It’s similar to what is happening now in Mexico. We had 150,000 murders. In this context of violence is organized all the privatization and all the plunders. We need unity among the social organizations in Mexico, the US and Canada. This is the center of the social war on the planet. We need to exchange information and build international brotherhood.”
— Andres Barreda, Mexico



“We represent over 60 grassroots organizations and California Indian tribes. Twenty-two million people in California get their water from contaminated sources. Water affordability is closely linked to that. It costs a lot to clean contaminated water. We also have a drought and extraordinary mismanagement. Water defies gravity and flows upwards toward money. In 2008, we worked with international allies at the UN and started a campaign for the human right for water. After 4 ½ years of struggle, we got in 2012 the nation’s first law declaring a human right to water. It is a policy now that every human being in California has a right to clean, safe affordable water. Ground water is a huge resource but is not regulated by the state. Last year, we were part of a taskforce that got Californians voting to regulate ground water for the first time ever. Because we are well organized across the state, we are able to get our agenda over. I propose that this is a strategy that can be advanced.”

—Colin Bailey, J.D.,
Environmental Justice Coalition for Water in California

“Access to drinkable water is an essential, fundamental and inalienable right because it determines the quality of life and the ecological issues.”
— From an encyclical
(The pope was not)

“We’re really glad the conference happened. We didn’t realize how many other communities are affected by water issues. We got to meet amazing influential people. We are part of ‘We the People of Detroit’ and we partner with ‘Michigan Roundtable.’ We show the music and stories from young people around the state. Our issues are racial inequities, water, housing, transit, criminal justice and education. We are helping with the water issues, putting together water stations where people can pick up water, a water hotline, and canvassing to inform people and to help those who need it.”
— Jada Patrick and Preston Welborne El
(Jada and Preston are some of the youth who participated in the gathering)



“We were switched by our Emergency Manager to the Flint River which is disgusting. GM for dumping into it for about 18 years. You can’t drink, bathe and cook with this water. Our water plant has been adding more lead. I am being poisoned. I am sick. I have developed since October. All of my symptoms are for rashes, hair loss, and muscle pain. This is a huge health crisis in Flint. You can’t release as steam, you absorb it through your skin. Across our city, water is clear to blue. They say they switched us to save money. The cost went from \$80 a month to \$700. I was shut off your water, condemn and evict you. I am a cute tourist college town. Then they took our children. We have no rights. We are filing an emergency injunction. The Emergency manager will not disclose the cost. They’re not disclosing the cost.”
— Melissa Moore
Water You Fighting For



“I live in West Virginia. I didn’t think people had it as bad as we do. My heart goes out to you. Not only does our water unite us, but our struggles unite us. I buried my father at 52 years old. I buried so many family members. Raising my children in Appalachia means I have to watch our rivers and streams turn orange from chemicals and heavy metals. Last year, we had a major chemical spill: 300,000 people were poisoned. People turn on their faucets and the water is black. I am a coal miner’s daughter. I am a mother. And I am a proud Appalachian woman. I am here to stand with our brothers and sisters in Detroit. Let’s take our water back, our lives back, and our heritage back. These corporations do not own us. We, the people. It’s not about our skin color. We are human beings. This nation is fueled by the blood of my people. Nobody should be denied water. Appalachia stands with you. We protest, we rally, we fight our leadership that doesn’t stand with us. We need national collaboration. We need to take it to the streets.”

— Paula Swearengin,
Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC)

“The Russell Woods neighborhood in Detroit was once a very middle class community. It is now under attack by banksters. At one time you worked in an auto plant, had an industrial or government job, but those jobs are gone, the industrial base is gone. Taxes have gone up so high that people are often facing tax foreclosures as a result of the house not even being worth what they owe the taxes on. We have approximately 300 homes in foreclosure right now. Now, you can owe \$10,000 in taxes for a single year; some owe \$40,000. The average selling price is now \$14,000. This is a neighborhood that had all of the promise of Detroit; an historic area because of the Black folks that lived here... the Supremes, Diana Washington, first football players. Now, schools are closing. They’re shutting off the water. This is an all out class war.”

— Geo Errol Jennings,
President, Russell Woods Neighborhood Association



“In Italy the people won a referendum on water—27 million Italians said water is a common good, not a commodity.

Now, multinational companies and businesses in Italy are trying to undermine the referendum. They want to get a profit on water and they’re cutting off people who cannot pay for their house supply. Can we make a bridge between here and Italy and the rest of the world?”

— Cesare Ottolini, Italy



“Venezuela declared that water was a vital element to overcome poverty, and to guarantee life with dignity. Therefore the government decided to nationalize the service. Furthermore, we enacted two laws: Water Law of 2001 and Water and Service law of 2007. Before 1998, only 55% of the population had access to drinkable water; today 96% of the country has access. The government made an \$8.8 million investment to achieve that outcome from 2001 to 2012. In order to improve and address the water related issues in Venezuela, we created “water roundtables.” The community gets together and discusses its problems and issues regarding access to drinkable water... As of today, we have 9,000 water round tables nationwide and Venezuela has one of the lowest water bills in the hemisphere, around \$5 a month... You are welcome to visit Venezuela and see for yourselves an impressive democratic experiment.”

— Fravia Marquez, Venezuelan consulate representative
(via skype)

Participants at the International Social Movement Gathering on Water and Affordable Housing, held in Detroit.
(The photos do not necessarily depict the people quoted on this page.)

PHOTOS/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

and secure water is an
universal human right
the survival of persons.”
I recently released on
by Pope Francis
at the Gathering.)

ency Manager from Detroit water
ing and contaminated. Thank you
at 88 years. We have been forced
contaminated water. As a response,
more and more chemicals. We are
copper poisoning and lupus, all
y children have been to the doctor
and bone pain. We are fighting a
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rough your eyes, skin, and clothes.
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f you refuse to pay your bill, they
knock down your home to make it
the water department calls in CPS
ghts. They don’t want us here. We
based on our health to get off the
ger said it is too expensive but will
re saying ‘keep suffering.’”
ays, Flint, MI,
Fighting For

The manufactured Chicago Public Schools pension 'crisis'



Chicago Teachers Union Rally for a Fair Contract.

PHOTO/SARAH JANE RHEE

By Tim Meegan

CHICAGO, IL — The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) pension “crisis” is a manufactured one. Even Senate President John Cullerton has said as much in public. Over the past 35 years, the Chicago Teachers Pension Fund (CTPF) has outperformed most mutual funds averaging over 8.6% return, including the years of the recession.

In 1995 the responsibility

for pension payments was transferred from the Chicago City Council to CPS. This move removed a dedicated tax levy for making payments. CPS promptly began taking pension holidays, and a pension once funded at over 100% was reduced to 50% funding.

Now CPS faces balloon payments to catch up, all while crying poor. The reality is CPS has created their own poverty through convoluted spending priorities. For

example in just the past 10 years, spending on private contracts has increased 122% to \$1.4 billion dollars. They continue to open new charters while closing neighborhood schools due to “lack of funds.” But the Board signed a “no-bid” contract to SUPES Academy, an educational consulting firm that had employed former schools CEO Barbara Byrd Bennet, which alone cost \$20 million. Bennet and CPS are now under federal investigation

for this.

Waste and corruption run rampant. CPS borrowed money from investment banks, signing “swaps contracts” to do so. Now the interest rate on these “swaps” has turned toxic, but CPS refuses to renegotiate toxic swaps, even though they have cost over \$500 million and will continue to cost the school system as much as \$450 million more.

Mayor Rahm actively seeks to reduce pension benefits, claiming the need for “shared sacrifice.” But when questioned on renegotiating toxic swap deals (like Los Angeles City Council did last August), he says, “There’s a thing called a contract.” Pension benefits are guaranteed by the Illinois state constitution—is this not also a contractual obligation?

CPS’ appointed school board dares not call for additional revenue—everyone is expected to march in lockstep with the mayor.

CPS was hoping that the Illinois Supreme Court would uphold the benefit reduction for Teacher Retirement System, but that did not happen. Now the only option left is to raise revenue. The Chicago Teachers Union has consistently promoted several new revenue sources and cost saving measures. Perhaps it’s time for lawmakers to give them serious consideration.

The Chicago pension struggle and beyond

By Lew Rosenbaum

CHICAGO, IL — Illinois, and particularly Chicago, are notorious for their brazen addiction to wealth, corruption and waste. Meanwhile, there are now over 20,000 homeless students in Chicago Public Schools. Chicago Coalition for the Homeless estimates that around 12,000 young people living on their own are on Chicago’s streets. Alongside this, Forbes lists 18 billionaires from Chicago, headed by the Crown family, with \$4.1 billion.

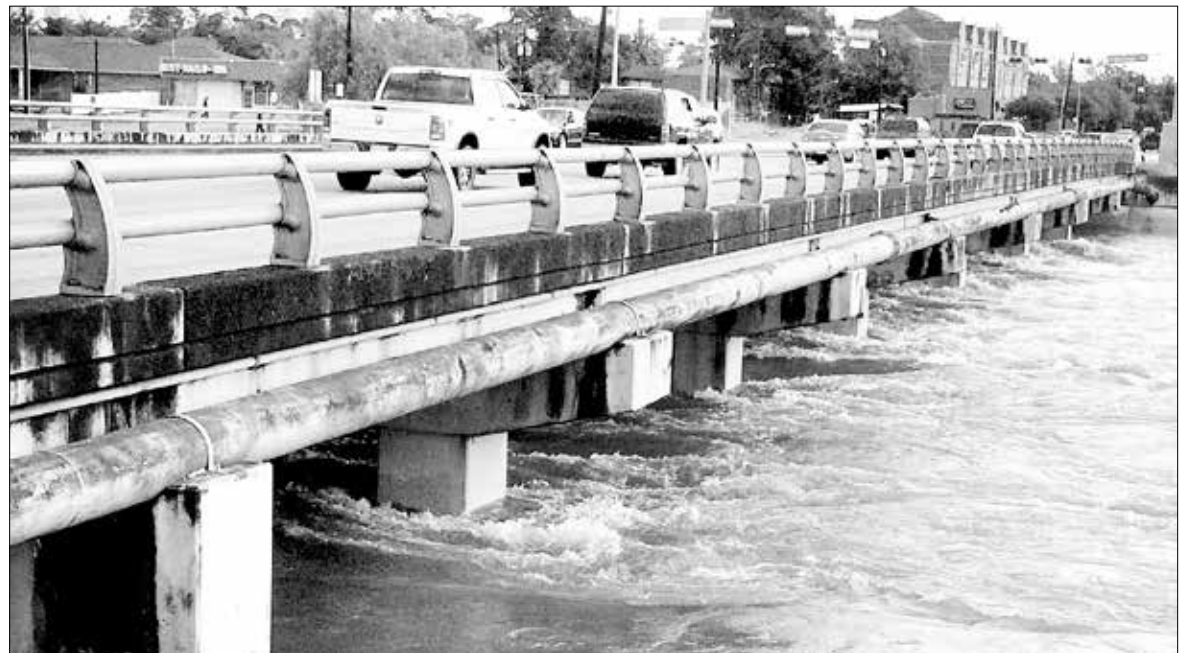
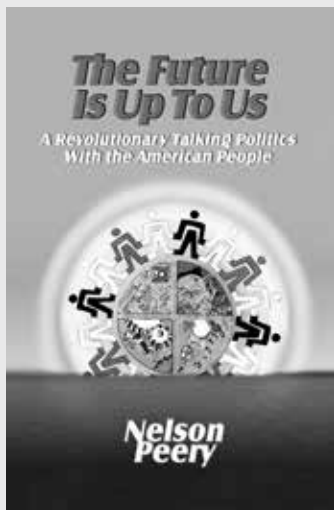
The Chicago Public School board, run by billionaire bankers, is militarizing and demolishing public education and privatizing everything in sight. In the new hi-tech economy, the billionaire class needs fewer workers, and they won’t educate people they don’t need. Breaking the teachers’ union and funneling pension money into their own pockets illustrates the end of their need for a stable workforce. The pension struggle is a key front in the struggle for the kind of society that can provide for all.

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The tragic proof of climate change was seen during historic rains and flooding in Houston, Texas in May. The rising water of Brays Bayou surged to nearly road level; water raged underneath a Scott Street bridge with the deadly “wave-power” of tsunami-like force. A Texas Tech University Professor, Katharine Hayhoe, wrote on Facebook, “We expect the future to look much the same, on average.” The fight to protect the planet is the fight for a cooperative society organized around our common interests, not corporate plunder and profits. Only this way can we guarantee the wellbeing of humanity and the planet that sustains us.

PHOTO/MARIAELENA CASTELLANOS

The political significance of the Charleston killings

From the Editors

Across the country, churchgoers, community groups and everyday people are voicing heartfelt grief, shock and outrage over the massacre of nine African Americans in Charleston, South Carolina.

As revolutionaries, we must examine the significance of the racist terror rising up in America and its goal.

Today, automation has created permanent unemployment and massive poverty. This will inevitably lead to a mass uprising by the people. The capitalist class is allowing and instigating racism in order to maintain control. It is their route to impose a fascist dictatorship in order to maintain their wealth, power and property.

Fascism, like all processes, develops in stages. The economic stage is the merger of corporate economic power with the government. The political stage is the rising police state and new laws that target the poorest workers. Now we are at the beginning of the social stage—a fascist movement. White supremacists like Dylann Roof facilitate this process.

What remains is for a crisis to erupt that allows for a full-blown fascist offensive. The legal power of the government to declare a



Prayer vigil held for the Emanuel AME shooting victims at Morris Brown AME church in Charleston, South Carolina.

PHOTO/MIKE LEDFORD, WWW.MIKELEDFORD.COM

dictatorship already exists.

Given American history, the rulers' attack on democracy starts with an attack on the Black workers. We must see, however, that today's racist terror has a different economic and political goal than the racism of yesteryear. The purpose of the brutal terror after slavery was to keep the Blacks on the plantation working for nothing. Today its aim is to stop the movement for a democratic society.

In this sense, the show

of sympathy from whites in Charleston, a city where slavery was once central to its economy, is important. It shows real unity is possible today.

The role of revolutionaries is to show the American people that the rulers are using racism to hide the fact that they are imposing fascism on the whole of society.

The shootings in Charleston The American Sin

Editor's note: Below is an excerpt from a statement on the Charleston killings by Maureen D. Taylor, Chairperson of the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization. The full statement appears at peopletribune.org.

"We will not always remember the names of these fellow citizens, but we will always remember this tragedy and will mourn this episode for the rest of our days. It is what we do next that will mark how we recall this murderous moment that happened on a Wednesday night, during Bible study, June 17, 2015.

Progressive and revolutionary thinkers are marching ahead, envisioning a new world without the influence of corporate pirates who keep us poor and fighting for crumbs as they train how to blame others for individual economic challenges. Progressive and revolutionary thinkers are marching ahead, envisioning a new world where people access what they need in a system that supports equal access and opportunity for all. Progressive and revolutionary thinkers are marching ahead, envisioning a new world where we don't let 9th graders drop out of school, nor do we allow messages of hatred masquerading

as "free speech" to be shared on "Facebook" without consequences, nor do we allow traitors to that vision who call themselves Klansmen, Nazis, or the rest to operate with impunity and in the dark. Time to call them all out, and to make them pay along with their financial sponsors, those who would defile the peace and the prosperity that is ours to claim.

From neighborhoods, to this greater American tragedy that played itself out in Charleston, S.C., any single person or class of persons that supports violence in the form of bullets, or in the form of poverty, or discrimination of any type must be challenged. No one can legislate feelings or thoughts, but we must hold those who openly declare hurt toward others, responsible in such a way that they learn to fear saying similar words where others might hear them.

We cannot allow this horrible incident to take us off our mark as we go forward toward the building of such a new world that works for the majority of working class people. We must close ranks around our sorrow and carry the memory of those lost to us by the senseless act of this demonic, domestic terrorist with us into the bright future that lies ahead."

We stand on their shoulders to invent a future

By Rev. Dr. Edwin L. Jones, Sr.



WASHINGTON, DC — There are a number of institutions in the Washington D.C. area that help us grasp, as a people, where we have been and where we're going. This article spotlights two efforts to preserve and teach our history. The first is a highly visible effort, soon to be erected on the Mall with established resources; the second is virtually obscure among Washington's historic features, but under construction by a local community group to study our heritage, a heritage that

A community leader fights to resurrect and preserve the rich history of a sacred African American burial ground in the heart of Washington, DC.

equips our youth to visualize a future worth fighting for.

Major construction is currently underway on the grounds of the Smithsonian for the establishment of the first of its kind African American History Museum. This new institution will tell the story of a people and their contributions in building this country—a story that has been in many cases overlooked and under-recognized in modern American history. The African American History Museum is scheduled to open in 2016.

At the same time, one of the most historic landmarks in our nation's capital is also under development. Woodlawn Cemetery, at 4611 Benning Road,

contains more than a century of historic political figures, founders of national organizations and thousands of slaves who have been laid to rest after living significant lives that impacted the African American tapestry. One of the largest historic cemeteries, Woodlawn's 22 acres of rolling hills inters more than 36,000 individuals. They include notable figures such as John Mercer Langston, U.S. Representative from Virginia who served office from 1869 to 1879. Blanche K. Bruce, born a slave in 1841 was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1875. She shares the grounds with thousands of ancestors whose stories are steeped in the evolution of a race and a nation.

Members of the Woodlawn Cemetery Association have made the resurrection of this historic cemetery their mission. They work tirelessly to breathe life into this important piece of American History, unlocking the stories of former slaves and major historic figures that have been lost overtime. Their goal is to preserve African American history and share the rich heritage of ancestors with our youth and the world.

The work of the Association is refurbishing the grounds and ensuring that all of the interred on the property are appropriately identified and placed in a database system.

We are asking that the sur-

rounding community and the nation come together to support this restorative effort. There are lessons to be learned from our ancestors about shaping our future. The Woodlawn Cemetery is being developed to honor the voiceless millions that have since passed, but left a legacy to our youth for building a better life. Visit the website at historicwoodlawn.org.

Rev. Dr. Edwin Jones is Vice President of the Woodlawn Cemetery Association Board of Directors, Senior Pastor of Living Faith Baptist Church and International Ministries, and a community activist. Contact him at christianeddirec@aol.com.

Attack on immigration programs is an attack on all workers



Protest for immigration rights in Boston, MA.

PHOTO/MAR IS SEA Y

From the Editors

CHICAGO, IL — The recent court decisions to halt two immigration programs are an attack on all workers. A few days before the Expanded DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and DAPA (Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents) became effective, 26 states, mostly Southern, filed a lawsuit against the federal government. A Texas judge then placed a hold on the programs. On May 26, a second court in New Orleans, Louisiana upheld the lawsuits.

As of this writing, none of the politicians, Democratic or Republican, are saying anything about this. Where is the political leadership from our so-called “representatives of the people?”

The answer is that today, the government, politicians and the corporations are one and the same. U.S. immigration legislation is essentially written by corporations in order to increase profits and to legally approve a strata of guest workers that the corporations need, and to deport those who are not needed. Meanwhile, the four to five million people who were to benefit from the expanded immigration programs are stuck in limbo. Not only will parents not be benefited, student programs will not be renewed. Clearly, the system does not have solutions.

What's behind the immigration reform fight, and why should we care?

In the past, during the industrial era, immigration was used by the corporations to control wages. Today, with electronic production, there are less and less jobs, and employment is no longer expanding. Today, immigration is used to drive wages down by increasing the competition of the workers over the few jobs that exist.

Current and proposed immigration laws also facilitate the spreading of fascist terror. Laws deny citizenship and political rights to a growing sector of workers, and force workers to accept routine raids, detention, criminalization, and deportation without legal recourse. Almost no public information is released about Border Patrol shootings. All this diverts, divides, and defuses the movement for human rights for all,

The decision to halt Extended DACA and DAPA needs to be resolved. But we should not expect that the politicians will make the necessary decisions. It's going to be up to the people.

This means we, the people, must show that immigration is a class issue that affects all of us. Then, we must build unity in this fight wherever we can. The poorest workers in the U.S. can and must be united in a struggle for their common interests, whether it is food, housing, healthcare or immigrant rights. Understanding the need to unite our efforts to gain what every human being needs to live and thrive is the next step forward to a world with justice and peace for all.

In this era of antagonism the attacks on us are relentless

By Al Gladysck

DETROIT, MI — Wages can consist of your paycheck, your profit sharing check and the cost of medical insurance for you and the family. They can also consist of the medical insurance and pension checks of workers who retired from the company you work for. Lastly, they consist of income, Medicare, and Social Security taxes, which pay for Medicaid and Medicare insurances and Social Security checks of today's retirees and their families.

Since 1980, increases in productivity through new technology has been the basis for the decreases in our wages.

A robot may cost a year's wages and save many years of wages for the company by replacing wage workers. The robot doesn't have a family to support, it doesn't require healthcare or a pension. It doesn't pay taxes. And

a new robot is not needed until it wears out years later. In that case, the robot is replaced with the next generation of robots which cost less, does more, and replaces many more wage workers.

In other words, two products are produced in an hour with half the workers because of the new technology. Objectively, it is good for us and society because we can produce more with little or no labor involved. Objectively, it is bad for the corporations because there is little or no unpaid labor involved.

In order to increase unpaid labor the corporations have to reduce the wages of those of us still working.

So the current strategy of the corporations is to rid themselves of the responsibility for retirees or as they call them “non-employees”. Remember, their medical insurance and pensions checks are part of our wages. The result is and will be more poverty for retirees.

One example is the establishment of two-tier wages at GM, Ford and Fiat/Chrysler in 2007. The savings from two-tier wages was used to fund the Voluntary Employee Beneficiaries Association (VEBA) to establish a medical insurance fund for UAW Retirees independent of the big three. We are having a hard time accepting that in the big three new hire wages were cut by 50% in order to eliminate the corporations' responsibility for retiree healthcare.

Now, two-tier wages are a problem for the UAW because of the “right to work” laws recently passed in the “Rust Belt” in the Midwest. Under the “right to work” law, union members do not have to pay dues as soon as the ink dries on the 2015 UAW contract. Certainly, UAW members in auto who are earning 50% less than UAW members working right next to them will stop paying dues until they are all earning

the same wages.

So the goal of the UAW in the 2015 contract negotiations is to eliminate the present two-tier wage system. But the only bargaining chip they have is the retiree pensions. They have to trade two-tier for retiree pensions and drive the retirees further into poverty or strike to eliminate two-tier and save retiree pensions. A strike could be a blow against poverty.

That is the political reality that UAW active workers and UAW retired workers are faced with in these 2015 auto contract negotiations. They need to unite against their common enemies.

Homeless artist for Mad Matt

The man living on the street
has immeasurable talent.
How will we ever know
what he could have
created
if he wasn't so busy trying
to stay alive . . .
Damn this wretched
system!!!

—Julianna Cheng

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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 people of color. History also shows that as this brutality becomes accepted by the majority, it is inevitably used against everyone. To stop a complete fascist police takeover of the country, every instance of police violence must be fought.

Reparations: Window into a new society

By Lew Rosenbaum

CHICAGO, IL — Chicago is known as the torture capital of the U.S. Rebuked by the United Nations Commission on Torture, the subject of a Guardian series on the Homan Square “black site,” Chicago has been targeted by a large coalition of organizations to acknowledge the years of brutality committed by Police Commander Jon Burge and a cohort of other officers. Burge’s “Midnight Crew” beat, suffocated, electroshocked, burned with a hot radiator, and choked prisoners, documented well by John Conroy in his many *Chicago Reader* articles.

The campaign for justice for the torture victims reached a milestone May 6, 2015: the Chicago City Council voted unanimously for a reparations ordinance, which recognizes the torture and grants up to \$5.5 million to the Burge victims. It also provides for educational benefits, emotional counseling, and other benefits for the survivors and their families, and that Burge era torture will be part of the Chicago Public Schools curriculum.

Jon Burge was a police Commander in the 1970s and 1980s, when he and other offi-

cers tortured prisoners to extract confessions. This did not take place in a vacuum: most of the heavy industrial infrastructure of Chicago has gone elsewhere, while electronics has penetrated every segment of the economy. The result is an economic wasteland for most, side by side with the accumulation of wealth by the corporate masters of the area and a rising police state for the rest. Chicago denied the torture, though year after year survivors were released after confessions were discredited and the city paid millions of dollars in judgments in individual civil suits. For years, the Chicago Torture Justice Memorial has documented and publicized these cases with public events, readings and exhibits.

Complementing the decades long struggle, Project NIA launched an audacious initiative: Young people from Chicago reprised the “We Charge Genocide” campaign from 60 years ago, taking this charge against the city of Chicago to the United Nations in November, 2014. They focused on the Burge torture victims as well as police killings of young Black men. This international embarrassment may have forced Chicago’s hand, as Mayor Emanuel ran for

re-election. After a majority of city councilmen agreed to call for a hearing in the council finance committee, Mayor Emanuel and movement organizations worked out a deal to support the ordinance, paving the way for the May 6 vote.

There is a real victory here. That is, that the people are becoming aware. After years of denials, in the face of a consolidating police state, the first official municipal recognition of torture in the US took place. It is the state’s de facto recognition that a society presiding over an economic wasteland and based in private, corporate ownership has nothing to offer the dissatisfied but torture, prison and death.

The growing police state marks the last stand of an economic system that cannot provide jobs or a decent life for the majority of workers. We must continue to fight every attack on our liberties, recognizing that the very police state that tortures and kills the poorest workers is what is standing between us and a new restorative, reparative society without police terror, one that insures that everyone’s needs will be met.



Chicagoans celebrate after the City Council voted for a reparations ordinance, which recognized that police torture took place (decades ago), and grants up to \$5.5 million and benefits to the victims. PHOTO/SARAH JANE RHEE

Police State: Americans are under seige

By Suzette Shaw

LOS ANGELES, CA — As American citizens we have proudly worn a subliminal badge of honor elevating our “freedom” to that of a black American Express Card which we can swipe at our leisure to freely and proudly roam our streets of the US as though they were a homage to our “American Dream” path along the “yellow brick road”. Yet, more and more, we are spied upon by law enforcement, thus, deemed “domestic terrorists” in our own homeland. I wonder if Dorothy in the “Wizard of Oz,” on her spiritual quest and traveling the “land of the free and home of the brave” today, would feel enlightened or oppressed?

American citizens, especially Black citizens, are

increasingly, systematically dehumanized when roaming this “land of the free and home of the brave” in their every day lives. Law enforcement deems them as criminals through use of brutal police tactics, thus, the new Jim Crow.

According to Hamid Khan of Stop LAPD Spying, currently racially discriminatory Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) or rather, secret files, are opened on people who law enforcement and the public deem as suspicious individuals. Rather than fostering better community-police relationships, law enforcement too often uses deadly force and even military style tactics to patrol communities of color. Tensions between communities of color and their local police departments escalated throughout the fall of 2014 and have not abat-

ed. Rather than spending monies to empower impoverished communities, monies are spent as reactionary means of oppression through capitalistic policing dollars.

According to Hamid Khan, in 2014, body-worn cameras for police became the subject of discussion across political and media landscapes following the non-indictments of the officers involved in the killings of Ezell Ford, Michael Brown, Eric Garner and countless other people. Law enforcement continually is acquitted of most charges in these shootings. However, a trickle of hope was recently given. After three hours of public testimony, the Los Angeles Police Commission Board rendered that both officers in the Los Angeles Ezell Ford case acted improperly when they drew their guns.

According to those with Stop LAPD Spying Coalition, law enforcement agencies are using any various combinations of body worn cameras along with intelligence and surveillance apparatuses. These body worn cameras add facial and voice information to the already large amounts of data already gathered by surveillance technology such as Trapwire, Stingray, Automatic License Plate Readers, Hi-Definition cameras, drones and more.

Imagine today an African-American Dorothy, such as in

the acclaimed Broadway production of the “Wiz,” and how safe she would be traveling these same roads on her journey? Would she be deemed human or a “domestic terrorist” under siege? For far too many in Black and brown communities, the American Dream is increasingly an American nightmare. And, the menace of a police state is spreading like a dark cloud over *all* communities struggling with poverty and the jobless economy.

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'Build a society where the people, not corporations, make the decisions'

By Rev. Edward Pinkney
(from prison)

COLDWATER, MI — The vicious, cowardly attack on democracy in Benton Harbor, Michigan, shows that the corporate power structure is determined to crush anyone that stands in its way. The Whirlpool Corporation and government joined together to destroy the people of Benton Harbor. We call it fascism. It is part of the process underway across America in various forms. The once stable working class of Benton Harbor was devastated by automation and globalization and the community began to resist. They have to contain the struggle.

We live in a failed system. Capitalism has no solution to poverty. It does not permit an even flow of economic resources. A small privileged few are rich beyond one's imagination, and almost all others are doomed to be poor at the same level. It is rich against the poor, the haves against the have-nots, and them, the rich, against the rest of the

world. The time is revolution.

But like Rip Van Winkle who (so the story goes) slept through the American Revolution, today there are those among us who are sleeping through today's revolution. There are those among us who are missing in action. We have to wake up! Today's revolution is for human rights, freedom, justice and to do away with poverty. Any system that will not feed, clothe, and house its people must be overthrown. It is like a monstrous octopus, spreading its nagging tentacles into hamlets and villages all over our world. Over 2/3 of the people of the world will go to bed hungry tonight; they are ill housed and ill nourished, without shoes and shoddily clothed. It is in Latin America, Africa, Asia and right here at home in Benton Harbor, Michigan.

We are demanding that America be true to the huge promissory note it signed years ago. The revolution will not wait. It will not slow down because some claim that progressives like Rev. E. Pinkney are "moving too



Rev. Pinkney and supporters outside Berrien County Courthouse on the day of his sentencing. Left to right: Marcina Cole, Pati Heinz, Rev. Pinkney, Dorothy Pinkney. PHOTO/MARCINA COLE

quickly." I am here to tell you we can win and will win.

Let's make this struggle a victory for all who are victims of the economic crisis in every city

and town in America. Let's make the invisible visible: the poor—whether Black, white, red, brown, yellow, and all other people. Let's take control of this country away

from the corporations and build a society where the people, not the corporations make the decisions. The revolution is now. We can win.

'We are all here together,' says Benton Harbor activist

By Pati Heinz

BENTON HARBOR, MI — In 2012, Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams, of Cleaveland, Ohio, were driving in their older model car, in need of repair, when it backfired. A nearby officer radioed in, "Shots fired!" What happened next is a nightmare. Mr. Russell looked in his rearview mirror to see a mass of police chasing after him and his companion, Ms. Williams. Not only were they chased, but they

were fired upon. In total, 137 shots were unloaded into their car by Officer Michael Brelo and 112 other officers. In May, 2015, Judge John O'Donnell found Brelo not guilty of manslaughter.

Should being poor mean a death sentence? No! But, more and more, our legislature, law-enforcement, courts, and even society, works against those who are less fortunate. Cities across America have laws prohibiting feeding or helping those in need. That goes against what we are

taught as children, and against what the human conscience feels toward others.

As citizens, we must stand up and speak out, especially at the polls. We must push our legislators to do the right thing and when they don't, call them out on it! We cannot afford to be complacent with the brutality so many are faced with. I believe police brutality is just another arm of the GENTRIFICATION BEAST. The courts and law enforcement are engaged in this process via

the school-to-prison pipeline, sentencing above and beyond guidelines, and the all too often police brutality. This is the most drastic and damaging act of gentrification that yields death and devastation.

The mainstream media likes the ratings that come from pushing the racial issue, but this war is really against anyone who isn't the 1%, or their "friends". This war is against people of ALL colors, especially if you are poor and outspoken, as Rev. Pinkney is.

The system wants to keep people from uniting, and sharing knowledge, because together, we are powerful.

I am in this fight for ALL people's freedoms and rights, and I would love to see all people engage in this for themselves, their children, and fellow man. We are all here together. It only makes sense to stand united. As Martin Luther King said, "If you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything."

Rev. Pinkney jailed for being a spokesperson for the poor

From the Editors of the
People's Tribune

Rev. Edward Pinkney, convicted without evidence of changing dates on petitions in a recall election of corporate-backed Mayor James Hightower, is filing a motion to be released from prison pending the appeal of his conviction. That they have refused to allow him to remain free while his appeal is pending shows how much they want him silenced.

At the center of it all is the Whirlpool Corporation, the largest producer of household appliances in the world, and the dominant political force in the area. While it's international headquarters is in Benton Harbor, they ceased production there long ago. The electronic automation revolution that has been going on for decades affected not just Whirlpool, but all manufacturing in Benton Harbor (and the surrounding area) and decimated the job

market. As jobs left, in exact proportion, poverty, hunger, destitution and homelessness increased.

A once thriving working class community of more than 20,000, it is now being economically transformed into a population less than half that size with a growing new class of impoverished workers who are permanently under-employed and unemployed. At the core of this new class are the homeless and completely dispossessed work-

ers. It is Reverend Pinkney who has been the most vocal spokesperson for their interests. It is for this reason that he has been railroaded to jail.

This is an attempt to silence the demands of the new class for food, clothing, housing, health care and education and a new society that provides for their interests. The fascist control of our society by private corporations like Whirlpool, now merged with the government, will not allow these demands to

be met. The problem can only be solved by public, not private ownership of the new and developing automated means of production so the necessities of life can be provided for all based on need. The struggle in Benton Harbor is a harbinger for all of society.

Donate to Rev. Pinkney's appeal. Send to BANCO, 1940 Union St., Benton Harbor, MI, 49022, or visit bhbanco.org