

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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FLINT WATER CRISIS SPECIAL REPORT PULL-OUT, PAGES 5-8
THE UNTOLD STORY BEHIND THE POISONING OF FLINT, MICHIGAN



Flint resident Sarah Truesdail holds her daughter Gabriella Venegas, 5, as she screams out with tears rolling down her face while a health official pricks her finger for a free lead test on Monday, Feb. 8, 2016 at Carriage Town Ministries in Flint. "My daughter takes a lot of baths. Just recently she's been having stomachaches. I took her to the emergency room but they said she was OK. She missed school today. There's something wrong with her," Truesdail said. "We don't drink the water. Bathing in it is supposed to be safe. But if it's safe, why do you have to limit the time? And you're breathing the steam when it's hot and the vapors enter your body through the air? We just don't know how it's affecting us. I'm a little worried for the lead test."

PHOTO/JAKE MAY, MLIVE.COM

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WHY ARE THEY POISONING OUR CHILDREN?

[Read story on page 3](#)



This march in Raleigh, North Carolina, represents all those hurt by the regressive policies of the state's legislature and its attempts to hinder voting rights. PHOTO/KAITLYNBARLOW.COM

Elections and the demands of the dispossessed

EDITORIAL

With election season upon us, the role of government is being debated by the American people. With so many struggling to survive, the question of government's responsibility for the people's well-being is on the national agenda. The refusal of government to do anything but make the richest people richer and protect the billionaire class's wealth is causing many people to question their loyalty to a callous corporate government that cares nothing for the lives of the people.

As the billionaire class accumulates more and more wealth, more working people fall into insecurity, poverty and homelessness. Whole communities are being decimated. Young people graduate from school thousands of dollars in debt and without any prospect of finding a job. People are demanding that their needs

are met. They face police violence when they stand up.

The candidates are appealing to people in various ways, trying to convince them they have a remedy for the worsening problems.

The word socialism is now being spoken and its merits debated. Thirty-six percent of the American people say they have a favorable opinion of it. However, real socialism means putting an end to capitalism through government takeover of the giant productive forces, and equitable distribution of the goods and services such as energy, food, or healthcare to the people. Revolutionaries must join these debates. Socialism sets the basis for a transition to a whole new cooperative society. All that stands in the way is the private ownership of the productive forces by a small ruling class and its stranglehold on political power.

Others are appealing to what

is most historically backward in our culture, to divide people and prevent unity on a class basis. Attacks on immigrant workers and blatant racism are whipped up to win over a section of people to the ruler's agenda who are angry at the destruction of their lives. The poor are described as criminal, lazy and unworthy of help.

While the Sanders campaign offers an important opportunity to challenge the system and get out the new ideas that can make history, the role of both parties is to confine the fight within the bounds of capitalism. This points to the urgency that revolutionaries join the electoral battles, introducing a vision of a new society and how to get there.

We are living in a new era. Today's vast computerized machinery, which produces what we need, is replacing workers with robots. This creates abundance on the one hand and hun-

ger and misery on the other: an obscenely wealthy class that owns these machines as private property on the one hand, and the growing mass of impoverished workers all around the world on the other. These workers must get what they need to survive, whether they have money or not. No representative of the capitalist system can provide these things under the law of private ownership.

We will either organize to gain the political power we need to create an economic and political system compatible with the new forms of workerless production—one in which the goods produced are distributed according to need—or the ruling class will impose hunger, slavery and war. The world's people want a future of plenty and peace for everyone. Revolutionaries must take this vision to those who are seeking answers. The future is up to us.

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

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

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

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

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

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Why are they poisoning our children?

COVER STORY

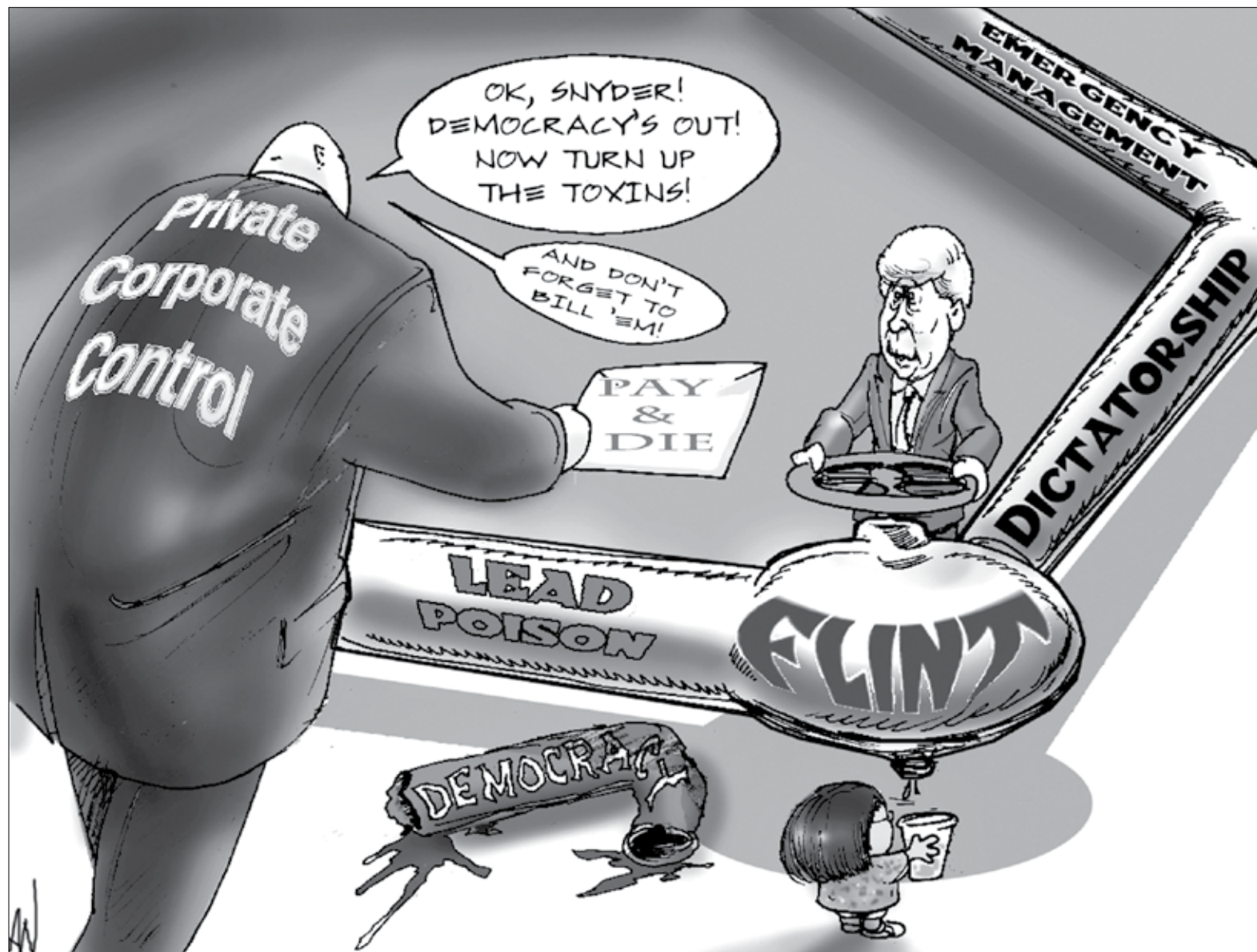
Tammy Loren, a mother of four who lives in Flint, recently told the *New York Times*, “My trust in everybody is completely gone, out the door. We’ve been lied to so much, and these aren’t little white lies. These lies are affecting our kids for the rest of their lives, and it breaks my heart.”

The poisoning of Flint, Michigan’s water with lead and other chemicals has become an international story. Millions of people are shocked and outraged by the callous disregard for human life shown by public officials in Michigan and at the federal level.

Yet there is more to this than heartless officials. These officials are acting on behalf of a corporate ruling class and an economic system that is eliminating democracy as it coldly discards anything that won’t make a profit, including people.

In Michigan the corporations have been moving to restructure cities like Flint. The rulers need to cut social services and privatize public services to funnel more money into the pockets of their corporations. They have used the financial crisis in cities like Flint as an excuse to appoint “emergency managers” with dictatorial powers to replace local elected officials and impose austerity programs. It was Flint’s governor-appointed emergency manager who switched the city’s water supply to polluted river water to pave the way to privatize the water for the corporations. This is a form of fascism. Democracy is going by the wayside to protect the continued rule and profits of the wealthy.

More and more, human labor is no longer needed, because the computer and the robot are replacing workers. Flint had some 80,000 residents working in the auto industry in 1978,



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

and today less than 4,000 are employed in the one auto plant remaining there.

This pattern has been repeated across the country, and despite what politicians say, the jobs are not coming back. Millions are permanently unemployed or working for wages too low to live on. Poverty, hunger and homelessness continue to rise.

The wealthy ruling class that owns the increasingly laborless factories and other workplaces has a problem—the workers they no longer need are a liability. The corporations control the government, and they don’t want money spent on workers they

don’t need. What’s more, these unneeded workers are a threat to the continued rule of the corporations, because they are demanding things that a system based on private profit can’t provide. The rulers are eliminating democracy to silence them.

The people of Flint and other Michigan cities are leading the way by building their own independent organizations and waging a determined struggle. We must build a powerful movement that demands that the government guarantee food, clothing, housing, healthcare and safe water for all in our country who need it. This is a stepping-stone to building a

whole new society.

The current economic system, based on the private ownership of the means of producing what we need, is coming to an end. Factories run by robots can produce tremendous abundance, but they cannot provide jobs.

As Flint shows, there is no practical solution except for we the people to take over the corporations and run them in the interest of society. In this cooperative society, the people would be in charge, no one would be homeless or hungry, and no one’s children would be poisoned by uncaring dictators.

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— *People’s Tribune*
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Formerly homeless mother speaks at Super Bowl protest

By Julianna Cheng

Editor's note: This is a transcript of a speech given at a protest of the Super Bowl-NFL corporate takeover of downtown San Francisco and harassment of the homeless.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA— I am very happy to be here with you to take a stand today. They have changed San Francisco so much for their private party. They have privatized public space. My child's park that she plays in right over there is now part of Super Bowl City. They have armed guards with military assault rifles, wearing body armor, they're driving these trucks that look like they should be in Desert Storm. I was going to have to submit to a search in order to go to the park

with my daughter—that's ridiculous! They shouldn't be allowed to take over public space like this. The way they're sweeping homeless people out of the encampments, trying to get them out of the way so the city can maintain its reputation in front of the tourists and visitors to the Super Bowl, is disgusting. They treat homeless people worse than anyone would treat a dog.

Four years ago I was homeless myself in San Francisco, when I was pregnant with my daughter, living right around here actually, sleeping in the BART stations, down at the Ferry Building or just around the corner in the Financial District, and I've seen what they do during the sweeps. They kick people awake, they steal your possessions and you never get them back, you

lose your blankets, your tarp, everything. They take it as evidence of your criminal activity, if you are sitting, sleeping, lying, anything. Actually, once I got cited for sleeping when I was awake!

We can't let people be treated in this inhumane way. We are in a city with incredible wealth and we have one of the largest homeless populations in the nation. The way we treat our most vulnerable communities shows who we are as a city. We have politicians who are hateful towards the homeless. It's just disgusting the way people are treated in this city. I know people who are still out on the streets living, and protesting, comrades here and in the East Bay, and they deserve better. Thank you all for being here!



Protesters against the corporate takeover of San Francisco by the NFL during the privatized Super Bowl party and the harassment and sweeps of homeless people. PHOTO/SARAH MENEFFEE

San Jose renters struggling to survive

By Liz Gonzalez

SAN JOSE, CA — Renters in San Jose continue to live under enormous pressures from egregious rents and a lack of enforcement around tenant concerns with unsafe living environments. Landlords face no accountability for their inability to keep units up to standards and tenants feeling secure.

Just shy of a year of organizing to increase tenant protections in the city by dramatically strengthening the city's Apartment Rent Ordinance (ARO) and enacting just cause eviction protections throughout the city, an analysis of San Jose's Apartment Rent Ordinance has been released by the Economic Roundtable. It was contracted by the city's Housing Department.

The preliminary report found that median rent increases for units under the rent control ordinance have exceeded those for non-ARO units; median rents for ARO housing units rose 21% percent between 1990-2014 while non-ARO units rose at 13% during the same period. The allowable rent increases under the ARO (at 8%) are above the annual rate of increase in market rates in the whole Bay Area, which has been an average of 4.7% since 1980. "As a result, the ARO has had little if any impact on overall rents," states the report.

The report confirms what tenants and advocates have been expressing all along. Being a

landlord of an ARO apartment is very profitable. The study also shows that tenants in ARO apartments have a lower-income, are overburdened with rent, and live in overcrowded units. The existing ordinance has not helped keep rents low and keep families in their homes.

Jose P. has lived in a rent controlled 3-bedroom apartment for 14 years in San Jose's District 1, seeing his rent increase from \$1,600 to \$2,600 this year. He's had to rent out the other rooms in his apartment, even converting the living room into a bedroom to make enough money for the rent.

The current landlord only contacts tenants to collect rent when it's a few days late and to personally inform tenants of rent increases without warning. He will go door to door to inform the tenants that the following month rents will be increased, and that if they cannot afford it they can move out. Some folks in the complex have made the decision to leave after outrageous rent increases. Jose says that's nearly impossible as a single father of 3 kids. "Who's going to rent to me?" he asks.

"We pay 10 sometimes 11%, this time I paid 3% more over the limit. Who care[s] about it?" he asks. "Only myself, so I have to pay whatever the landlord wants."

Jose has shared his story with not only Mayor Liccardo, but with his councilmember



San Jose tenants demand an end to the epidemic of arbitrary, unjust, and retaliatory evictions in Silicon Valley. PHOTO/SANDY PERRY

Chappie Jones. "They are not living the way that we are living; they don't pay the rent that we've been paying or make the salaries we make. So they don't really care if we survive or not," he said.

Jose lives next to a similar ARO complex with another owner where the rent is \$1,600. "There is no rent control," Jose adds.

STAY WOKE
says the young
woman's sign

the youth are waking up
and getting ready
to bring a new thing in

— Sarah Menefee

The untold story behind the poisoning of Flint

On these pages we present the voices of those in Flint, Detroit, and Benton Harbor, Michigan, and across the nation who are waging a determined struggle for the lives of the people of Flint—and the lives of us all.

— *The People's Tribune*

'They said the water was safe'

In a city with no democracy, forced under an emergency manager hand-picked by Governor Snyder, a decision was made to switch the water source without the proper testing and enforcement of regulation. The citizens in Flint were assured for 18 months that the water was safe... I started doing independent testing with Virginia Tech, and 30 tests were done. My average was 2500 ppb, my highest was 13,500 ppb; hazardous waste is 5000. Regardless of this information and the fact that my son had lead poisoning, the city and the MDEQ still continued to tell everyone the water was safe as the EPA sat by and watched in silence...

The citizens in Flint are relying on each of you because we have no choice, we trust no one but Virginia Tech. There are people in Flint today still not being assisted during this crisis: immigrants, disabled, and shut-ins. Broken policy and procedures are smothering the outcry of an entire community suffering financially, physically, mentally, and emotionally. I urge you to help restore some of the trust lost, and protect all the citizens in the U.S. by never allowing this to happen again. We need this to happen now, not ten years from now.

— *LeeAnne Walters, excerpts from testimony to U.S. House Panel in Washington. LeAnn was critical to bringing the poisoning to light.*



From left: Detroit resident Elmarie Dixon and Flint resident Tammy Brewer join hands with others in prayer in front of the Rayburn House Office Building on Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2016 in Washington D.C. Two bus loads of residents traveled from Flint to Washington D.C. for the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform hearing on Flint's water. PHOTO/CONOR RALPH, MLIVE.COM

Water warriors from Flint expose what is really going on

After nearly two years, the fight for safe, affordable water by the long-suffering people of Flint, MI., has finally been brought to national and international attention. Coverage of the crisis by publications such as "TIME" magazine and "National Geographic" and more have shocked the nation.

'It's like we're living in a third world country' is a common refrain in the community here. But the toxic water comparison doesn't end there. Under the notorious Emergency Manager law, several municipalities and school districts in Michigan have been denied the ability to control or make decisions about their communities, and were touted as "fiscal martial law" when the law was enacted in 2011—another eerie reminder of some so-called third world countries. Emergency Managers (EMs) sell off public assets and privatize public services. Since its passage, EMs brought massive water shutoffs in

Detroit, Highland Park, and Flint. They infamously stole a beachfront property from Benton Harbor residents. In Pontiac, local Fire and Police Departments no longer exist and the public water source is privatized. Furthermore, EMs totally destroyed public school systems in Highland Park, Hamtramck, and Muskegon Heights and wrecked havoc on Detroit's school system. In their zeal to transfer the Flint water system to bondholders and other corporate interests—a Michigan city was poisoned.

We have to publicize and shine the light of day on the fascist offensive going on in Michigan. There is nothing to duplicate this model in the country, where you have one individual who can write an order and do all these things.

The backdrop is that Flint is the home of GM, and also the home of the great sit down strike that established collective bargaining

with GM. Flint was a game changer within the labor movement and the acceleration of unionization nationwide. As technology advanced and GM began to shift jobs overseas for lower labor costs, the workforce went into rapid decline. The problem is we no longer build cars and trucks and so we have become a throwaway disposable class—a class where people's lives don't matter anymore.

Our future is up to us about what kind of a society we want to have, what kind of life we want to live. We don't want to pass on lead to our children and grandchildren. We want to pass on a good life to them—one where this new technology being developed every day can make life better for all of us. That's the kind of future that I as a retired GM worker want to pass on to my children and grandchildren.

— *Claire McClinton, Flint, MI*

Dictatorship in Michigan – A Harbinger for America?

From the Editors

The poisoning of the people in Flint shows what happens to workers who are no longer needed. As robots replace workers, our democracy is going by the wayside to protect the profits of a corporate ruling class as it coldly discards anything that won't make a profit, including people. The Emergency Manager system of rule set up in Michigan to privatize public assets, including water, is a corporate dictatorship. It is a form of fascism. It is coming to all of America if not stopped.

Although the government, state and federal, may say they are trying to alleviate people's suffering, an entire city has been poisoned. People will deal with this for the rest of their lives. Furthermore, the Emergency Manager dictatorship that allowed for the poisoning remains in place in some Michigan cities. And, while the Nestlé corporation pumps water for free, tens of thousands in Michigan are having their water shut off, unable to pay soaring rates.

The positive side of this story is the determination of the people of Flint. Without their perseverance, the truth would never have been told. There has also been an unprecedented groundswell of solidarity from people across the country who, in the face of government inaction, are embracing the people of Flint.

The people of Flint, and America, are demanding nothing less than a government that cares for and provides for their well-being, health and basic needs. This is the battleground. It is part of the fight for the ultimate solution—a truly cooperative society where the corporations are taken over by the people and run in the interest of society. In this new society, no one would be homeless or hungry, and no one's children would be poisoned by uncaring dictators.

Use this "Special Report Pull-Out" to educate others. The People's Tribune has been reporting on the Flint water struggle since 2014 when the EM switched the water to the toxic Flint River. Contact us at 800-691-6888, info@peoplestribune.org or peoplestribune.org. Send your story. Order bundles of papers to share with others.

My DNA is so damaged, the antibodies are attacking my joints, brains and liver. I have seizures now. My liver is starting to fail, and I have the beginning of cirrhosis. When's the last time you heard of someone getting cirrhosis of the liver from drinking water? I'm 37, and I hurt every time I move... I try to keep the severity from [my kids] so they'll stay positive. But I can't lie when they ask why they're so sick and hurt so much. They know that people did this to us, but I try to enforce the fact that we're fighters, not victims. I feel betrayed by my state government, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and every single person put into place to protect us from exactly what they did to us. I am furious that they took away our voice with the undemocratic Emergency Manager Law. But I also feel proud of the citizens who banded together and did all the protesting, marching, rallying, researching, and testing. (Excerpts from Huntingtonpost.com)

— Melissa Mayes, founder and activist at *Water You Fighting For?*

Learn the ABC's of Dictatorship

The Corporate Takeover of America FOR DUMMIES

Includes: Detroit, Ecorse, Flint, Allen Park, Pontiac, Benton Harbor

Bonus Corporate Jackpot! Atlantic City!

DVD INCLUDED: Who's Who in Fascism Today: -Rick Snyder, -Gary Brown, -Keyyn Orr, -Chris Christie

Learn How the EAA & NCLB Take Schools

What's An Emergency Manager?

Inside: Navigating Your New Government Without the Right to Vote



In April, 2014, people stand in silent protest at Flint City Hall over Emergency Manager Darnell Earley's change to limit public speaking to three minutes during Flint city council meetings, and moving the public speaking portion at the end of the meetings. PHOTO/JAKE MAY, MLIVE.COM

On the imprisonment of Michigan's Rev. Edward Pinkney

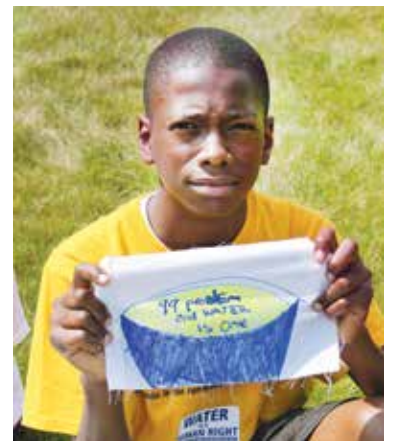
"We must push for immediate suspension of all Emergency Managers. They symbolize the destruction of democracy by corporate power," said Rev. Edward Pinkney as early as 2012. Rev. Pinkney and others from the Benton Harbor community exercised their democratic right to oust officials that serve these corporate dictators. For this, Rev. Pinkney was arrested with phony vote fraud charges. He was convicted **without any evidence** and sentenced to 2½ to 10 years. A precedent has been set. Other activists in Michigan can now receive the same treatment. Meanwhile, the corporate criminals who have taken over Michigan and poisoned Flint are free.

— People's Tribune

See Page 12 for more coverage of Benton Harbor.

I got close to see what they were giving out, and it was water. And the first thing they asked me for was my license.

— Lucia, who has been living in Flint for more than a decade, told ABC. Local groups are trying to distribute water to the undocumented workers but say people are scared to open the door for them.



Flint children create signs to protest the poisoning of the city's water. PHOTO/VALERIE JEAN

Speakers from Flint reveal what is behind the poisoning of a city's water

Speakers for a New America discuss how the poisoning of a city is the result of a poisonous system. Speakers also discuss the struggle to turn running water back on for thousands of Michigan residents who cannot afford its skyrocketing price. Speakers can discuss why water should be publicly owned and how to guarantee that everyone has safe, clean water—regardless of ability to pay!

Call Speakers for a New America today at 1-800-691-6888 or e-mail info@speakersforanewamerica.com to book speakers.

On these pages we present the voices of those in Flint, Detroit, and Benton Harbor, Michigan, and across the nation who are waging a determined struggle for the lives of the people of Flint—and the lives of us all.

— The People's Tribune



Miracle Martin, 3, cries out as her mother Dawnell Martin, both of Flint, gives her a kiss to calm her nerves during a free lead testing event on Monday, Feb. 8, 2016 at Carriage Town Ministries in Flint. Molina Healthcare provided children up to six years of age with free lead testing.

PHOTO/JAKE MAY, MLIVE.COM

There is a genesis to the Flint River poisoning

The crisis flowing through the streets of Flint has galvanized the soul of the country.

Michigan Welfare Rights Organization (MWRO) is very engaged as we look at and react to what has occurred, and we find ourselves in turmoil about what is to be done. Members of MWRO search for the deeper meaning of events as we try to anticipate political trends in an effort to expose the true nature of capitalism, the economic system we live under that is not good for any of us.

The rise of robotic manufacturing changed Flint forever. Industrial manufacturing accounted for upwards of 80,000 Flint residents working in 1978, and by 2000—fewer than 8,000 were still connected to factory work. Today, fewer than half of that number is still actively employed in the one auto factory left. The city was relegated to the “unimportant sector” because they were no longer part of the active workforce, so their quality of life fell fast.

In 2011, Flint residents, along with several other cities in Michigan, lost the right to vote, stripped of democracy because, “Flint lives don’t matter.” Democracy was destroyed while America stood by and watched, not understanding the significance of what that meant. The governor authorized a series of EMERGENCY MANAGERS over Flint, who decided it was cost-effective to switch from clean water to river water.

We now face a systemic disaster that calls for a systemic solution. The political call must be adjusted to fit what is needed. We must continue to deliver water but also consider these steps: demand that residents be temporarily relocated into nearby communities where the water is clean and accessible. Mobile homes, state-county-city owned houses, vacant apartments, unused military housing—a decent system would have activated use of these and more, offering residents immediate relief and distance from danger. Clinics offering 24/7 access should be constructed near those sites so that round-the-clock health monitoring can take place since the damage done is permanent. While residents are away from their permanent homes, repairs and replacement of all involved pipes, which should have started within days of discovering what happened, start. All of these steps should have taken place along with a team of investigators who’s task should be to indict those who caused this crisis.

MWRO hopes we might one day construct steps to unite us as we fight these devils who would destroy humanity, poison children, challenge our collective futures, and harm mother earth all in the name of profit.

— Maureen Taylor, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, excerpt from the full statement found here: peopletribune.org/pt-news/2016/02/crisis-streets-flint

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE DISCUSSION GROUPS!

Call or email us to find out if there is a *People's Tribune* discussion group in your area.

(800) 691-6888 info@peopletribune.org

People are scared their water will be cut off. You need water to survive. You die without it. And if they cut your water off, they can take your kids away. Why? Because they want to get the poor people out and bring the rich people in. They will make a lot more money with rich people. They also cut off some people because they think they’ve been a thorn in their side, like my Dad. He made the water sign: “I believe water is a human right.” It makes me sad. I think about Flint. Making people drink the poison. People could die and get diseases to make some people rich. They are even trying to make it illegal to use rain water. First they privatize water, then air, and we die. We have to tell the people so they know. Without that they end up lost. And, don’t buy Nestlé’s!

— W. Morales, 10 years old, Highland Park

I’m devastated... they told us lies after lies and I believed in my government. Flint is not rich, it’s minority. Poor whites, poor Blacks... And they knew about it? That hurts.

— Mary Johnson, Flint, quoted in *National Geographic*

Water is today’s gold. The corporations want the Great Lakes. If they get Detroit and Highland Park water they get the key to privatize the Great Lakes. This is just the stomping ground for what they want to do nationally. They are moving to privatization—we’ve got to move to nationalization of the water, the opposite of privatization. We keep the water public for the benefit of the people and under our control—not for the corporations or the banks (like they did with our monies in the bail out).

— Marian Kramer, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization

The Flint City Council, recognizing the obvious hazards from consuming water too contaminated for GM to use, voted to reconnect to the regional Detroit water system. EM Gerald Ambrose said that Flint’s water is safe to drink and, “incomprehensible to me that seven Flint City Council members want to spend \$12 million a year to the system serving southeast Michigan.” So money is more important than human life and health. This is the predicted result of having despotic, unaccountable power-tripping political leaders like Snyder, Ambrose and their EM colleagues.

— Shea Howell and Tom Stephens, from the *People's Tribune*, March, 2015



PHOTO/VALERIE JEAN

NATIONWIDE SOLIDARITY WITH FLINT

Children are the most susceptible to lead poisoning because they are rapidly growing and drink more water. Lead crosses the placenta and affects fetuses. 12 million children in the U.S. under 7 years of age are potentially at risk. They live in homes built before 1960, which used lead pipes, although problems have been seen even in homes built up to 1980. Lead causes a myriad of problems in adults too. The worst thing is that what happened in Flint, Michigan was totally preventable. It is an indictment of our public health system, our decrepit water delivery systems, and government that has abandoned those who built this country.

— Salvador Sandoval, M.D., Merced, CA

The Federal government is finally rightly examining just what is going on in Flint. It should also look at the assorted water crises here in West Virginia and in other states. We need a commitment to upgrading water infrastructure, especially in communities facing public health emergencies by turning on their tap. We had to fight tooth and nail to gain some drinking water protections after our chemical spill, and prior to it. Industry has been lobbying politicians to roll back the post-spill safeguards. We demand our state politicians serve the people's interest. Methylcyclohexanemethanol (MCHM) and other chemicals are not strangers to the Appalachian water supply. It's going to take national collaboration to solve these problems.

— Paula Swearingin, Direct Action Welfare Group and the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition in West Virginia

Chicago Midwest Regional Joint Board members in 13 states have responded in mass to the emergency in Flint. Some locals have held bake sales, while others collect as many cases of water as possible. Solidarity is alive and well with our members, and the crisis in Flint has become a reason to solidify our membership. Through our social media we have been able to reach people outside of the Midwest. This electronic solidarity has helped us get donations from New York, California and Canada, which are then used to buy water and other essentials that are needed by the community in Flint.

— Carlos Ginard, Workers United, SEIU

I am appalled at what is happening in Flint. I have implemented a water drive to have all 12 schools participate. I, with others, will travel to Flint to personally deliver water. I am a mother of an 8-year-old and currently unemployed so I know what it is like to be on the bottom of the barrel. I will do whatever it takes to bring justice to Flint.

— Patrice Maina, Rhode Island



Tonya Kirkland, resident of Flint for 41 years and member of Worker's United Local 2402/2403, hands out water to fellow residents. PHOTO/ADRIAN GARCIA

On January 30, Arielle Maldonado and I traveled to Flint, MI from Chicago to distribute cases of water to families in need. We started on the East side. We distributed water and copies of the People's Tribune newspaper to those who opened the door. Some people said they had more than enough water. We drove a few blocks down. We met Jason Johnson and Rick Ruiz, who opened up their home to us and told us their stories. We learned the water crisis had been going on for as long as 10 years. We also learned that the filters residents had did not take all the lead from the water.

Many residents of Flint have come together to help each other, including Rick Ruiz's band, While Rome Burns, that had a charity concert where benefits went to the people of Flint. Rick expressed anger and asked why the government had yet to fix the problem with Flint's water supply. Jason and Rick said they had felt increasing fatigue over the past year and have not been checked for lead poisoning but they would be going soon. They thanked us for coming to bring water and even though their kitchen "looked like a grocery store," as Jason said, they accepted a few more cases. Before we left Rick asked us to pray for them.

Our next stop was Howard Estates. An elderly woman told us that the day before an organization came and delivered 15 cases per family. Upon leaving, we met a mother in the parking lot. She told us once again that the Flint water crisis had been going on for years. We asked if her children had lead poisoning and she said yes, at a high level. The pediatrician told her not to bathe the children in the water or let them drink it. But she explained that she still bathed her children in the water because the problem has been going on "forever" and they need to have a proper shower. At this point, we realized that the residents of Flint needed more than water. The city must inform them on the long-term effects of lead poisoning. This lady did not want any water but she did take a copy of the People's Tribune and we continued on our way.

— Krystal Robledo, Chicago, IL

Excerpt from 'Water es Vida'

he who controls the water
enslaves the world
she who pollutes the water
destroys herself
he who puts a price on the water
steals from his mother's womb
la madre misma
will curse your
fluoride fortune &
fountains of filth
because el agua
no se vende
the precious resource
is free &
when contained
will dry up in your mouth
slip through your hands
& flow back to its
place of origin
like these words
water will flow
free forever
flow forever
flow free

Water es vida
I take mine
pure & unrefined
you should too

— Iris De Anda
From Iris De Anda's book *Codeswitch:
Fires From Mi Corazon*



Jason Johnson (left) and Rick Ruiz of Flint welcome supporters into their home who bring them water.

PHOTO/KRYSTAL ROBLEDO

Lawyer discusses police killing of Michigan teen

The People's Tribune interviewed Hugh M. Davis, the attorney representing the family of Deven Guilford, a 17-year-old killed by police on February 28, 2015 in Eaton County, Michigan during a traffic stop. The family has filed a federal lawsuit against the county and the police officer (who the prosecutor has already decided won't be charged).

People's Tribune: How is the family taking this?

Hugh M. Davis: They are stunned, honest hardworking church going, police supporting people and simply can't imagine that their son could go from flashing his lights at a car he didn't know was a police officer and be dead six minutes later. Flashing your lights isn't a crime. The stop was illegal. Once a traffic stop ensued, Deven challenged the officer. That is no longer acceptable. You can't talk back to a cop. As Deven continued to dispute the police officer, the officer became more agitated because of the challenge to his authority.

Even though the cop originally said it was OK to record, when Deven started doing it, the cop grabbed him and pulled him out of the car, a further illegal act. He didn't give Deven a chance to comply. After that, it's not entire-

ly clear what happened.

A lot of people analyzed the video. One flash freeze sent to us looked like Deven is down on his hands and knees and the cop is pointing his gun at his head after the cop unnecessarily and illegally tasered him. The use of the taser made Deven get up and respond. The cop went to deadly force.

The injuries to the cop's face look very bloody in the picture. Once he was cleaned up, it was clear the injuries were not caused by wounds of someone receiving a blow-by-blow fist. The cop hit his face on ice. That is an important part we can prove.

Secondly, the medical examiner and ballistics will show shots were fired from a different way and angle from what the officer now says occurred in his made up story. We will be able to prove that he is just lying. So it is almost incredible, but the challenge to the cop's authority is what generated this homicide.

PT: Why do you think these things are happening?

HMD: There is no doubt that the criminal justice system and police operate vastly different toward minority and poor populations. The idea that this could happen to a kid in a community like this is



PHOTO/ FB.COM/JUSTICEFORDEVENGUILFORDG

an indication of where things are heading. Even though we have a façade of democracy and democratic institutions and elections, etc., it really is just a façade.

The reality is we live in a police state. If you look at the budgets of every level of gov-

ernment, the largest single item is the military, cops, courts, corrections, probation. You don't hear any politician talking about dismantling the military, demilitarizing the police, cutting mass incarceration or bringing the troops home.

We have become an empire. You can have an empire or a democracy but you can't have both. For there to be real fundamental change, the troops and cops are going to have to point their guns away from the people.

'If Blacks can't rise up, nobody is really secure,' says activist

Interviewed by Steve Teixeira

LOS ANGELES, CA — Melina Abdullah is chair of the Pan African Studies Department at Cal State LA, and a well-known activist. In January of 2015 she was part of an encampment outside the LA Police Department protesting recent cop killings of Blacks. She and fellow camper Sha Dixon were arrested for trespassing when they tried to deliver a list of demands to LAPD Chief Beck. "We are not a threat," she told reporters, "We are two women who are armed with letters."

One year later, Dr. Abdullah commented about the links between the struggle against cop killings of Blacks and the struggle to defend those economically at the bottom of America. "Black Lives Matter was birthed in 2013, and by the end of 2015 you're seeing a Black student movement all across the country."

"Young Blacks on and off campus are catching hell... the way they are assaulted, police killings. Young Black folks have targets on their backs and they

know it. You can either walk around as prey, or be a lion and fight back. Students have talked about how the movements in the streets, like Black Lives Matter, have emboldened them."

She added that while many Black students have a degree of economic security, many are poor and most have some personal connection to those suffering poverty. "Even the most middle class Black folks are tied to poorer folks because there's not enough openness in the system for all to move forward." But she added, "When we talk about police killings, the Black poor are occupied and terrorized to a greater degree... It's really important that folks understand that liberation begins with those at the very bottom."

She explained the perspective of her department as being that "We think of Black people as a group targeted for the most State violence. Blacks are killed at 8 times the rate of Whites. Black people are upwards of 70% of the L.A. Skid Row population, and have the highest rate

of school suspensions, and highest imprisonment." But she said this benefitted the class at the top, not all non-Blacks. "It's important for non-Blacks to see that if Blacks can't rise up, nobody is really secure."

Malcolm said you can't have capitalism without racism. If you aspire to the Black capitalist ranks, you're separated from the Black masses, like Herman Cain, Ben Carson... freedom requires toppling capitalism."

She pointed to billionaire politician Donald Trump as promoting the worst ideals of his class, to the detriment of the masses of all colors. "Trump appeals to the worst fears of those of us who occupy the bottom rung, like the poor White folks who are Trump supporters. He has Black folks saying, "build that wall" against immigrants, whites saying, "they're all terrorists" about Muslims, and wealthy Latinos saying "keep the rest out." Everybody is pointing a finger at everyone else... but we never look up to who is making things so bad."



Justice march for "Africa," who was killed by the LAPD outside his Skid Row tent. PHOTO/LYNN ROSSI

Solace zine: Photography feeds the homeless

By David Guzman

ORANGE COUNTY, CA — My name is David Guzman and I'm 21 years old from Orange County, CA. As strong advocates for the

homeless community, my brother, Stevie, and I run a small photography magazine, *Solace*, which we sell and use the proceeds to buy meals for people on the street. In a nutshell; a person buys a

copy of *Solace* for \$10 and we hit the streets searching for someone to befriend, and if they're hungry, we purchase whatever meal they'd like.

People often ask why we

do it or how *Solace* even started. Well, about three years ago, my brother and I moved to Southern California. We grew up in a middle-class, closer to lower-class family. Getting through high school with hardly a dollar in our wallets every week. Vivid memories of sitting in fast food joints watching friends eat full meals while we just salivated and stared, holding back from wanting to ask for a bite. But these moments lead to *Solace*.

Soon after moving to Southern California, I landed my first job and started to make a good amount of money for an 18-year-old and all I wanted to do was give it away. Around the same time of landing my first job, my brother and I fell in love with film cameras and analog photography, but we weren't shooting much. One day, I had an epiphany and texted Stevie about how blessed we are and how we need to take advantage of Orange County and go explore. That led to countless weekend train rides along the coast and countless photographs. Every trip we made, we would encounter the homeless and supply them with food and meals. It was the best feeling in the world. It made sense.

A few months later I had stacks of film photos just sitting in my room and it hit me to

make a small zine (personal magazine) just for myself; hence, *Solace Volume 1*. A handmade and dorky looking photography magazine. At this time, I had a copy of *Vol. 1* in my hand not knowing what to do with it. And then, it hit me. Another epiphany. Sell these zines to generate money to help people on the street. And I did just that. Never did we ever imagine that two-years later, *Solace* would lead to hundreds of meals, countless new friendships with the homeless and six existing volumes—continuing to do just that.

So, why do we do it? We are the voice of the homeless community. Our goal is to show that a homeless person is simply a person without a home. We have met the humblest, most grateful and most beautiful people on the streets. Most importantly, we do it to build friendships with the homeless. To show them someone does genuinely care about their well-being. It's all out of love and doing what we can while we can. *Solace* is a small photography magazine with big plans to impact society's judgment about the homeless community. Thank you.

See photos at etsy.com/shop/SolacePhotoZines, instagram.com/solacephotozine, instagram.com/yourfrienddavid or instagram.com/fatboybutter



John (left) and James on 4th Street in downtown Santa Ana, CA. About 1400 homeless are spread across this city. They mostly sleep by the Civic Center and Library. PHOTO/DAVE GUZMAN

School of Social Work students tackle homelessness

By Cathy Talbott

CARBONDALE, IL—Students in Associate Professor Dona Reese's Social Work class conducted a research study last semester to look into the rising homelessness in the area. After compiling the data, a community meeting and discussion was held at the university. The audience included Southern Illinois University (SIU) administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Community members included religious leaders, social service providers, professionals who serve homeless individuals, community activists, and those who have experienced homelessness. The following points summarize the wide-ranging discussion held following the presentation.

- Community awareness of the problem of homelessness needs to be increased.
- We need to provide an address, phone number, and shower for all homeless.
- Minimum wage jobs do not provide an adequate income; some working people are homeless.
- Religious leaders asked how the religious community can reach out to students and to homeless people. We should create a "grace margin"—a place that is safe for anyone. SIU students should help more, and help to provide a program in the church. Maybe they could get college credit for doing this, maybe it would count for the volunteer hours that some are required to put in. It's conceivable that SIU social work students could do counseling in a field placement there.
- Each church should adopt one or two homeless people and care for them.
- Homeless people should be allowed to come up with their own solutions. People who have been there (have been homeless themselves) can help each other.
- We know that there are homeless students at SIU. Do they remain homeless in Carbondale after leaving SIU? Our results showed that there were many homeless individuals in Carbondale who had some college or college degrees.
- The stories of the homeless are

important, they should be told in the news.

- Businesses should be accountable; each one should employ a certain number of homeless people.
- Students should get active politically, and contact senators and congressmen. We could engage in a movement similar to the *Moral Monday* movement, to advocate for action on homelessness.
- A formerly homeless person said that if no one cares about you, you start to not care about yourself, and lose confidence.
- The audience suggested that we follow up on this study, conducting another one in the future about additional questions that were raised about homelessness in our community.

Although the discussion did not delve into the structural changes in the economy giving rise to this new permanent homelessness, this was a beginning. People's eyes have been opened. And an important bridge has been built linking the university community to the wider community it sits within.



Deva is homeless in Portland, Oregon where the number of homeless women has increased by 15% in the past two years. PHOTO/DAVE GUZMAN

For more information, contact Dona Reese, Associate Professor, School of Social Work, SIU: djreese@siu.edu. Also visit

the website: sparrowcoalition.org. A video of the event can be viewed here: www.youtube.be/ekiRTfQCnR0

Chicago declares war on teachers

By Lew Rosenbaum

CHICAGO, IL — Chicago's mayor, his school board chief and the governor of Illinois are trying to force a Chicago teachers strike this spring. Why? Because they want to drive a wedge into the working class by breaking the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU).

After months of negotiations, CTU negotiators on February 1 rejected a "tentative agreement" that had been offered by the unelected Chicago Public School (CPS) Board. On February 2, CPS chief Forrest Claypool fired at least 1,000 teachers and cut teacher salaries 7% by forcing them to pay the full cost of their pensions. On February 4, thousands of teachers, parents, students and allied organizations flooded downtown Chicago in protest of CPS' draconian retaliation.

Also on February 2, Republican governor Bruce Rauner offered to appoint an emergency manager to take over the public schools and declare them bankrupt, along with the financially

strapped city of Chicago. Democratic mayor Rahm Emanuel ridiculed him, pointing out that Rauner has been unable to get a state budget passed since he took office a year ago. Here's the reality: both Rauner and Emanuel oppose benefits and services that workers need. Neither of them is going to bat for those who have fallen off the employment grid.

Both Emanuel and Rauner dance to the tune of Wall Street. Rauner's call for bankrupting Chicago added tens of millions of dollars in higher interest on a \$725 million bank loan to CPS on February 8. Meanwhile, Emanuel considers bank loans sacred, never missing a payment and never challenging loan interest, while his obligations to the pension fund have always been discretionary. This is how these stick-up artists rob the working class. Either way, financial corporations and the government become more enmeshed, especially when the head of the school board, appointed by the mayor, comes from the energy giant Exelon Corp.

Emanuel is at his weak-



Thousands of teachers, parents, students and allied organizations flooded downtown Chicago in protest of the firing of 1,000 teachers and salary cuts. PHOTO/SARAH JANE RHEE

est, most unpopular point in his administration. His cover-up of the murder of Laquan McDonald by Chicago police outraged Chicagoans. Almost daily demonstrations call for his resignation. A recent poll showed the public views the Chicago Teachers Union three times more favorably than it does Emanuel. The teachers may never have a more favorable time to fight for their survival and that of public education. However, the threats to

take over the public schools are not empty. Michigan has been the testing ground for the "emergency manager" form of dictatorship. The emergency manager of Detroit's public schools is managing the destruction of public education there. Union contracts, once sacred in Michigan, have now succumbed to "right-to-work" legislation.

The steps the Chicago Teachers Union is taking to unify the fighters for a world-class educa-

tion are important to a section of society that is losing any hope of education as an end to poverty. The battle is transcending the fight for individual schools. The combatants are forced to engage the political apparatus to achieve their contract goals. This is the beginning of seeing the goal as fully funded public education for all, guaranteed nationally by a government with abundant resources to accomplish this.



In 2014, Detroiters protest the bankruptcy filing which allowed the city's unelected Emergency Manager greater powers to attack the current and retired public workers.

PHOTO/JAMES FASSINGER, STILLSCENES.COM

Detroit: A tale of two cities

By John Williams

DETROIT, MI — The Detroit after bankruptcy report depends on whose view one accepts. Representatives from Wall Street and the corporations called it a success on the local level. Democrats and Republicans echoed the same sentiment. Governor Snyder, Mayor Duggan, former Emergency Manager Kevin Orr and bankruptcy Judge Stephen Rhodes insured that millions of dollars were paid to law firms. J.P. Morgan received millions, while city pensions were basically eradicated along with their savings. In addition, privatization of trash and regionalization of water were other factors. Multimillionaires,

Dan Gilbert, owner of Quicken Loans, and the Cleveland Cavaliers and Mike Illitch, owner of Little Caesar's Pizza, Detroit Tigers and Redwings lauded the report as they invested in downtown, Midtown and Corktown.

On the other hand, reports from Homeless Management System, and Michigan State and Housing Development state that Michigan ranks fifth in the U.S. and first in the Midwest in homelessness, while Detroit leads the state. The Huffington Post states that Detroit leads the state in poverty where 2/3 of families cannot afford basic needs such as health and housing, including those working. Unemployment is three times higher than

the national average. In addition thousands have lost homes do to foreclosures with many more facing this dire fate. Water shut offs are beyond the panic stage and the school system is in shambles.

Struggles have arisen in healthcare, water and schools, and major concern about poverty and unemployment is rising. The embodiment of these struggles and concerns are the part time, temporary and permanently unemployed workers categorized as dispossessed. It is this class that Jesus spoke of when he stated if you do it unto the least of these, you do it unto me.

It is the widening contradiction between two classes in which one sees two views of Detroit. One is the owning class that is trying to protect its private property and profits and is united in that goal. The dispossessed comprise millions the world over but are not yet consciously united as one class. However, as stated above, many are becoming open to new ideas in their quest for single payer healthcare, public ownership of water, health care and education. This is the foundation for class unity.

next time you're in Chicago
ride the 155 bus

look around at the faces
young and old, so beautiful
— they reflect the whole globe —

i promise,
it will give you hope.

— Adam Gottlieb



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

Corporations own America!



Protest outside the Berrien County Courthouse over the unjust incarceration of community leader, Rev. Edward Pinkney. PHOTO/PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

Free Rev. Pinkney!

Defender of the poor and a political prisoner—Rev. Pinkney sounded the alarm early on about the threat of the iron fist of the emergency manager system of corporate dictatorship in Michigan. Now the fight is spreading from water shutoffs in Detroit to fighting poisoned water in Flint, both of which result from the emergency manager system. The “Free Rev. Pinkney Coordinating Committee” coordinates national activities in the campaign for his defense. In the words of Rev. Pinkney, “Let’s join together and defeat this monster!” Contact us at justice4pinkney.com and Friend us on Facebook at justice4pinkney. Tell us what you can do and join the fight to “Free Rev. Pinkney.” Write him: Rev. Edward Pinkney N-E-93 #294671, Marquette Branch Prison, 1960 US Hwy 41 South, Marquette, MI 49855. Make donations at bhbanco.org

Voices of Benton Harbor

There’s an inequality problem here. There’s no due process. There’s judges sitting for years locking up 15-year-olds living in extreme poverty. When you have poverty and no jobs, you’re going to have crime. People are starving here. Rev. Pinkney was an advocate. He fought for the low man on the totem pole. He asked why they build \$50 million golf courses and then close down a whole school system? They brought a financial manager in. What did he manage? He just put the nail in the coffin for the corporations.

—Linda and John Bey

They should lock Snyder up. He took lives. Others are locked up for nothing. Their lives will never be reversed. It’s a means of genocide against the poor, especially the Blacks. A lot of whites are affected, also. We must all realize if you are working class, poor, Black, green, or grey, we’re in the same boat. As long as they keep us divided they win.

— Emma Kinnard

Rev. Pinkney’s message cannot be silenced!

From the Editors of the People’s Tribune

Rev. Pinkney is a political prisoner. He languishes in prison, now for over 400 days, for the ‘crime’ of exercising his democratic rights on behalf of the people of Benton harbor and beyond.

Those who have followed his story here in the *People’s Tribune*, and now with a media outcry all over the US and the world, and who read his own writings, understand what a fascist attack his conviction and unjust incarceration represent. This is part of the larger attack by the corporate-controlled government, led by the dictatorial Emergency Managers in Michigan against the people who are being displaced and abandoned as the economy tanks.

The corporations that no longer need people’s labor, especially in the once heavily industrialized Rust Belt where Pinkney is active, will no longer bother to keep them alive and will exercise state terror against anyone who resists and speaks up. Now Rev. Pinkney is not being allowed

to communicate beyond prison walls, because the ruling class fears his message. This will not stop the growing movement in this country, or stop his message from being heard and spread.

The corporations and the owning class must deal with the millions of people who are being thrown out of work and into dispossession, poverty and misery. People don’t put up with having their children’s future stolen from them, along with their homes and ability to live. They are furious when their water is poisoned because of greedy privatization schemes put in place by corporate dictators, as is happening in Michigan and all over the country. In Pinkney’s Benton Harbor, the Whirlpool Corporation acted as though it owned the town and could seize public spaces for its own use. The corporate-controlled government agreed. Rev. Pinkney and the people of Benton Harbor, mostly poor but not powerless, disagreed and organized. They exercised their democratic rights in a recall campaign against a corrupt mayor.

The ruling class is putting laws into

es and already outrageous executive compensation packages. Congress and other elected officials grant huge subsidies and tax breaks for “corporate welfare” amounting to billions of dollars. The welfare and life and safety of the average American is increasingly crushed underneath it all.

Many economic concerns pour through the halls of our government like lava; financial interests are unabashedly placed ahead of the collective good. We spend billions upon billions to support certain industries, rather than to support our children, because organized business interests can afford highly paid lobbyists to make it happen, in both legal and illegal ways. The influence of money on the political process is a fast-growing malignant cancer in America.

“Corporate welfare,” tax subsidies to the wealthiest corporations, increases to the tune of billions of dollars, take place while Head Start programs are obliterated. If we believe in the principle of equality, then the rich should not be granted greater opportunities than the poor.

We the people must say enough is enough and fight the corporations.

Editor’s note: The corporations in Benton Harbor, especially Whirlpool, and the local government and court system they rule, put Rev. Pinkney behind bars to try and stop the Benton Harbor movement, but it hasn’t worked. The movement continues to grow.