

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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DONATION \$1



A homeless pregnant woman pleads for help on a Detroit freeway. Her act of survival is punishable by arrest in cities across the U.S.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

INSIDE:

Healthcare for all	2, 10
Rising police state	4-5
Homeless take a stand	6-7
Water is a right	8
Battle in Benton Harbor	12

ATTACKS ON THE HOMELESS THREATEN ALL OF US

[Read story on page 3](#)

We can provide healthcare to everyone

EDITORIAL

If we need any more reasons to nationalize health care so it can be guaranteed to all, the horror stories in America surrounding the cost and availability of prescription drugs provide many examples.

The cost of a drug for rheumatoid arthritis was recently boosted from \$366 per month to \$1,800. A new medication to treat Hepatitis C costs \$113,400 for a 12-week treatment. According to Bloomberg, 15 cancer drugs introduced in the past five years cost more than \$10,000 a month. Medications for asthma, high blood pressure and diabetes have been among those seeing the highest price increases in recent years.

Even people with insurance can't afford the drugs they need, as insurance companies either refuse to cover expensive drugs or impose large copays on patients. A recent survey reported by CNN found that "one out of four people whose prescription drug costs went up said they were unable to pay their medical or medication bills. Seven percent said they missed a mortgage payment. One out of four stopped getting their prescriptions filled, and one out of five skipped scheduled doses."

With average annual profit margins around 20 percent or more, pharmaceuticals is the most profitable industry in the world—more profitable than banking, auto manufacturing, or oil and gas. And the drug companies in the US are allowed to gouge consumers worse than in any other country.

The problem is obvious: it's the private ownership of the drug industry and all the other aspects of health care. Health care is run for profit, not for people's needs. In the case of drugs, this means not only that patients suffer dangerous side effects, but that only



Protest by members of the community who are fighting for healthcare for all. PHOTO/SARAH JANE RHEE

the most profitable drugs get development funding. And why can't we have drug-free alternatives for treating illness? The solution is equally obvious: the people must take this industry over. Indeed, the only way to guarantee universal health care in our country is through the creation of a national health service, where every aspect of health care—hospitals, clinics, doctors and medicines—is a public service provided by the government.

A handful of wealthy people cannot be allowed to decide whether the rest of us will have health care. We have a right to have health care. To get it, the people are going to have to take over the corporations that have taken over our society, and run those corporations in the interest of society.

This is a question of life or death. Private ownership of the health care industry is condemning tens of thousands to death in our country every year and standing in the way of social progress. Is the government going to represent the interests of the capitalists and their corporations, or the interests of the people?

The people are ultimately fighting for a whole new society where private ownership for profit is not standing in the way of all of us leading healthy lives. Nationalizing health care would be a step forward along that road to a new world.

Prisoner donates \$30 to People's Tribune

"Thank you to those at the *People's Tribune* who take chances every day to get the word out on serious matters in our poor communities that often proves to be a matter of life or death. Thank you for being there!"

Prisoners work for pennies on the hour. Imagine what others will give, if asked!
— The Editors

Do you like what you see in this paper?

If you like what you're reading, the *People's Tribune* needs your help. We have no paid staff and get no grants. The *People's Tribune* relies entirely on its readers for financial support. Make a donation today. When you distribute this paper to others, ask for a donation. If you hold a discussion group around the *People's Tribune*, ask for donations. The *People's Tribune* not only opens its pages to the voices of the movement, it puts forward a vision of a new, cooperative society where everyone's needs are met and a strategy for getting there. From this point on, the direction our country takes depends largely on how people understand the problem and the solution. We need a press to win the battle of ideas. This paper can only continue to exist with your help. Make donations payable to *People's Tribune* and send to P.O. Box 3524, Chicago, IL, 60654. You can also donate via Paypal at www.peoplestribune.org.

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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

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

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

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

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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Attacks on the homeless threaten all of us

COVER STORY

An overwhelming majority of the American people want to see the problem of homelessness solved. They consider it insane that people continue to die in the streets when millions of houses stand empty. Under this capitalist system, the billionaire ruling class can't house people who can't afford to pay, which means they can't guarantee housing as a right without undermining the system itself. Indeed, homelessness is the worst expression of a dying system. To cover this up, the rulers attack the homeless with criminalizing laws, scapegoating in the media, police harassment and brutality, and outright murders of homeless people.

Because the capitalists cannot solve the problem of joblessness that is throwing so many down into poverty and homelessness, the enforcers of corporate power – the police and the laws – are moving to target and blame those who are suffering the worst effects of this economic crisis. As people are thrown into the streets, cities and towns create more laws that criminalize homeless people's every move. Tent cities across the nation are torn down and people scattered or arrested, their few meager possessions confiscated and destroyed, even as winter approaches. Notorious 'sit/lie' laws make it illegal to sit or lie in public places. These mean-hearted laws, which do nothing to solve this human crisis, are designed to get homeless people to 'move along' and out of sight. At the same time the crumbling capitalist system creates millions more homeless.

The fascist attack against the homeless is an attack on our



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

whole class, exposing the ruling class's unfitnes to rule.

Vast automated labor-replacing production is throwing millions of workers into insecurity, and many out of work forever. At the leading edge of this are the swelling ranks of the homeless, in advance of a growing number of dispossessed. Human beings whose labor is no longer needed must still survive, outside the wage or money economy. Their demands for the right to the necessities of life, whether they can pay or not, are revolutionary demands. Their fight to survive, for dignity and autonomy,

is a revolutionary one, and can't be answered within capitalism or under any system where what we need is held by an owning class as private property.

The defense of homeless rights is not only the defense of our whole class against the brutal rule of the billionaire capitalist class and its fascist agenda, it is a fight for a new society. From sit-down resistance to the so-called 'sit/lie' laws, to organized squatting and housing takeovers, to defying these injustices on every level, the battle for the program of the homeless for rights, dignity, homes and all we humanly need is

a fight for all of us. All homeless people could and must be housed now. The only thing standing in our way is the rule of corporate private property. The government may grant concessions from time to time but this is not enough. We as a class, homeless and housed, must demand that the government provide housing as a right for everyone. This is a step toward organizing ourselves to fight for a new society where everything we need is distributed according to need. That is the remedy for homelessness.

November is our subscription drive. Subscribe or renew now!

The *People's Tribune* relies exclusively on those who read and write for the paper for its financial support. We offer our pages to grassroots leaders who speak out on issues such as poverty, healthcare, housing, water, education, police brutality, immigrant rights, and more. At the same time, we offer analysis and solutions to the problems our society faces. We tell the truth! The corporations are tightening their fascist grip on all of society with a police state. The *People's Tribune* is needed now, more than ever!

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— *People's Tribune* Editorial Board

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Struggle for justice continues in Baltimore

By Jim Fite

BALTIMORE, MD — Six Baltimore police officers were indicted on charges connected to the death of Freddie Gray. Freddie's treatment before he was put in the police van was recorded and played back for all to see. Baltimore police could and would hurt or kill you with no concern about being held accountable. With social media, this was now in the public view.

The public said no! Almost everyone wanted the police terror to stop. Thousands demonstrated, many times a week. Traffic was disrupted, the Oriole baseball team had to play home games in Florida, and businesses throughout the town were deserted. After Freddie's funeral, over one hundred buildings were burned.

The ruling class quickly reshuffled the deck, reinforced the state and used the corporate media to convince people that the system was working. Justice would be served by a brilliant young woman lawyer, the new-

ly elected Marilyn Mosby, Chief Prosecutor. Her office indicted the six police who arrested Freddie. Since then, the Mayor announced she would not run for reelection, the police commissioner was replaced, the trial of the indicted police were kept in Baltimore.

Meanwhile, Federal agents from many agencies came to Baltimore to review thousands of video surveillance tapes to identify those people who broke into and set fire to stores. Once identified, the pictures were spread throughout the community with police requests to identify those people in the pictures. Late in the summer it was announced that the City would pay Freddie's family \$6.5 million to drop their lawsuit.

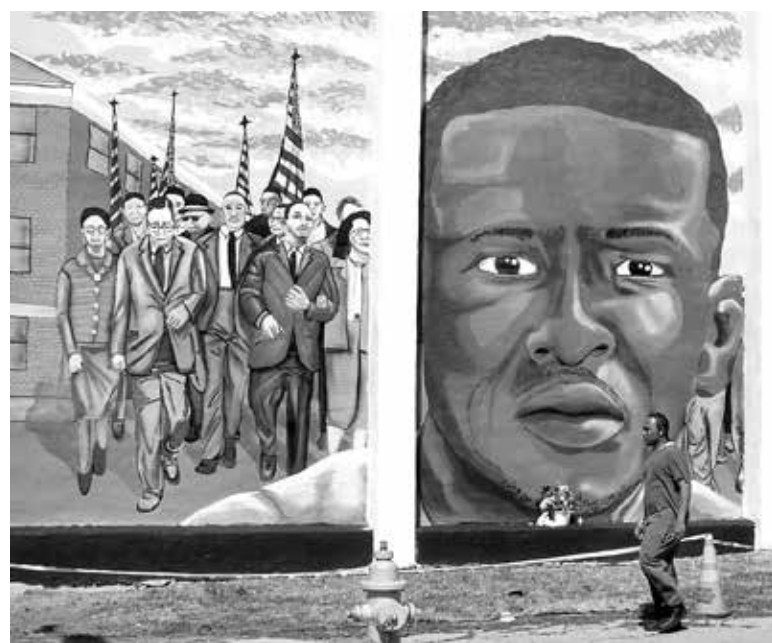
The struggle against injustice continues. One hundred women demonstrated against immigration arrests. Rev. Westly West was arrested for stopping traffic. He was trying to draw attention to the number of homicides in the city. In October, a few students opposed the

City Council contract for the new police chief. Sixteen of the students were arrested. The charges were dropped.

Also in October, Sargent Robert Meaner was videoed spitting on a handcuffed man he had just arrested. When Kwame Rose tweeted the video you could feel the masses of people begin to sniff the air for justice. Kwame Rose has over 7,000 followers on Twitter. Sargent Meaner was charged with second-degree assault.

The public view of police brutality is challenging the way police do their business. Video from phones and Twitter continue to expose police brutality. The rulers still have the power. The public is trapped between capitalism, drug gangsters whose gunfights kill every day, and police brutality. The murder rate, mainly of Black men, has risen to the highest in 40 years.

If police brutality could solve the crime problem it would have been solved by now. Our community has vast sections that are a wasteland: no



Baltimore mural artist, Nether, created this mural at the corner of Mount and Presbury where Freddie Gray, who died while in police custody, was arrested. PHOTO/JIM FITE

jobs and no legal way to make a living. We need to reorganize society to use the wealth that a small section of people hold to create an environment where youth are not given crime as the only way to make a living. And,

in fact, isn't it a crime that billionaires not only run the country, but wallow in wealth while millions go hungry, become homeless and are subject to police brutality?

Lessons learned in the moment

By Jack Bryson,
interviewed by Joyce Mills

Editor's note: Jack Bryson is a relative of Oscar Grant who was killed by BART police in Oakland in 2008.

OAKLAND, CA — Thinking about lessons I've learned over the last eight years and, I ask, "Why do I care and fight so much?" I've been labeled an everything you can think of, but basically I'm a young man that knows things aren't right, and when you know something isn't right, you stand up against it!

December 31, 2008 was a life-changing experience for me when Oscar [Grant] was murdered at the Fruitvale station by a BART police officer. I was numb. I couldn't believe it happened to our family. My sons were grieving in a park. Eventually they were joined by hundreds of other people and surrounded by police and helicopters. People asked me, "What are we going to do?" I woke that day to the community's pain.

I've had a lot of friends die or go to prison. I felt bad, but these were things you just tried to avoid, like being taxed, paying for choices, things you accepted.

We would say, "If I go to prison, look out for my family." When police kill it's another level. They are supposed to protect and serve, not violate your world.

I went to rallies and marches. I didn't feel I fit in. I didn't see my friends there, street folks, like we were from a different world. People used words I had never heard of. I was confused, uncomfortable, but I had to be there, I needed help now.

I said to myself, this is what Frederick Douglas talked about. I was denied a good education, in "special ed" because I wasn't able to succeed. Can any kid succeed carrying physical and mental abuse, on top of being hungry? Can a father succeed for that matter, without a job because of skin color or a felony, without a degree. Gentrification. Displacement. People from "ghettos" forced to the suburbs. Suburban people abandoning their communities. Background checks on your affiliations. They consider your community an affiliation!

These things came together in my thinking. You can't talk about one thing without talking about all of it. I see Mario Martinez' family struggling for answers; Sandra Bland's, Fred-



Protest over the killing of Oscar Grant by BART police at the Fruitvale station in Oakland in 2008.

PHOTO/THOMAS HAWK, THOMASHAWK.COM

die Gray's, Mike Brown's, Shawn Bell's, and I know I can help. I wondered, would they do me like they have done to Rev. Pinkney? [Imprisoned for politically confronting the power of corporations.] But you stand up, use your voice, and revolutionary ideas just start kicking in. Now I have

people who support and believe in me, organizations I honestly consider a shield against anything happening to me.

I made mistakes. I grew. This is about collective understanding and the importance of fighting. Governments everywhere have their feet on the necks of

the poor. If we get a victory here in Oakland it will help others to stand up. At one point or another our class will get tired of all this. Others will wake up like I have. How long can you keep people down?

'We have to fight each instance of police violence'

By Cathy Talbott

HERRIN, IL — Tamir Rice, 12 years old, was shot and killed by police within seconds after police arrived at a park in Cleveland, Ohio. Deven Guilford, 17, was shot seven times and killed within six minutes after a traffic stop by a sheriff's deputy in Eaton County, Michigan. More recently a teenage girl was brutally attacked by a resource officer in a South Carolina school for refusing to leave class. All three incidents were caught on camera. Tamir Rice was Black, as is the teenage girl. Deven Guilford was white.

The public has been debating the particulars of these incidents while authorities have attempted to justify the officers' actions in each case. But the question we should be discussing is WHY are the forces of the corporate state brutalizing and killing our children?

The children of the wealthy attend private schools and live in gated communities protected by police. On the other hand, our children, the children of workers, are viewed as threats that must be thwarted by heavy handed polic-

ing. Heavily policed schools and communities are the harbingers of a brutal fascist police state.

The police were created to protect the private property first of the slave owners and then the industrialists early on in America. In the industrial North, police were used to break organizing strikes of the workers killing men, women and children. Today the police are in the direct service of the giant corporations that have taken over the government and nation.

Post WWII expansion allowed the capitalists to "bribe" a section of workers with a higher standard of living. In turn, they helped bind the working class to the rulers. Now, a new electronic-driven economy is expelling workers from production, cheapening the value of our labor power as we are forced to compete with robots and globalized production. Under this system, the future our children have in store for them is one of poverty and destitution. As more of us are pulled into activity to get what we need to survive, we are confronted by a corporate police state designed to protect the wealth and privilege of the few over the



Tamir Rice, left, 12, killed by Cleveland police at a park where he was playing. Deven Guildord, right, 17, killed by police in Michigan during a traffic stop. PHOTOS/FACEBOOK



needs of the many.

Increasingly, it is not only working class children of color brutalized and killed by police and thrown into juvenile prisons. Given American history it starts there. If this brutality becomes accepted by the majority it is inevitably used against everyone. Already, working class children who are white are targeted. The film

"Cash for Kids" depicts the plight of school kids in Luzerne County, PA sent to juvenile prisons for minor infractions while two judges accepted huge cash payouts from private prison corporations.

Workers historically have striven to better the lives of their families. To maintain control, the ruling class has channeled this striving into identity politics,

keeping us from uniting around our common interests. Today it is urgently necessary to join together to stop a complete fascist police takeover of the country. In fighting every instance of police violence we need to recognize that the entire working class is under attack. The wellbeing of each worker depends on the wellbeing of *all* workers.

'I was born and raised and work in Oakland. Now I can't afford to live here!'

By Steve Miller

OAKLAND, CA — Such testimony was heard repeatedly at the Oakland-wide Anti-Displacement Forum, "Speak Out to Stay Put", held on October 17. Over 400 people joined together to denounce the corporate dictatorship that pushes displacement, and to seek answers on how to save their homes in the face of massive gentrification caused by the spread of "Silicon Bay."

Rents have doubled since 2009 and 60% of Oakland residents rent. While Oakland residents are being driven out of the city, corporations are making big profits by manipulating housing. Wells Fargo and Bank of America have begun evicting up to 10,000 families in the city, while Air BnB is buying up homes to turn into residency hotels. Developers are building condos, while Uber is moving its headquarters to the city. These corporations are consciously creating a "rentership society", directed by corporations that feed off foreclosures to create high-priced rentals.

Like most cities, Oakland has more empty houses than it has homeless people. But put-

ting homeless people indoors would ruin the real estate market. The immorality of homelessness is augmented by the predatory nature of gentrification. Corporate policies have forced one quarter of Oakland's African-American residents to leave the city since 2010. But the newcomers to the city's neighborhoods aren't always exactly "neighborly."

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church has held services in West Oakland for 67 years. New residents, comfortable in their condos, are reporting the church to the police for making too much noise! At the same time, residents of the Dimond District and other newly "upwardly mobile" communities are logging onto Nextdoor.com in order to post unsubstantiated suspicions about African-Americans they see walking down the street.

This is more evidence that it is impossible to fight poverty without fighting racism, just as it is necessary to fight racism in order to fight poverty. These two evils are joined at the hip. What else can we expect in a country with such a legacy of slavery?

For an African-American (or any low-income person) to just

walk down the street in peace in America requires ending killer cops, militarization of police, the prison-industrial complex, the militarized border, the school-to-prison pipeline and the New Jim Crow legal system.

Now gentrification must be added to the list, for the police are part of a real estate plan. Corporate developers live by the formula that police create security, security creates investment, investment creates developments, developments create real estate markets. This is corporate dictatorship, organized on many levels, both open and secret, working through and around the legal process. People lose their homes, primarily because they lack political power over the class that calls the shots.

Oakland's elected politicians make noises about how they will guarantee low cost housing, but Oakland is still one of the cities in California that does not force developers to do so. Pious statements just won't do in the face of gentrification. Oaklanders must develop the political power to force the politicians to guarantee our communities, not the profits of corporations.

Poet to the Poor

Who will be the poet to the poor

For the abused, used, confused

Who aren't even aware

They have a hope and a prayer

Who will be the poet to the poor

Rich man's writer is but a whore

Producing propaganda for war

Or marketing merchandise to sell more

Who will be the poet to the poor

It's what these words are for

— John Kaniecki

‘Tasers equal torture!’



Homeless youth protest the constant police harassment in downtown Berkeley, CA. PHOTO/SARAH MENEFFEE

By Sarah Menefee

BERKELEY CA—Members of the public recently lined up to testify before the Berkeley City Council at a hearing on the Berkeley Police Department’s desire to acquire tasers as weapons. One after the other read off heartrending accounts of people of all ages and backgrounds, many of them undergoing medical or psychiatric emergencies, or

simply non-compliant, or even restrained and unconscious, tortured and killed by cops using tasers. All the speakers from the public were passionately against the police being trusted with this torture device; in their hands they have accounted for over 900 known cases of death. It is clear who this weapon will be used against: the poor and powerless, the homeless, the disabled, the most vulnerable and defense-

less. No police state, no torture, no tasers!

Below are a couple of remarks made by activists from Berkeley and San Francisco who spoke at the hearing:

Mike Zint (from ‘First they came for the homeless’): “Tonight, the Berkeley City Council heard from the public on the taser issue. Dozens of people read accounts of injuries and deaths by tasers. Product warnings for tasers say they are not to be used on the following: pregnant women, asthma sufferers, people with heart conditions, elderly, children, mentally disabled, and people under the influence of drugs. Can you tell by looking if someone is pregnant, an asthmatic, or has a heart condition? No! So people are guaranteed to die. Mentally disabled and addicted, even though listed, as well as homeless, will be tased. Minorities will be tased. Tasers are not non-lethal to the victims who die. Tasers equal torture.”

Mike Lee (from Homeless Action Team): “Tasers are the cattle prods of capitalism, they are going to be used to prod us along and get rid of us.”

By Gena Mercer

MERCED, CA — When does a homeless person become unhuman? When the community treats them like they’re less than nothing, has them run off everywhere they sit, and turns their backs on them.

I don’t choose to live this way. Most of the homeless don’t want to be homeless. Not only do we get harassed by people, the Merced Police Department is doing the same. Only thing is that they have the power to put us in jail.

I got a ticket for camping under the G Street Bridge and received five hours of community service. They wanted to give me three years of informal probation. I couldn’t believe it—there was a woman charged with her third DUI and the judge gives her three years of informal probation along with DUI classes. I didn’t go drive a car while drunk; I don’t put other people’s lives in danger. I just needed to sleep.

Every place I sleep, sooner or later, the cops will run me out. I have to move quite often. I find a spot, put my bedding out and go to sleep. I try to be up before sunrise, pack my stuff, clean up any trash I might have dropped.

I go out and pick up cans and

People’s Tribune gets good response!

The *People’s Tribune* is an invaluable tool to help educate and unify workers around the vision of a new cooperative society where the abundance new electronic technology is producing is shared by all, not owned by a handful of billionaires.

Recent experiences in distributing the *People’s Tribune* in low-income working class communities of different ethnic backgrounds confirms how open people are today to such new ideas. People are working two or three jobs, going without healthcare, and are only one paycheck away from homelessness. Many are mainly concerned with how to put food on their table rather than the divisiveness that the corporate media spews out to keep us apart.

We encourage you to order copies of the *People’s Tribune* to get out in your community. Find the people who want to make a change!

— *People’s Tribune* Editorial Board

Rest in Power, Pirate Mike!

Michael Clift, “Pirate Mike,” homeless veteran, member of Veterans for Peace and founding member of OccupySF, was struck and killed October 30 on a Texas highway, while on his “Odyssey for Peace” bicycle journey across the country, to bring attention to how, in his words, “American citizens have shamefully and quietly passed by thousands of homeless and needy veterans living on the streets of our small towns, the steam grates of our teeming cities, and in the canyons and wilds of suburbia.” He was an artist, peacemaker, visionary and, revolutionary of the highest order.

Rest in Power, Pirate Mike!

‘It’s going to take all of us homeless to make a stand’



Gena Mercer (left), who is homeless, with Gloria Sandoval at Applegate Park in Merced, California. Although money is spent by local government, homelessness is increasing (and this is true everywhere).

PHOTO/SALVADOR SANDOVAL

plastic bottles to make money. I mow lawns when someone asks. I hold a sign that says “Homeless, God Bless.” I’ve had people pull over and yell “get a job”—believe me I would love to be working, earning my way and being a productive member of society. I can read lips and can make out some of the things that people say when they are behind the wheel in their car. One lady with a young girl in the car stopped at the stop sign. I saw her throw her arm over the girl’s chest, like some people do when they have to stop suddenly and tells her daughter not to look at me. The poor girl stiffens up and eyes locked forward like looking at me was going to turn her into a homeless!

The police run us out of everywhere so I asked where can we go? “You can only go to Apple-

gate Park, can’t sleep there at night, but you can be there from 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.” Now they have me going to Applegate and guess what? There are cops that come here almost daily and if any of our stuff is lying around, they throw our belongings in the trash. A few of us attended a Homeless Connect event and about six of us lost everything we owned. One lady’s meds were dumped. Now what does that say? It says that the cops don’t care about our civil rights.

To all the homeless in Merced County, we need to learn and stand up for our rights. This is the only way to stop this crap. I for one will not be run out of Merced. I raised my son here and my grandson is here. I’m not leaving!

It’s going to take all of us homeless to make a stand to fight for our rights.



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

'Exodus from the Jungle': The shame of Silicon Valley

By Anthony King

SAN JOSE, CA — On October 2, members of H.O.M.E.L.E.S.S., Affordable Housing Network, Silicon Valley DeBug, Western Regional Advocacy Project, San Jose State University, and many others came together to view the premiere of "Exodus from the Jungle". Filmed in December 2014, the documentary is about the dismantling of what was at one time considered the largest homeless encampment in the United States. The entire floor level of the 500-seat theatre was filled with a vast cross-section of the community, there to see an honest accounting of what local advocates call "a travesty upon human dignity given the vast amount of wealth in this region."

The mood was upbeat as people got to know one another, but turned somber within the first two minutes of the film, which followed what happened to residents forced to leave their encampment, many with no other place

to go. The film showed police setting up barricades to control onlookers and traffic, followed by crews mercilessly demolishing the various living quarters of the former residents: a community consisting mostly of tents, a few plywood-walled structures, one "micro-home" type dwelling (wallpapered in Christmas wrapping paper for the holidays), and even a treehouse. As their belongings were destroyed and loaded into garbage trucks, the film captured the despondent and dejected residents feverishly scrambling to move whatever they could carry so as not to be discarded by work crews.

Residents were also interviewed later as they tried, with the aid of advocates, to regroup and find a new place to stay. While visibly shaken and highly irate, the trait that came across clearly and repeatedly as the interviewees spoke is **resilience**. While these human beings had been stripped of their possessions, they were not ready to surrender their

dignity or be swept quietly under the rug by a process that offered very few immediate solutions.

As the film wound down, many in the audience were visible shaken as well. At the end there was a question and answer session with a five-person panel including the film's producer and advocates and residents from the Jungle who were displaced that day (some still homeless). They fielded questions from the audience and explained what we as a community can do to advocate for better solutions to the help the Homeless Community. They mentioned lobbying local leaders to build more low-income housing, preserving what low-income housing stock there is, and independent monitoring of the camp "abatement" process. They called for those same leaders to provide safe, sanitary and secure places for those rough sleeping to stay for as long as no low-income housing is provided. What becomes very clear after watching this video is that



Tracy Morgan leaves the "Jungle" (a homeless camp destroyed by the city) after being rousted by San Jose police last year. She was only able to bring possessions that could fit in her suitcase and shopping cart. She had no idea where she would go.

PHOTO/SANDY PERRY

everyone's voice is needed to persuade our leaders to consider every option available, conventional or **unorthodox**, in order to provide for our most vulnerable Sisters and Brothers.

Los Angeles: Homeless capital of the nation

By Chris Venn

LOS ANGELES, CA — Homeless residents all over Los Angeles woke up on June 16 to the realization that their possessions, if left on the street for more than 24 hours, could be confiscated and sent to a location as far away as downtown Los Angeles for them to retrieve. The implementation of Los Angeles' Municipal Code 56.11, which allows the confiscation of homeless possessions, is devastating to a growing, new section of discarded workers.

According to the National Law Center, 15,000 Los Angeles residents become homeless every month. In one area of the city, rumors have spread that the homeless are loaded onto busses and driven to San Pedro, however study after study indicates that 80% of the homeless previously had homes in the same area.

Homelessness is not caused by an invasion but instead by the replacement of workers by automation and the inability of this private property system to meet the needs of human beings. Families' personal belongings, prescription medicine, their children's school records and, perhaps most important, their personal identification are taken and discarded.

The devastation caused by Municipal Code 56.11 demands an understanding that a system

based on private property necessarily defends the market and profit making by punishing those who it has no use for.

"Affordable housing in Los Angeles is almost non-existent," says Mr. Smith, a resident of the city's Skid Row community. Data suggests that the average two-bedroom unit in the city now costs more than \$2600 per month to rent. "They're building the tallest building in Los Angeles for a billion dollars and they're going to spend a tenth of that on sheltering the homeless," he adds. "So where's the priority?"

"The de facto policy on homelessness in Los Angeles is enforcement and criminalization," said Eric Ares, an organizer with the Los Angeles Community Action Network, a group on Skid Row that advocates for the homeless. Ares sees the mayor's call for compassion as empty rhetoric that distracts attention from what the city could be doing. "At this point it's no secret what the solution is: its housing and services," Ares said. "But what we're seeing—and this has been going on for at least 10 years, particularly in the gentrifying parts of Los Angeles—is a blank check for policing." "We live in a system that would rather destroy a family than provide the sustenance necessary to keep it together with food, clothing, and housing.



Protest of police killing of homeless man at Venice Beach in Los Angeles. (The People's Tribune thanks photographer Lynn Rossi for her contributions of photos about the struggle against homelessness and police violence on Skid Row and elsewhere in Los Angeles.)

PHOTO/LYNN ROSSI

On the other hand, the battle over homelessness is fundamental to carrying on the fight for a new cooperative society. It is possible today to unite a section of workers discarded by the economy. The basis for unity is the demand that the government provide housing for everyone who needs it.

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Lead in drinking water – Do Flint lives matter?

By Nayyirah Shariff

Editor's Note: On Flint's bittersweet 'Victory.' Below are excerpts from a presentation given to the Flint City Council just days before the governor, in a stunning retreat, ordered the discontinuing of the poisonous Flint River as a water source for the city and the return to Detroit's water system. This is a development that community pastors and the community had been demanding for months. With an entire city exposed to everything from THMs to lead and more, Flint is now a poster child for the dismantling of democracy and the fight for water as a human right versus a commodity used for corporate profit.

FLINT, MI — The city of Flint has eroded public trust and violated the social contract between the residents and their government. The continued inaction of the city and the state of Michigan to resolve this public health cri-

sis has residents wondering, "Do Flint lives matter?"

Our anecdotal stories, individual medical records, and visual aids weren't enough. We facilitated a study with Marc Edwards, a leading expert on water treatment and corrosion. He discovered the Flint River Water is so caustic it is leaching the lead from the pipes and making its way into our tap water. A study led by physician Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha discovered that since the switch to using the Flint River as our drinking water source, blood lead levels increased among our most vulnerable population, our children. So, do "Flint lives matter?"

For the state and this administration, the answer is "no." Bond ratings and balanced budgets are more important than the health and welfare of our residents. The decision to use the Flint River was motivated by projected "cost savings" and to balance the budget. This began under the unelected emergency manag-

er, and it continues under Flint's mayor. This shortsighted fixation over immediate savings will have longterm effects for Flint residents. There has been discussion over the cost to fix Flint's infrastructure. But what of the medical conditions caused by this ill-fated experiment? What about the kids who have lead in their bloodstream? Or other illnesses that were exasperated by the caustic water that is coming out of our taps?

This administration and the state is more interested in damage control and attempting to downplay this public health crisis than to take bold action to resolve this crime against our community. In a public health crisis you assume everyone is at risk until proven otherwise. Our infants and children cannot afford to be lost in the shuffle. There is a lack of concern for their future. We see the sense of urgency. For us these aren't throwaway children. Flint lives matter.

Governments topple when



A donation of clean water is brought to Flint residents from Dearborn, MI. Flint's water has been poisonous, causing serious health hazards. PHOTO/ NAYYIRAH SHARIFF

people in power work toward the betterment of the few within their inner circle at the expense of the masses. Revolutions begin when governments prioritize profit over

its people. If this is not resolved, the state of Michigan and this administration will be battling a new revolution led by residents that value people over profit.

By Salvador Sandoval MD, MPH

The real cost of water

MERCED, CA — In the midst of a drought, and with wells on small farms and towns throughout the Central California Valley running out of water, oil and gas companies have been legally and illegally dumping chemical laden waste water into actual and potential sources of drinking water.

California is into the fourth year of a drought, and non-agricultural residents have been ordered by the governor to reduce their water use 35 percent. The snow pack in the mountains, from which surface water such as rivers, streams, and dams are refilled and underground aquifers are recharged, is less than six percent of normal. As a consequence, deeper wells are being dug into existing aquifers, particularly by large farmers who are not restricted in their use by Governor Brown. The result is that farm workers and other rural residents are running out of drinking water, while water intense almonds, grown for export abroad, and oil companies, continue to drill and pollute.

The revelation that the oil and gas companies have been drilling legal and illegal wells was made by Clean Water Action (www.cleanwateraction.org/DrinkingWaterAtRisk). Ostensibly the oil companies are dump-



Global climate march in Oakland, CA. The water crisis is inextricably connected to environmental destruction by the giant corporations and their drive for profit. PHOTO/SALVADOR SANDOVAL

ing the chemical waste from fracking into salty or unfit sources of water underground. However, it appears that this has been happening even with clean drinking water. In 1982, the oil companies were given the authority to regulate themselves in monitoring 42,000 injection wells that dump toxic waste fluids into groundwater. This of course didn't happen (Tom Hayden, www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/article/Dogging-DOGGR-s-misdeeds-in-Kern-6220757.php).

Ironically, bottled water, which is trucked into the stricken, waterless communities, is itself an example of the rich and powerful profiting off of the misery of the rest of us, particularly those in the devastated areas. First of all, bottled water in the main is just tap water, but sold for hundreds of times more. Secondly, the plastic for making the bottles is made from oil, the drilling for which is contaminating water sources (www.businessinsider.com/facts-bottled-water-industry-2011-10).

The oil companies are the highest paying lobby in Sacramento, (according to Dan Bacher, 8/3/2013, Calitic). Their significant influence on Governor Brown is felt to be driving his twin tunnels idea to send Northern California water to corporate farmers and oil companies in Kern County, despite adverse effects to fishing and farming in the San Joaquin Delta.

Not only do we have a shortage of water due to the drought. We have a shortage of water

because it is being contaminated to make some corporations filthy rich. The first step in defending ourselves is knowing what the problem is. The second is knowing who is causing the problem. Next, we have to be asking why our elected officials are not doing enough to protect us and the environment. Then, we have to organize in our and our neighbor's interests. Water is a sacred and human right, not to be sold for profit and contaminated.

Fighting for the education our children deserve



Protest in Chicago demanding an elected representative school board.
PHOTO/SARAH JANE RHEE

By Lew Rosenbaum

CHICAGO, IL — An ominous specter is haunting Chicago Public Schools (CPS) this fall and winter, the specter of scandals, budget cuts and layoffs. The latest shoe to drop in the ongoing travails of “Crook County” is the federal 23 count indictment of former schools CEO Barbara Byrd Bennett, accused of taking gifts and kickbacks throughout her 4 year tenure. Her conspirators, SUPES Academy, promised her hundreds of thousands of dollars, to be hidden in relatives’ bank accounts, and high paid employment for her upon her retirement from CPS. She even emailed her conspirators, “I have tuition payments to make and casinos to visit.” Bennett has resigned and Mayor Emanuel replaced a number of members of the School Board. The School Board had unanimously approved Bennett’s proposal for the SUPES contract.

It has been reported that Bennett will plead guilty. This is just the tip of the iceberg, but if previous corruption cases are any indication, it’s likely that other heads will not roll, and that Bennett will ultimately find comfort-

able employment elsewhere. The real significance goes beyond a few corrupt individuals. This is a system that privatizes and thrives by lining the pockets of corporations with public money, money which should be used to guarantee children’s education.

This follows months of chaos in CPS, as announcement after announcement of budget constraints accompanied cuts in programs and layoffs of teachers and other personnel. On Tuesday, July 21, Chicago Local School Councils (LSC) held a press conference to denounce CPS cuts in public education. One after another LSC member from across the city denounced slashed budgets that have forced nearly every school to lay off teachers and cut after school activities. Special education services have been gutted. Meanwhile, Mayor Emanuel blames the state of Illinois for withholding \$500 million from Chicago schools, without which CPS will lay off as many as 5,000 *more* teachers after Thanksgiving. In the face of these threats and a state budget stalemate, students walked out in protest in four Chicago high schools in early October. The Chicago Teach-

ers Union, faced with intractable CPS demands, may strike if they are unable to reach an agreement soon.

Every year gets worse and worse. Anxious parents, who cannot make ends meet, crowd the spaces where school supplies are given away by charitable organizations. Community supporters hold toilet paper drives to assist schools in meeting the needs of the students. Teachers tell us they can’t teach because of the endless testing. When our kids graduate from school, they find themselves deep in debt, competing for jobs that don’t exist. The 1% is telling us in every way: there are no more reforms.

What’s the first step for us? With a mayoral appointed school board, it looks like we’re living under a Michigan style “emergency manager” dictatorship! Open up the process and get a democratically elected, representative school board! As far as cutbacks go: no more finger pointing! Full education funding must be guaranteed nationally, for all. It’s time to pool our scattered, school-by-school struggles and focus on a government that should be providing education for all.

New voter ID laws aimed at the poor

By Gloria Slaughter

ATLANTA, GA — “ROLL TIDE ROLL” is the clarion call in Alabama to cheer on the University of Alabama football team. But due to budget cuts in Alabama’s general fund other agencies are not rolling on as well. There are more hurdles for voters since officials are planning on closing 31 driver’s license offices in 30 counties in the state.

In 2011, Alabama enacted a Voter ID law that requires voters to bring a government issued photo ID to the polls. Some legislators declare that this law is necessary to stop voter fraud, although research has shown that voter fraud almost never happens.

These voter ID laws have proliferated around the country — nearly always enacted by corpo-

rate controlled legislatures at the expense of the poor.

Historically, the poll tax and the literacy test have kept people from registering to vote, and this \$11 million cut in the fund allocated to the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) will have the same effect by not having the funds to keep thirty-one driver’s license offices open so people won’t have the opportunity to have their photos taken in order to vote.

The Congressional Black Caucus states that the shuttered offices are located in Alabama’s rural areas and counties where more than 75% of the registered voters are African American. But 60% of the population in the white majority counties are also impacted by the closing of the driver’s license offices. Although the percentage is higher for black

majority counties, it is very high for white majority counties.

This statement by the Congressional Black Caucus shows the dire situation poor residents will find themselves in. “Alabama’s harsh voter ID law further restricts the ability of residents to obtain the requisite identification needed not only to vote, but also to drive, get a job, or apply for a passport.”

It seems that “democracy” has hit a barrier and many people will be disenfranchised, in the name of budget cuts “because there is no money,” regardless of color.

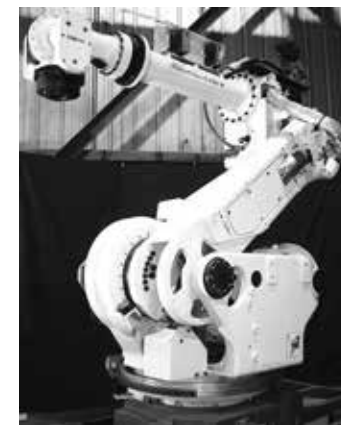
This shows once again that attacks on our democratic rights start with the Black poor, but, if not stopped, become an attack on everyone.

‘Will machine-produced wealth be shared?’ asks scientist

From the People’s Tribune Editorial Board

“If machines produce everything we need, the outcome will depend on how things are distributed. Everyone can enjoy a life of luxurious leisure if the machine-produced wealth is shared, or most people can end up miserably poor if the machine-owners successfully lobby against wealth redistribution. So far, the trend seems to be toward the second option, with technology driving ever-increasing inequality,” wrote Stephen Hawking in an October question-and-answer series on the website Reddit.

Stephen Hawking is arguably the most revered scientist on the planet. Therefore, his response to a question asked about the results of “technological unemployment” produced by automation is giving rise to a growing debate. At the center of that debate is the future of the human race. Will the majority of us be “miserably poor,” or will all of us “enjoy a life of luxurious leisure?” The tiny class of capitalists who own the machines have made their choice of a future. Have you made yours?



A packaging robot.
PHOTO/KITMONDO.COM

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Ulises Bella of Ozomatli discusses a changing America

Recently, poets and authors, Matt Sedillo, David Romero and Lee Ballinger joined visionary artist Ulises Bella of the band Ozomatli for an interview in Bell, California, by the L.A. River.

Matt, David, Lee: Tell us a little bit about yourself and where you're from.

Ulises Bella: I grew up here in this area southeast, L.A., in Bell, California. At a very early age in sixth grade I was getting bused. My bus went through South Central Jefferson High, all over Koreatown. So constantly people from all over the world were on my bus. It was like a funky thing of the mix of rich and poor, the mix of classes, the mix of ethnicities and culture. In a weird way, it prepared me for the tasks at hand.

M, D, L: What do you think of these attacks on music education?

UB: I am a product of the public school education system. All of Ozomatli came out of public school systems with music programs. It could bring joy in your life. It is really sad. There could be the next Jimi Hendrix in this hood. As a band and as individual, I am really a fan of public music education and public education in general.

M, D, L: Please speak a little about how the band got together.

UB: The catalyst was that Will Dog, our bass player and our original drummer, were in the conservation corp. Now, this particular group of workers tried to unionize and got fired in the process. And they occupied the building. And though they lost their jobs they maintained the rights to the building until the end of the lease. Every weekend they threw parties to raise money. We did like a

year of free gigs. Just 15 dudes would show up. It was like a jam session. And these sounds blended so well.

M, D, L: Politically, have you been following the electoral campaign? Why is Trump doing so well?

UB: It's the changing face of America. A lot of fear and lack of historical knowledge. California, Arizona, Texas, they are complaining about Mexicans. I don't have a magic elixir to make people stop worrying about this. But this is not just an American thing. Look what is happening in Europe and that little boy that washed up on the beach.

I don't know if this is our next step in evolution but we all have to realize the borders are imaginary. Birds migrate when they are threatened. Why would human beings be any different?



Ulises Bella (Left) of the band, Ozomatli, is interviewed by poet Matt Sedillo in Bell, California by the L.A. River.

M, D, L: What's the role of the artist moving forward?

UB: I usually take my cues from the people. One of the biggest marches (right after we went to the demonstration) we recorded *Temperatura* because we were so inspired that the people shut down the city. Things are changing so fast, but more than

ever, the world is connected in ways it never was.

I really think there are three things that should not be for profit. Healthcare, education and they shouldn't incarcerate people. And don't tell me we don't have the resources cause that's a myth.

'State managers' ordered to run South Texas school district

By Juan Torres

WESLACO, TX — Progreso, Texas in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas has been slapped with an order from the Texas Education Association for the installation of "state managers" to run the Progreso School District, which has been the victim of bribery, theft and scandal at the hands of a powerful family and their allies.

The community is divided as to the benefits or liabilities of having "state managers" run the district. According to investigators, the "Vela" family had been fully entrenched in the control of school expenditures, projects, etc., and gained a percentage from that, thereby violating many laws, and is facing years in prison. This is in addition to the cash bribes given to them under the table for "favors" in the conduct of public works.

However, Progreso, Tex-

as, is not unique in the practice of "compadre" (corrupt) politics and the "mordida" or the "bite" (the bribe) that keeps the wheels rolling in many communities in South Texas. This quiet, mostly agricultural community established around the 1920's as a military outpost for national guardsmen fighting the so-called "bandido" threat from northern Mexico, was also an important entry port for much needed immigrant labor and a source of support during the depression and World War II. It was an accepted custom in those days, due to the language barrier, that if you needed things done, you pay or "talk" to an official or an influential person and grease the wheels of progress. During election time, you would attend the "pachangas" or parties and return the favor by voting for the person and continue with the practice of "compadre" politics. This would keep the

officials, some corrupt, in power for a very long time. This is done all over the valley and maybe all over Texas. In Progreso, it was blatant to the point of mockery. This all had a great effect on the lives of the community and the students.

The Texas Education Association has also lowered the academic status of the school district, fired and suspended all school board members, including the president, even though they were democratically elected. The school superintendent is gone,

and the direction and program of the district is up in the air. What's important is that the community is very much involved, either for or against.

Community elements and progressives are confident they can influence the decision making process of the "managers" since half will be from the community. They are concerned that the graduating seniors will not be able to attend desired colleges due to the low academic standing of the school. This has forced parents to unite and work together in

support of the student population. This effort, and also the struggle against "state managers," must be supported. In these times of less school funding, the government will find any way possible to deny the people their right to education and a decent way of life. With automation discarding so many unneeded workers, the system no longer needs educated students, just the cream of the crop, if at all.

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— The Editors

The Future is Up to Us

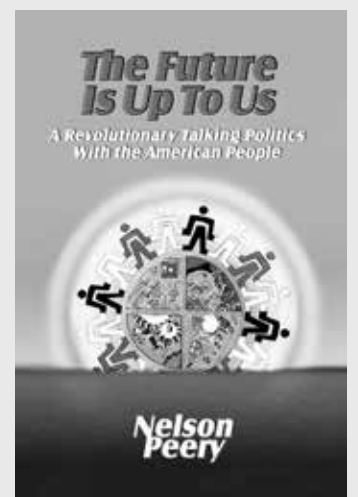
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Editor's note: We sadly announce that Nelson Peery, revolutionary, author, People's Tribune board member, has passed away. Donations in his memory can be sent to the address above or via paypal.



Government abandons poor: We need our own organizations



Chicago protest for mental healthcare. PHOTO/SARAH JANE RHEE

By Andy Willis

CHICAGO, IL — The people of Chicago are being abandoned by state and local government, even as the city slips deeper into crisis.

If you go to the city council budget hearings where supposed-

ly decisions are made that effect millions, you will be lucky to see five of the 50 aldermen even attending. The show hearings are nothing but a cruel farce. There is no democracy present.

What there is behind the dog and pony show is Money. Money distributed in such a way as to

impact the lives of all the citizens but especially the poorest.

Perhaps the most outrageous betrayal by “city fathers” is the closing of the few mental health clinics and the privatization of the services. The Chicago Public Health Department is headed by a doctor, Dr. Julie Morita, who essentially is in charge of making the cuts and assuring the public “it will be alright—go back to sleep.” Her main job is to get the city out of the business of providing mental health and other services (such as HIV treatment) for the citizens who rely on them. Most of the decisions to cut these services were made behind closed doors. Dr. Morita is just there to get you to swallow the bitter pill after the fact.

It is no accident that violence is escalating—from domestic to street to police—while services including education and health care are cut and privatized. The scientific correlation between

poverty and every societal problem, including homicide, has been understood for at least 125 years. However, the federal, state, and local governments are controlled by millionaires and billionaires who are abandoning the pretense of caring, while literally abandoning the most dispossessed sections of society. There is no accountability to the public for the moves that the government is making.

Almost weekly there is a scandal in Chicago. Bribes and kickbacks lure one official after another to a “piece of the action”. Aldermen are an especially cheap bargain for scam artists who wish to start a “school” or “clinic.”

There were 12 poorly publicly funded mental health clinics serving Chicago’s poverty traumatized citizens. That has been reduced to six clinics with one full time psychiatrist for the whole city. Dr. Morita says that’s okay because the private sector

will pick up the slack. But, of course, she can produce no evidence that they will do anything but bilk the city out of money.

Because persons with mental illness are mostly treated as criminals, the Cook County Sheriff admitted the county jail was the largest mental illness institution in the state. He appointed a psychologist to run it.

People are reeling as there is always plenty of money for any project the mayor and his cronies want including tax subsidizing a Star Wars Museum on public land. The situation is maddening and demeaning.

The only bright spot in this depressing picture is that people are beginning to wake up in spite of Dr. Morita’s assurances. We see that this government has no intention of representing us. We have to build organizations that will. The future is up to us.

Psychiatric care and the Illinois budget impasse



By Ben Mattson

CHICAGO, IL — All of us value health, but not all of us have to think about it every day. In this article I argue that the recent Illinois state budget impasse is/was deeply unjust. The reason is that many individuals who need care are not being provided it. Among those affected are persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, such as Autism, and mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia.

Illinois is still funding elementary and high schools for the

Fall semester, and this is laudable. But many individuals are feeling pain that Governor Rauner and the General Assembly are not. For instance, state funds are no longer available to many assistance programs for the disabled, poor, children, and the elderly.

Active Visions Inc., which offers counseling and community integration services, among many others, to children and adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities, is one such organization. It maintains homes where residents can learn self-determination and autonomy, and prides itself on its ‘person-centered’ approach to care for the disabled. This approach stands in stark contrast to the austere (read: non-person-centered) approach advocated by Governor Rauner, whose proposed 2016 budget would slash \$1.5 billion to Medicaid, which is the largest source of mental health funding in Illinois. The Rauner budget would also include \$87.8 million in cuts to mental health services, such as psychiatric care, funded by the Department of Human Services.

Yet the budget impasse itself also has significant human costs, and to many feels like a “death march”, says Al Ridley of Illinois Partners for Human Services. Centerstone, a not-for-profit which seeks to prevent and cure mental illness and addiction dis-

orders, is another organization slowly being suffocated by the impasse. According to John Markley, CEO of Centerstone Illinois, people asking to see psychiatrists are denied because that particular service is among those not being funded while our lawmakers quarrel. This is following a trend: According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, between fiscal years 2009 and 2015, Illinois cut its Medicaid by \$3.2 billion, human services by \$1.2 billion, and the mental health budget by about 30%.

About 9% of persons with schizophrenia kill themselves, and as many as 15% of depressed individuals do. Medications protect against suicide, but these are prescribed through the psychiatric care that is not being funded.

These are real people who suffer in often unimaginable ways, and it is the duty and human obligation of our elected representatives to find the money to care for them. If we are to develop ethically as a nation, be respected by the international community, and if we are to care for those who need care the most, we must address systemic issues such as these.

As long as it is denied that healthcare is a human right, budget impasses such as this one, and the human suffering that follows, will continue.



Chicago protest for mental healthcare. (Top) PHOTO/SARAH JANE RHEE
Moral Monday protest of governor’s austerity budget at the Chicago Board of Trade. Protesters demanded a tax on the rich to generate state revenue. (Bottom) PHOTO/ FRANK JAMES JOHNSON

Pinkney case: Corporate dictatorship tries to silence movement



Reverend Edward Pinkney at UAW Local 22 in Detroit, MI.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

From the People's Tribune Editorial Board

Editor's Note: Rev. Edward Pinkney, convicted without evidence in a struggle against corporate power in Benton Harbor, MI, has contributed monthly arti-

cles to the People's Tribune for the past ten years. We regret that he was unable to do so this month.

CHICAGO, IL — Rev. Edward Pinkney was recently moved by the Michigan Department of Corrections from Lakeland prison,

near his home, to Marquette prison, 500 miles away, in the Michigan Upper Peninsula, near Lake Superior. Some call the prisons in this region “America’s Siberia” because the distance effectively cuts inmates off from the outside world.

Now Rev. Pinkney’s wife, Dorothy, is concerned about his wellbeing. “His phone privileges were suddenly taken away and I cannot talk to him,” she said. “I’m also concerned about his health. One cell he was in had a heavy black mold infestation that made him ill. He is awakened by guards with flashlights in his face several times every night, depriving him of sleep,” she added.

What’s behind the incarceration of Rev. Pinkney? It is the rising corporate dictatorship in Benton Harbor, throughout the state of Michigan, and the U.S.

Ever since Whirlpool, the corporate giant that runs Benton Harbor, permanently laid off its factory workforce years ago, it has been on a mission to

remove the growing poor it created while gentrifying the city into a profitable playground for the rich. Whirlpool was assisted by the governor, who appointed dictatorial emergency managers in Michigan. These “managers” replace elected city officials. They are there to guarantee the corporate will to sell off city assets to the highest bidder.

Versions of this process are taking place all over the country and Rev. Pinkney, along with others in his community, have been sounding the alarm. As Rev. Pinkney once said, Benton Harbor is “the testing ground to see what they can get away with.” Whirlpool, for example, got away with not paying city taxes and stealing city resources. All along the way, Rev. Pinkney exposed what the corporate dictatorship in Benton Harbor was doing. He led the community’s fight against the emergency managers that were selling off the city. He led the fight of the poor for justice in the courts. He soon became the voice of the home-

less and destitute. Rev. Pinkney was singled out because the powers that be had to stop the growing movement in Benton Harbor. The message is clear: if you oppose corporate rule and stand up for the people, this is what you’ll get.

As automation throws millions of workers into the streets permanently, especially in Rust Belt states like Michigan, Rev. Pinkney symbolizes the new kind of leader emerging in the country. His vision is to end the corporate-government dictatorship by uniting all who can be united in a struggle for a new, truly democratic, society where everyone can live happy, fulfilled lives.

The movement must defend its leaders. We urge you to get your community organizations to connect their struggle with the struggle to free Rev. Pinkney. Visit bhbanco.org and justice4pinkney.org to learn more about what you can do. Write Rev. Pinkney #294671, at Marquette Branch Prison, 1960 US Hwy, 41 South, Marquette, MI 49855.

Benton Harbor votes out mayor!

“People in Benton Harbor are saying that Rev. Pinkney’s hard work has paid off. People are awakening to the injustice done to him and are standing up on behalf of him.” — Dorothy Pinkney

Editor's Note: The People's Tribune interviewed Benton Harbor community leader Emma Kinnard about the city's recent election.

BENTON HARBOR, MI — I think the election process was really good. Mayor James Hightower was voted out! Marcus Muhammad won. It shows that people are awakening. With all the money that was thrown behind the previous mayor, he still couldn’t win. When you misrepresent your people, eventually the people get wise to you. And you can’t make up for all the things you tore down in the last minute. Hightower had big bill-

boards all over the city. But this time, the corporations couldn’t get Hightower the vote. It was the people that made the change.

I was a write in candidate for Commissioner-at-Large. Some voters didn’t remember that my name had to be written in so I didn’t win. But as soon as Hightower vacates his commissioner seat in January, I’ll apply for it!

Rev. Pinkney, imprisoned for fighting for justice against the corporations and their government representatives in this city, will be happy to hear Hightower is out. We must continue the fight to free Rev. Pinkney.

What is socialism?

From the People's Tribune Editorial Board

Today, many people are talking about socialism. This discussion is happening now because many of us are coming to the conclusion that the capitalist system is dying. More people than ever are open to discussing new ways of organizing society.

Underlying this changed thinking is that today robots are rapidly replacing human labor in every facet of the economy. On the one hand, these new tools are creating an untold abundance of necessities such as food, healthcare, housing and energy, as well as limitless possibilities for the advancement of humanity.

On the other hand, under capitalism, the means of producing what we need to live is owned by the giant corporations and run in their interests for profit. This means if you don’t have a job or money you are on your own, facing hunger, homelessness and even death. Socialism, a practical alternative to this cruel way of organizing an econ-

omy, is possible and necessary today.

What exactly is socialism? Contrary to what we are told, socialism is not about simply adding more social programs, nor is it a fascist dictatorship. The Merriam-Webster dictionary makes clear that socialism is an economic system, and a stepping-stone to a communist society. It states:

1: [Socialism is]... collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods.

2: [Socialism is] a stage of society... [which is] transitional between capitalism and communism.

Socialism sets the stage for the creation of a communist society based on the principle that everyone contributes their talents and skills and everyone gets the necessities of life based on their need, not money. Government would merely organize the distribution of society’s abundance to all who need it. This is the practical solution to the inability of people

to get the things they need to survive and thrive under the current system. It is the door to new thresholds in the struggle for a new humanity where everyone can live happy, fulfilled lives.

The ideals of socialism and communism have been around for centuries, but the productive capacity to fully create such a society did not exist until now. With robotics, the elimination of human labor coupled with the ability to produce such abundance makes a communist society not only realizable, but also necessary.

What is the first step toward a communist society? The political question comes down to how do the people gain control over the corporations when, today, the government has been taken over by these corporations. The people need to fight for a government that takes over the corporations and makes corporate property public property. We are at that fork in the road.

The future is up to us.

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