



Flint residents brave the cold to protest the poisoning of their water. The city's former Emergency Manager, a dictator appointed by the governor, switched to a polluted water source over the objections of the community, resulting in water contaminated with lead and other toxins. PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK

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Dictator Law Poisoned Flint: Harbinger for America?

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Flint: Forefront of battle for healthcare for all

EDITORIAL

America's inability to provide good health care for all is most clearly visible when we have a health catastrophe such as exists today in Flint, Michigan, a city of 100,000. The people of Flint were poisoned with lead and other toxins in the water as the result of a dictatorial Emergency Manager switching the city's water supply to the Flint River in 2014. Today they and their children are suffering seizures, skin rashes, hair loss, anemia, memory loss, brain fog and fatigue, among other symptoms.

Lead poisoning does lifetime damage, especially to children, so the demands of Flint's people justifiably include lifetime health care. Clearly they are not going to get it from a health care system that is privately owned and sells health care as a commodity. The average Flint resident doesn't have much money. While there has been some extension of Medicaid to cover more women and children in Flint, that doesn't cover everyone. The immediate solution is to extend Medicare coverage to every Flint resident.

There is precedent for this. Years ago, the people of Libby, Montana were poisoned on a mass scale by airborne asbestos from a local vermiculite mine. Over time, thousands got sick and hundreds died. In June 2009, in the first action of its kind, the Environmental Protection Agency declared a public health disaster for the whole county around Libby. The W.R. Grace Co. that owned the mine dodged responsibility for the disaster. Congress then approved adding a provision to the 2010 health care reform bill that extended Medicare coverage, free of charge, to the whole Libby community.

The government must extend Medicare, free of charge, to every resident of Flint. And this would



Miracle Martin, 3, cries out as her mother Dawnell Martin, both of Flint, gives her a kiss to calm her nerves as she is tested for lead. PHOTO/JAKE MAY, MLIVE.COM

move us a step closer to having Medicare for all for the entire country, and a step closer to having a national health service.

The health care emergency is nationwide, and thousands are dying. Some 30 million people still have no health insurance at all. The health reform law extended coverage to some, but for many, those policies are expensive and don't cover much. Millions still can't afford to go to the doctor, while the insurance and pharmaceutical companies are striking it rich.

The corporations used to provide health insurance because they needed healthy workers. Today, millions of jobs have been automated out of existence or sent overseas, and the corporations are not going to provide health care for workers they don't need. The question is whether the government is going to represent the interests of the corporations, or the interests of the people. We

need the government to intervene on behalf of the people.

There are many health care emergencies under way in America, but Flint embodies so much of what is happening in our country—the elimination of jobs, the destruction of democracy, and the resulting assault on peoples' lives. Bringing Medicare for all to Flint, including prescription drugs, would build on the precedent set in Libby and create a

health care model for the whole country. The crisis in Flint cries out for Medicare for all.

Forcing the government to recognize health care as a human right is a key battle in the fight for a whole new society where all of us can lead happy and healthy lives.

People's Tribune Fundraiser

"I can't wait to get my new subscription," said an attendee at a Michigan fundraiser for the *People's Tribune*. The *People's Tribune* was recognized for its years of coverage of the dire poverty, water struggles and more recently, the elimination of democracy through the dictatorial corporate model imposed on the people of Michigan to privatize city services and hand public resources, like water, over to the corporations. Thank you Michigan!

— The Editors

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PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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

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

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

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

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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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Dictator law poisoned Flint – Harbinger for America?

COVER STORY

A battle is unfolding in America. The workers are fighting for life itself—for food, water, shelter, healthcare, and education against a corporate class that has openly taken over government and is employing it as an instrument of brute force to impose its will.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the state of Michigan, where legislation was passed that empowers the governor—in the service of the corporations—to take over whole towns, cities, counties and school systems. This law gives unelected governor-appointed Emergency Managers the power to dissolve contracts to lower labor costs, privatize public resources, hand public assets like water over to the corporations, and do away with local governments. Emergency management is the primary means of doing this.

In Flint, the Emergency Manager made the decision to switch the city’s water source to the highly polluted Flint River over the objection of the residents. As a result, a city was poisoned. The intent of the switch was to pave the way for a complete takeover of Michigan’s water by the giant water companies. This shows how ruthless rule by corporate power is.

This corporate “dictator” law is no longer confined only to Michigan. Although the laws in other states do not yet have the power of the Michigan law, nineteen states and the District of Columbia now have some form of the Emergency Manager law. The public school system in Chicago is now targeted by Illinois Governor Rauner for take over.

We are in a new era. As the economy continues to transition to production of goods and services by robots and computers

instead of wage labor, the number of jobs shrinks and those that remain are increasingly low wage. Workers cannot buy and capitalists cannot profit. To maintain their wealth and privileges in the face of a dying system, the corporations need fascism. They are putting into place a militarized police state aimed at containing the struggle of the workers for their survival. The Emergency Manager system, which denies democracy, is an essential part of this process.

The question posed is will society control the corporations

and guarantee the needs of the people? Or will the corporations control society and guarantee the wealth and property of the owning class with disastrous consequences for the majority?

The poisoning of the people of Flint continues to draw the attention and ire of people across the nation. Acts of solidarity are broad with the recognition that government is failing to protect the most vulnerable among us, children. Individuals and organizations alike are taking the situation to task and trying to meet the needs of their sisters and brothers

in Flint. This solidarity expresses the underlying desire of people to come together and cooperate. We can stand on this sentiment as we fight to create a whole new society where humanity can cooperate.

The only thing standing in our way is a system of private property and laws designed to benefit the owners of productive property. If we as a society owned this property in common, we could guarantee that the future of our children would be one of peace, health and well-being. The future is up to us!



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— People's Tribune Editorial Board

Cooperative spirit key to ending homelessness

By Katherine Brock

SAN JOSE, CA — Despite massive rollout efforts, Covered California (ACA and Medicaid Expansion), have not yet proved the long-term healthcare solution for the over 6000 people still living outdoors in Silicon Valley. Homeless people still get most of their medical care from Emergency Rooms, and clinics and vans providing mostly episodic care. Nationally, 30,000,000 people are still uninsured.

Attendance was up 2-3 times at a yearly winter health fair for the homeless at St. Joseph's Cathedral in San Jose. Although 75 flu shots were given, and people participated in glucose and cholesterol tests, etc., what the attendees appreciated most were basic comfort items such as warm clothes, blankets, haircuts, foot washing and a healthy lunch.

The connection between lack of housing and health is obvious. Without access to clean water, sanitation, cooking, healthy food,

a warm bed and safety, it is pretty hard to be healthy. The extreme trauma and stress that are part of everyday life for people living rough is compounded by the callous tossing of camps by police, with destruction of precious personal property like blankets, warm clothes, medicines and tarps.

While the average life expectancy in the U.S. is 78, long-term homeless people have a life expectancy of only 42 to 52 years! The sick and vulnerable become homeless, and the homeless become sicker and more vulnerable. Loss of a job is often the tipping point to homelessness, but often illness or injury precipitate job loss, and since healthcare was historically tied to work in the US, loss of job has meant loss of healthcare.

One in four women are homeless because of domestic violence. Youth also become homeless due to violence, sexual abuse and other traumatic experiences. People without a home

lack personal safety from assault and suffer from major depression, substance abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder.

The majority of adults who experience homelessness have more than one health issue, such as hypertension, diabetes, HIV or viral hepatitis. Managing chronic illnesses is always challenging, but nearly impossible while homeless. Taking medicines at certain times or with meals is important to control blood sugar in diabetes. Not so easy when the next meal is hard to find so patients must skip doses. Irregular doses or doses without food can increase the risk for heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure and blindness. Other life-saving medications like asthma inhalers are often lost or stolen. Medications which have to be refrigerated are not possible. Often, moment to moment survival just takes precedence over healthcare.

Programs like health fairs are incremental at best. But, the



Attendance was up at the yearly winter health fair for the homeless in San Jose, CA. Life expectancy is 78 in the U.S., but 42 to 52 years for the long-term homeless. PHOTO/MEDICARE FOR ALL COALITION

cooperative spirit that brought over one hundred people to volunteer to help homeless community members get healthcare and comfort for one day is a powerful start. Combined with

political education and organization, that community spirit can fight for the kind of housing and kind of society necessary to end both homelessness and poor health.

God lives in a tent

Editor's Note: This article is from a sermon by Rev. Bruce Ray, Pastor, Kimball Ave. Church, Chicago, Illinois

CHICAGO, IL — These days, you don't have to look far to find tents. Tent cities have popped up across the country—the homes of the displaced and the homeless. I pass an encampment beneath the expressway overpass three blocks from my home almost every day. Dozens of men and women have constructed tents from blankets and tarps to keep out the cold and wind of Chicago winters. No one should have to live in makeshift tents under the constant roar of traffic. These people need the privacy, security and protection that only a permanent house can provide. While some of us may exchange our house for a tent temporarily and enjoy “roughing it” on occasion, in the end we long for the “comforts of home.” These men and women deserve nothing less.

Recently, I ran across a Biblical story found in 2 Samuel 7:1-7 that ends with a surprise. David, King of Israel, had settled down in his cedar (i.e. luxurious) palace in Jerusalem. He brought in a trusted advisor, Nathan, and

revealed that he was bothered that God was still living in a tent and proposed building God a house. Ever since the days of wilderness wandering, God had “lived” in a tent (also known as the Tabernacle). Even after the people settled down in the Promised Land, God remained in the tent. Initially, Nathan encouraged David to proceed with his building campaign, but during the night (here's the surprise ending) God revealed that God didn't want to settle down in a house. God preferred living in a tent.

So why would God choose a tent when God could have a house? I believe God is reminding us that God cannot be domesticated, contained, or “placed.” A movable tent is a theological statement about how God ‘lives and moves’ among us. And (another surprise!) when God dwells among us, God encamps with those who have been shoved to the curb. God dwells with the “dis-placed” and the oppressed and the afflicted. God relocates far from the seats of power and wealth in order to locate with and empower the poor and the outcasts. God occupies at the margins.

When I pass the tents of those

who are displaced, I am reminded that God has chosen to dwell among them. And I believe it is where God's people are to pitch their own tents. We are to be on the move with God, occupying the places where there is pain and suffering—where there is injustice and oppression. It is among these tents that we will meet God face to face. It is among these tents that we will hear God's voice, reminding us to seek the justice that leads to peaceful habitations. It is among these tents that we will learn to seek the “kingdom of heaven” where everyone is welcomed and everyone's place is restored.



Tent city under the viaduct beneath Chicago's Lakeshore Drive, an area where some of the most sought after properties for the wealthy are located. PHOTO/CURTIS LOCKE

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Homeless assert their right to life

Tent cities are popping up everywhere. Uncaring city governments tear them down as they go up. Homelessness illustrates the decay of an economic system organized around profits for a corporate class. As our labor is discarded from workplaces, we are tossed into the streets to fend for ourselves. The corporate government will not provide for us. There's no profit in it. We need a powerful movement to force the government to release the tens of thousands of homes it has in its possession to those in need. This struggle will set the stage for the fight for a totally new system and government—of, by, and for the people—where our necessities of life are distributed to all, whether we have money or not.

The *People's Tribune* opens its pages to this fight. Send us stories. Order bundles of papers. Call 800-691-6888. Visit peopletribune.org or email info@peopletribune.org.

'There's a remedy for homelessness'

By Mike Zint

BERKELEY, CA — Throughout history, there have been those that have plenty, and those that have nothing. When those with nothing have suffered enough, they rise up, and take what they need. We are in a time of great need right now. We need a system that puts the people before profit. We need a system based on community. We need a system that represents all people equally. We need a minimum quality of life guarantee.

But these things are not possible. Take just one issue. Homelessness. This is simple to solve. Giving them housing is the obvi-

ous solution. Unfortunately “giving” something is bad. There is no profit in that. So, that is not an option. Allowing them tents for shelter will alleviate suffering, and provide storage, security, privacy, personal space, and most importantly, stability to improve their situation. Instead of allowing this, cities attack homeless looking to take care of themselves. They steal the people's gear, destroy personal possessions, medicines, identification, and tragically, memories. Pictures, family heirlooms, and such. This is done without regard for the law. And the cities get away with it because the homeless cannot fight back in the legal sys-



The homeless-led group, *First They Came For The Homeless*, protests San Francisco's notorious “sit/lie” law outside of Macy's, a big supporter of the law. PHOTO/PETER MENCHINI

tem. To make matters worse, the media uses drugs and mental disabilities to define homeless people. They are “lazy and want everything for free.” If that were true, the torture homeless endure would surely motivate them, right? But there is nothing but more abuses. Torture leads to drug abuse and insanity. Communities notice what the press says, and miss the homeless grandmother with the backpack blending in. How about the college student doing homework,

while wondering whose couch is available. How many abandoned veterans are there?

We are getting poorer. Everyone feels it. Americans are a broken ankle away from homelessness. Next year, there will be more of us out here. And where are city councils on this? Politicians pretend to care, while fence sitting on critical issues that developers or businesses districts don't like. Not one politician will ever represent the poor.

The proof is everywhere, sleeping on cardboard, in front of abandoned buildings.

So, our numbers grow. It's at 2.5 million now. They are in great need of compassion. They are in great need of respect. And the greatest need of all, the need to survive. And that need will always be filled, or the people will die trying. When a few million more have suffered enough in this country, we will repeat history.

Sweeps in San Francisco aim to force homeless out

Editor's note: This formerly-homeless veteran of the Occupy movement and the streets, a regular contributor to the People's Tribune, wrote these words on the ongoing sweeps of tent encampments in San Francisco, which have stepped up since the removals from downtown San Francisco during the corporate-giveaway parties during the recent Superbowl. They are part of the ongoing wave of extreme gentrification and removal of poor people from San Francisco and all over the Bay Area. These mean-hearted sweeps have sparked outrage and gotten the country and the world's attention

By Julianna Cheng

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — Okay let's just be honest about what is going on in this city... This

city does not care about homeless people—all the men, women, and children who spend their nights on the streets or in shelters. They started with the sweeps on Division—forcing people to leave who had no better place to go—and now SFPD are conducting raids against the homeless in the surrounding areas for violation of camping ordinances. The message here is clear: leave or die—because we will literally make your life intolerable through sleep deprivation, constant harassment, and we will deprive you of the things you need to achieve a bare minimum of comfort and dignity while living unsheltered on the streets.

The city pretends to care by doing little things so they can appear to be helping, and politicians like the mayor and Super-

visor Scott Wiener say that they care, but their words are meaningless because their actions clearly show where they really stand. The fact that there aren't enough shelters for the homeless population in San Francisco, coupled with the criminalization of homelessness and poverty, only perpetuates trauma for homeless individuals, and continues the harassment and torture by both Department of Public Works (DPW) and SFPD.

People say it's irrational for cities to behave this way—because it is inefficient in solving the problem of homelessness. It doesn't help people and it isn't cost effective for the city itself. So, what motivates this criminalization of the most vulnerable population of the city? The politicians and decision makers truly do not care



This razor-wired fence, near a temporary shelter for the homeless on the San Francisco waterfront far from any services, has the look of a prison camp. PHOTO/SARAH MENEFFEE

about the welfare of homeless people, and are working actively to either push them out of the city through constant harassment and torture, or eradicate them by making their attempts at survival so futile they simply die out. This is disgusting-

ly inhumane. We cannot allow people to look away from this reality. If this is not the world you want your children to grow up in, then it is time to say something and do something about it now.

Democracy is a righteous threat to corporate rule



Five of the Homrich 9 defendants. They are charged with civil disobedience for blocking trucks contracted by Detroit's governor appointed Emergency Manager to shut off people's water. Democracy was attacked further in the trial of two defendants. Prosecutors, fearing they were going to lose the case, dismissed the jury and put the trial on hold.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

By Hans Barbe

DETROIT, MI — Named the “Homrich 9” for blocking trucks owned by Homrich demolition company from shutting off thousands of poor people’s water, our actions stood up to Michigan’s undemocratic, corporate power structure known as “Emergency Management.” Under this law, the state’s governor can unilaterally replace elected city/school district officials with a dictator accountable only to him instead of to the people of that city/school district.

The Homrich trucks we blocked were contracted by Detroit’s “emergency manager,” Kevyn Orr. Since our arrest for that act of civil disobedience, city prosecutors manipulated and stalled any opportunity for our actions to be judged favorably by one of the last best vestiges of democracy in America: a jury.

A jury is for the Homrich 9

as elections are for the people of Detroit and the many other Michigan cities/school districts usurped by “Emergency Management”: democracy denied. City prosecutors maneuvered so that only two of the Homrich defendants could be tried at a time and argued pretrial to disallow our using the “necessity defense” (a defense demonstrating that breaking the law is justified when/if preventing imminent harm). Two defendants conceded this issue so their trial would not be further delayed, during which prosecutors repeatedly and unsuccessfully objected to allowing testimony regarding the city’s immoral mass water shutoffs. Fortunately, our trial judge ruled this as relevant information for the jury’s consideration.

Realizing they would lose because of this, city prosecutors sought a mistrial from a higher-court judge the day before jury deliberations, resulting in his staying the trial until he rules on

that motion.

Despite his many rulings favoring the prosecution, this same higher-court judge bluntly remarked in a recent hearing that “the best word to describe the prosecution of this case is ‘stupid,’” noting that especially with the backdrop of the nearby Flint Water Crisis, “the chances of the city winning a case like this [in front of a Detroit jury] are nonexistent,” and that, “this case has gotten completely out of hand. It has taken on a life of its own way beyond its importance.”

The reality of its importance is that our prospective vindication through this trial, making the mass water shutoffs look as bad as they are, has proven to be so worrisome to the city’s corporate power structure that our minor misdemeanor charge became a twenty month saga. The Homrich 9’s experience shows how democracy, whether in the form of a jury or an election, is a righteous threat to corporate rule.

The destruction of Detroit Schools and Emergency Management

By Tobin Sterritt

DETROIT, MI — Dozens of Detroit teachers staged a “sick-out” protest in January 2016, to draw attention to the deplorable condition of the school buildings that were still in operation, and the conditions under which they were expected to teach.

In February of 2016, Stephen Rhodes was appointed the head of Detroit Public Schools by Governor Rick Snyder. As the judge who had presided over the Detroit Bankruptcy hearings that put much of the burden of paying off Detroit’s massive debts on the backs of retired city workers and homeowners facing foreclosure and water shut-offs, his is an all-too familiar name.

Rhodes takes the place of Darnell Earley, former Flint City Manager, who oversaw the fatal switch from the Detroit water system to the untreated Flint River water, which thoroughly contaminated the city’s water supply. The inexplicable decision of the governor to put Earley in charge of the Detroit Public School System was met with fierce public resistance. Earley resigned in February just over a month into his tenure.

The “official” departure in December 2014 of Snyder-appointed Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr in Detroit did not restore local control, a false promise used to placate the critics of emergency management.

The fact is, emergency management, which serves corporate interests, has continued unabated in Detroit, with its key players still in the game. The salary of the head of the Detroit Public Schools is said to be in the neighborhood of \$225,000. Despite attempts to allay the criticisms he knew he’d face, all indications are that Rhodes will continue the state’s work of dismantling public education in Detroit, diverting resources toward solutions that will serve a privileged few instead of every child at every level of socioeconomic existence.

Governor Snyder’s claim that Rhodes is “highly respected in the city” is almost incomprehensible to anyone who has been involved in fighting the imposed dictatorship of emergency management, but it is also revealing. It is easy to forget that when emergency management was put to a state-wide vote in 2012, Proposal 4 was defeated by a narrow margin. Forty-eight percent supported it.

It is made clearer every day that the corporate government has no answers and no solutions for a discarded population who were once valuable to Detroit’s automobile and manufacturing industries, the denial is beginning to crack. New fighters come into this struggle every day as they connect the dots. Emergency management is one symptom of a dying capitalist system that cannot serve the needs of the many and survive.



Detroit teachers and supporters protest back in 2012 against the Emergency Financial Manager takeover of Detroit Public Schools. Recently, it was exposed that Detroit public schools have widespread vermin, mold and barely functioning heat.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

Rev. Edward Pinkney:

The face of opposition to Emergency Management

From the Editors of the People’s Tribune

Rev. Edward Pinkney of Benton Harbor, MI was among the first to speak out against the state’s dictator law which allowed for Whirlpool to take over the town’s prime lakefront property and turn it into an elite golf course. Pinkney is now in prison, persecuted on trumped up charges for his resistance to the fascism in Michigan. In 2012, he wrote in the *People’s Tribune*, “We must push for immediate suspension of all Emergency Managers. They symbolize the destruction of democracy by corporate power.” In another article, he wrote, “I am dedicated to the power of the people to control their own lives! Joseph Harris, the Emergency Manager with dictatorial powers to straighten out Benton Harbor books, predicted a \$400,000 surplus in 2011. But the books are apparently still in the red! A public investigation is in order!” See more about Rev. Pinkney on Page 12 of this edition.

Jail the corporate shill Gov. Rick Snyder!

From the Editors of the People's Tribune

Thousands in Michigan have organized protests and signed petitions calling for the jailing of Gov. Rick Snyder. At the behest of Flint's Emergency Manager (EM) appointed by the governor, Flint switched its water supply to "save money." A city was poisoned. The intent behind the switch

was to pave the way for a complete takeover of Michigan's water by multinationals like Veolia and Nestlé.

Flint shows the seamless connection between Michigan's EM system, the corporations, and a city's poisoning. Under EMs, your elected officials cannot govern. When asked about getting rid of the EM system at congressional hearing on the poisoning,

Gov. Snyder dug in his heels, saying there would be no changes in the law. It's clear that the corporations need this dictatorial form of rule to accomplish their goals. Yet people cannot get out of this crisis without getting rid of the EM system.

Snyder and all who have had a hand in the poisoning need to be jailed, but we need to go further. Let's get rid of the

whole class of billionaires that own the means of producing what we need to survive. Water should be publicly owned and the government must guarantee that everyone is able to get clean, safe water. Putting these demands forward will start a debate that will help take us toward the new society we need. A first step is to jail the corporate shill, Gov. Rick Snyder!

'Here's to Flint' A new documentary about the poisoning of a city

The ACLU of Michigan documentary, "Here's to Flint," produced by journalist Curt Guyette and filmmaker Kate Levy, was shown in March at the Woodside Church in Flint. The film depicts the ongoing struggle of the grassroots leaders (water warriors) in exposing Flint's toxic water—and the toxic system of undemocratic Emergency Management government behind it. Below are excerpts from comments made after the film showing by some of the grassroots leaders. View the film and the series of People's Tribune articles on Flint at peopletribune.org/pt-news/videos.

PHOTOS/BRETT JELINEK



"It is a real honor to be in the room with all of you. I have one thing to say: it's the power of documentation. Document injustices in your community. It was such a pleasure to do the work of this film with Curt and the people in this room—it was their documentation."

— Kate Levy



"This war started in 2011 with Public Act 4, the Emergency Manager law that took our democracy away. They tried to still our voice. I thank God for each and every one that walked up and down these streets all over Michigan with a petition to sign saying we did not want Emergency Managers. We know that the only cities that have Emergency Managers are predominantly those of color. They wanted to use Michigan as an example. We're showing them we will not stand for it."

— Bishop Bernadel Jefferson



"I grew up in Flint. I didn't expect this. I would love Flint to come back again, together as a whole. GM is gone. That left some very, very, strong soldiers and warriors here. There is no Black, white, green, red, yellow. We are Flint, and we are bad, and by bad I mean good. I love you Flint, I love you. There is no color here, this is a big red heart and we all carry it."

— Tony Palladeno



"We wanted to show that this was a community driven action. It is inspiring that so many people came together and fought together. Kids were poisoned. The people who are responsible need to be held accountable. Democracy was taken away from the people. We cannot allow that to happen again."

— Curt Guyette



"I've been sitting down with people, trying to figure out how to move forward on the health care crisis—how to get them to hear us. It is very much about the children; also about the adults and teenagers that have been poisoned. We're making progress but it's not happening fast enough. So it's up to us to light that fire and start holding people accountable for what we need here in our city."

— LeeAnn Walters



"Thank you for coming out today. We in this city are suffering post-traumatic stress syndrome. There is no daylight between this poisonous toxic water and emergency management. And, the political model here isn't going to stay in Michigan. I hope this event, and others, will be a marker, and history will look back at this as an eventful moment that helped turn the tide and reorganize society in the interests of humanity. That's what this is all about—it's a revolutionary effort."

— Claire McClinton

No jobs, only lead poisoning for Flint and Baltimore workers



Freddie Gray as a child. Gray died in police custody in 2015 at the age of 25. He and his two sisters were found to have damaging lead levels in their blood from lead paint chips that fell off the walls when they were children. PHOTO/FAMILY PHOTO FROM COURT FILINGS

By Jim Fite

BALTIMORE, MD — How would you like to look into the face of your five-year-old daughter and know she is mentally retarded for life because you gave her a bath? Although you paid your water bill each month, someone poisoned your tap water with lead. For years you and your family have been drinking and bathing in water the governor and others said was safe.

Lead was removed from gasoline in the 1970s after many studies showing increased deaths, disease and mental retardation in populations living close to roadways. Lead poisoning causes a variety of ailments from stomach pain, muscle weakness, lethargy and memory loss. It also can cause learning disabilities, death, organ failure, attention deficit disorder, antisocial behavior, anger, and confusion. Many of the effects of lead cannot be cured and last throughout life.

Now you know the truth: there is nothing you can do. The decisions in Flint, MI, were made by an Emergency Manager, a new experimental form of government used by Republicans and Demo-

crats in Michigan. The Emergency Managers are above the law. They are appointed by the governor and cannot be recalled or voted against. They can violate union contracts, break deals, steal pensions or switch water systems and answer to no one but Governor Snyder.

Flint, Michigan is not the only US city poisoned with lead in water and paint. Baltimore, Maryland is also a hot spot of lead poisoning and official wrongdoing. These two cities contain over 70,000 lead damaged children because government officials love private property slumlords and Emergency Managers more than children. In Flint, MI, the government officials are Republican, in Baltimore, MD, they are Democrats.

Maryland has required landlords to remove or cover lead paint for 30 years. Yet Baltimore's school struggles are in part due to massive amounts of students damaged by lead. Although government officials only test one child in five, since 1993 they have found 37,500 poisoned children in Baltimore.

Baltimore's housing is still polluted by lead paint. Democratic Party government officials

protect landlords more than children's health. The law is based on self-regulation. Many landlords ignore the requirement to make their rentals safe; the government only investigates after a child has been found to have lead poisoning.

Haricot Tablada, Deputy State Environmental Secretary, is typical of government officials. He blames the parents. The lobbyist for the landlords blamed the children. We must ask what is more important—private property or children? What is our future—the rights of slumlords or the health of our children?

A national poll by Value of Water Coalition found 76% of people "very concerned" about their tap water. Ninety-five percent said, "It is important or very important for officials to invest in water infrastructure to prevent a repeat of the Michigan crisis in their neighborhoods."

These problems are not just ignorant officials. They are problems which come from the desire to put profit and private property ahead of children and adults. We need a political party that represents us—not the corporations and landlords.

Visions of the new world that we can have

"The revolution starts in the heart, spreads to the mind, and is highly contagious. Once you get it, it never goes away. The only cure is social change. Welcome to the revolution."

— Mike Zint, homeless activist

"They are eating gold dust covered chocolates at Oscar pre-parties in a city where thousands sleep in the street."

— Matt Sedillo, poet

"I believe the government has a responsibility to care for the people... the US chooses not to do this. This country has vast wealth..."

— Carl Sagan (1934-1996), the renowned scientist and author, when asked if he was a socialist

"The people need to fight for a government that takes over the corporations, those giant conglomerates that produce the food, energy, water, healthcare, etc. These means of life will not be run for private profit. They will be run in the interests of the public. Goods will be distributed to all who need them. This is socialism. It is a step toward a new society where everyone enjoys healthy, fulfilling lives."

— The People's Tribune

*i call god people,
nature, earth,
justice, peace,
revolution,*

love —

*i call god the homeless man
who give his seat on the train
to a woman with a baby
& goes back out
into the cold city
with his walker
to ask for change*

— Adam Gottlieb

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carrying cardboard under both arms his cane between two fingers

all we have is us but who could want anything else

—Sarah Menefee

Hundreds of Californians rally against oil trains



Members of California Nurses Association attend the rally to stop the oil trains in San Luis Obispo. Public safety threats from the trains include oil spills, fires, and explosions. PHOTO/PEGGY ELWELL

By Peggy Elwell

SAN JOSE, CA — Hundreds of people from around California went to San Luis Obispo on February 4 to urge the county

Planning Commission to reject Phillips 66 Company's request to receive Alberta tar sands crude oil by rail. Phillips 66 proposes bringing five mile-long oil tanker trains a week, each carry-

ing 2.4 million gallons of flammable explosive petroleum, through California, as well as other states and provinces, to a proposed terminal in San Luis Obispo. It would go to a nearby refinery, sent for further processing in Benecia and then exported to the highest bidder, most likely to Asia.

Public safety threats include oil train derailment and oil spills, fires and explosions. There were six such explosions in the U.S. in the first half of 2015. Tens of millions of people live, work, or go to school in the blast zones along the way of the proposed route (one mile on each side of the tracks). In addition, diesel locomotives emit large amounts of exhaust and particulate matter which is very dangerous to public health, especially the young and elderly.

In addition to a huge noon-time rally, hundreds of people also signed up to testify against the oil trains. The planning commission was not able to hear them all in two days of hearings, and

set another day in February to hear the rest. A representative of the California Nurses Association, Sherri Stoddard, testified, "There are 1500 nurses in the area who are advocates for health. We know that not maybe but for sure, the toxic diesel emissions from the trains will pollute the air and cause health problems for children and the elderly, and people with asthma."

The Phillips 66 lawyer who spoke arrogantly threatened that if they didn't get permission to build a terminal, they would move the oil in by trucks from the San Joaquin Valley, over the dangerous Pacheco Pass highway.

Bob Sigala, leader in the anti-fracking movement, member of SEIU Retirees Action Team and the California Alliance of Retired Americans, told the Peoples Tribune, "From my experience dealing with the oil companies, you never know if they are telling the truth. It's like a shell game. On the days when there is no wind, when there are chemicals [from the trains] in the air, the chemi-

cals are just going to sit there. I like it that there are all ages here speaking—I'm here for the future and I'm here to empower seniors, just like I fight for Medicare and Single Payer health care." Maria Rodriguez of the Low-Income Self-Help Center, said "They shouldn't do this—people are everywhere along the route. We need to save lives. How many lives have already been lost for oil—look at the war in Iraq. We don't want to risk all those lives."

As detailed in Naomi Klein's book, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, and the movie by the same name, the inherent capitalist drive for growth and profit are totally antithetical to the health of the planet and its people. More and more people are understanding that only a cooperative society, in which essential industrial processes such as energy production are publicly owned and controlled, can elevate the priorities of the health and well-being of the people.

2010 BP Oil spill: 'Our people are dying and getting sick from the toxins in the water'

Dear *People's Tribune*,

Concerned citizens of Springfield, Massachusetts, are trying to help our people who have been affected by the British Petroleum (BP) oil spill in the Gulf [of Mexico]. We would appreciate your help in trying to get our story out.

The BP explosion took place in 2010, about five years ago. Since then we have been trying to sound the alarm about the contaminated water and food for the last six years to no avail. Many of our people are dying and get-

ting sick from the toxins in the water, our animals are dying and much of our wild life have been destroyed.

The beaches have been contaminated and we must warn our college students, before spring break, to stay clear of this water. Visitors and tourists should avoid swimming in the water at all cost. It's a serious possibility one could be infected with a flesh eating virus. We think singer Donna Summers may have come in contact with some of the contaminated food and water. Many have

come down with this secret sickness, and are now dying from a chemical called Corexit, which was used by BP. This chemical is highly dangerous, and associated with many diseases, such as cancer, breathing, lung problems, and many other illnesses. Little babies are born deformed, with double-breasts, circles under their eyes, and some can't walk or talk.

I cannot stress enough that they need our help now! Thank you.

— Marie Crenshaw,
bessie@crenshaw.com



Protest in New Orleans over the oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico. Protesters took over the auction of oil leases. PHOTO/TED QUANT

The Future is Up to Us

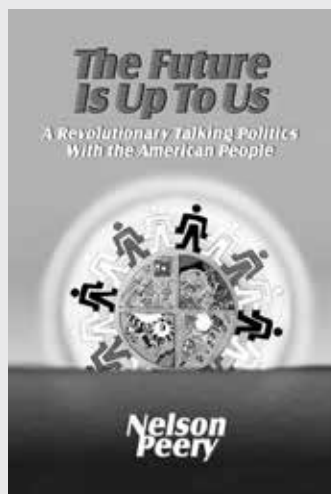
2nd printing now available!

Read Nelson Peery's examination of the past, present, and future of American revolutionary politics.

When *The Future Is Up to Us* first came out, it was read and discussed by many people involved in the fight for a new society. It sparked some lively debates and made people think. We need more debate and more critical thinking in this country today.

Order your books now. Send a donation of \$15 to Speakers for a New America, PO Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654-3524, or via PayPal at peopletribune.org.

Nelson Peery, revolutionary, author, and People's Tribune board member, passed away last autumn. Donations in his memory can be sent to the address above or via paypal.



Letter to the editor,

Dear Editors,

Thanks to Tobin Sterritt for the article in the January, 2016 issue of the *People's Tribune*, "Former teacher on hunger strike after losing job and home." An automobile accident can happen to anyone of us but, because the system is run by outlaws, Baxter Jones's accident resulted in his losing his 22-year teaching position, his benefits, his retirement, and eventually, his house. If Baxter Jones's experience is an example of how people are abused today, his fight is our fight. We have to support the Baxter Joneses of the world. All of us need to hold accountable employers, pension systems, and lending institutions. Let's join the "Beat Back the Bullies" campaign! Support Baxter Jones and anyone under-valued and overlooked by this society.

— Janet Sharp, Washington, DC

Chicago Education: From economic battles to political confrontation

By Lew Rosenbaum

CHICAGO, IL — The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) has called for a “Day of Action” April 1, involving other unions statewide and some 35 community organizations. The CTU called on its allies to “withhold their labor” as well as to conduct boycotts and demonstrations. The CTU House of Delegates overwhelmingly approved this strike action in a special meeting on March 23. This is broader than a trade union engagement. It has elements of a class response.

Caught in a difficult position by a system that will not negotiate, CTU challenged Governor Rauner’s and Mayor Emanuel’s excuse that the state and the city are broke—the CTU says, “broke on purpose.” The union coalition has demanded the mayor bail out the schools with his Tax Increment Financing slush fund, and to renegotiate the high interest bonds that cost hundreds of millions in interest. They are calling on the state to levy a tax on Illinois’ “billionaire class,” which would fund services cut by the budget impasse in Springfield. They are tired of fighting scattered local economic battles. The

federal government needs to fulfill its responsibilities to provide for its people. One thing the CTU knows: If they fail in their efforts to force the state to obtain new revenue, any contract they win will quickly be broken by Chicago Public Schools (CPS).

Illinois is using the excuse of the budget impasse to withhold funds not just from CPS schools, but also from public universities. Chicago State University is on the verge of closing, and North-Eastern Illinois University is also in dire straits. Some high school counselors are telling seniors not to apply to Illinois public universities. CPS is using scare tactics in messages to parents and teachers, labeling the April 1 action an “illegal strike.”

Leaders of the Chicago education movement are learning the toxic lessons of Detroit’s public schools and Flint’s water crisis. Emergency manager dictatorships in Michigan are seen as threats of what might happen here. Rauner has already threatened to take over CPS, declare bankruptcy, and gut pensions, wages and the union itself. We are learning of cover-ups of asbestos and lead in Chicago public schools, reminiscent of Michigan. Chicago, Flint



Chicago Teachers Union rallies for a fair contract.

PHOTO/SARAH JANE RHEE

and Detroit also have this in common: With the decline of industry and automation of whole divisions of labor, large areas of the cities are desolate, crowded with foreclosed or abandoned housing, the streets either forlorn and empty or teeming with the homeless and unemployed. Why educate young people that the corporate

machine no longer needs?

At the same time, Mayor Emanuel’s coverup of police brutality has left him politically weak. The CTU and their allies know they must seize this moment or they will soon be ground up by the fascist offensive. Both Governor Rauner and Mayor Emanuel are maneuvering in the hope of

forcing the CTU to self-destruct. For the movement to be successful requires the boldest fight for national funding for a national problem. The resources exist. Money is not the problem. Nationalization to deploy the resources for the benefit of all, according to need, could achieve a fully funded educational program.

Academics are disposable members of working class

By David Cochran

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS — On March 2, the Board of Trustees at John A. Logan Community College in Carterville, Illinois, voted to lay off 55 employees in an effort to resolve the college’s financial crisis, including 35 full-time faculty, 15 professional staff and five maintenance workers. The faculty layoffs include 27 with tenure and make up 38 percent of full-time faculty. Layoffs among professional staff will leave the college without coordinators for Veterans’ Services, Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Services, or student recruitment.

In a packed auditorium, the Board listened to more than three hours of emotional testimony from students, community members and employees before voting. In the end, board members blamed the state’s long-term budget impasse. But as full-time faculty chief negotiator Matt Garrison commented at the February Board meeting, “The state of Illinois is not entirely to blame for this situation. Years of dubious managerial decisions at the

college have contributed their portion, as well.” For instance, among other expenditures, the college recently paid \$900,000 for a new computer system that has been filled with bugs and a \$290,000 severance package to buy out the former president’s contract. In addition, the college is paying off a \$1.7 million fine for illegally inflating student numbers at its Community Health Education Center.

Logan represents a microcosm of the larger war on education and higher education in particular: the war on unions and tenure, the shift from full-time to adjunct faculty, and the bloating of administration.

The administration and Board made their priorities clear. Though full-time faculty make up only 14 percent of college employees, they account for 65 percent of layoffs. As IEA representative Bret Seferian says, faced with budget crises, he’s “never seen an education institution’s first move be to decimate the faculty.”

On the other hand, Continuing Education remained largely untouched. So did Athletics,

prompting one student to ask the Board, “Are we a sports facility or are we an education facility?” Similarly, there was only one layoff among administration, leaving the college 33rd out of 39 state community colleges in terms of number of administrators per student and per credit hour, which places the school about 50 percent above the state average.

When asked if full-time faculty will be replaced by term faculty, interim President Ron House replied that they would do so on a “temporary basis.” But as the Association of Term Faculty president says, the large-scale shift to adjuncts raises concerns regarding “the potentially large influx of possibly inexperienced educators hired to teach classes recently taught by 35 full-time faculty, these educators perhaps hired on short notice, with little time to prepare for the classes and with no guarantee of retaining their positions.” Administrators have openly complained about the percentage of full-time faculty and seem anxious to shift to a poorer and more easily frightened workforce.



Protest over the budget cuts leading to layoffs of 55 employees at a community college in Southern Illinois. Academics are becoming disposable members of the working class.

PHOTO/STEPHANIE ESTERS, THESOUTHERN.COM

Southern Illinois is an area hard-hit by de-industrialization in the last 30 years, with high unemployment and towns filled with empty factory buildings. As the Logan Board reminds us, academics are equally dispos-

able members of neo-liberalism’s working class.

David Cochran has taught history at John A. Logan College since 2001. He was one of the 55 faculty and staff sent lay-off notices.

'It's almost like we don't matter'

By Peter Brown

OAKLAND, CA — “Why do they treat us this way?” asked one student. Oakland’s Laney College, called “The Flagship” of the Peralta Community College District, is a source of pride in the Oakland community which relies on Laney for accessible education. But so many aspects of this complex institution are dysfunctional or don’t work at all that growing numbers of students, faculty and staff are increasingly outraged.

There is growing ferment on campus to demand that the school work the way it should, to carry on the human right to education. People don’t understand why they have worked and struggled (for decades in some cases) to correct infrastructure problems, yet there is no plan for preventive maintenance on kitchens, classrooms and even restrooms.

Students talk about where to find a working, supplied restroom. Faculty are told that “if we fund more custodians and maintenance engineers, it will

come out of faculty salaries.” The school loses enrollment because it’s hard to get assessment and counseling appointments required to enroll, and just plain difficult to enroll. Then, if you don’t pay fees by two weeks before class starts, the District automatically drops you.

Why would such mismanagement be tolerated at an important educational institution? Why do state leaders such as the ACCJC (Accreditation Commission) not insist on infrastructure maintenance, but instead demand that faculty spend hours logging Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and assessments into data websites, where they perform little or no educational function?

Is one student’s statement, “It’s almost like we don’t matter,” prophetic of what’s to come? Do community college students and teachers matter less than billionaires?

The poisoning of the population of Flint, Michigan is on everyone’s mind these days; the people of Flint just don’t seem to matter. In fact, there seem to

be lots of people in America who no longer matter, either being kicked under the rug, blamed for the country’s problems, or subjected to state violence or outright death for being the wrong person in the wrong place at the wrong time.

A system that is by law dedicated to maximum profit, whose values are centered on what can be bought and what can be sold, cannot value people it can’t employ; and the country is filling up with factories which run with few or no people. Unemployable people don’t matter. Facing sinking profits in manufacturing, the public sector is being reshaped to fit the needs of corporations, whether by declaring austerity in public education or raking in big bucks from for-profit colleges.

Regardless of whether we matter to corporations or to a government they control, we matter to each other. Real value lies in the relationships between human beings, and when we stand together to demand that our schools be safe, healthy, dig-



Students ask where to find a working bathroom at Laney College. This one has 1 broken sink, 1 broken towel dispenser, 1 overflowing trash container. Faculty are told if more janitors or maintenance engineers are hired, it will come out of faculty salaries.

PHOTO/PETER BROWN

nified places of study, we begin to define a new future which will place human needs above profits, and eventually end the prof-

it system altogether, creating an economy based on cooperation and public ownership of public resources.

The elections and a vision of a new America

From the Editors of the *People's Tribune*

As the election season unfolds, economists are projecting that an even deeper downturn in the economy is underway. Already half of all Americans have less than \$1,000 to their name, and nearly a quarter of them less than \$100. Fifteen thousand people become homeless every month in Los Angeles, a city with 22 billionaires and more millionaires than anywhere in the country. Millions are without healthcare. Government austerity policies are transferring whatever wealth remains to the rich. Something has to give.

This election is important, and it is an indispensable battleground for the immediate demands of the people. But the reality is that regardless of who gets elected, the fascism that is developing in the country, based on the merging of the corporations and the government, the slashes in living standards, is not going away without a fight. Fas-

cism and a police state to control the struggle of the people for their survival is the rulers’ only option. The jobs are vanishing and they’re not coming back. The robot is taking them over. No politician can solve this.

The only way to guarantee our needs is to make the giant conglomerates that produce the necessities of life public property. Then we could distribute the food, housing, healthcare and every other necessity to all according to need. This is socialism.

The elections, particularly the Sanders campaign, offer an opportunity to share this vision with the millions who are seeking answers. By doing so, we can begin to unite all who can be united in the struggle for a world of sharing and cooperation. The *People's Tribune* is a tool to help us do this.

Contact the *People's Tribune* to order copies to distribute in your communities and electoral campaigns. Call 800-691-6888 or email info@peopletribune.org or order on the web at peopletribune.org.



The Fight for 15 Movement protested outside of the Democratic Debate in Flint, MI in March.

PHOTO/ADRIAN GARCIA

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The *People's Tribune* welcomes your comments, especially on our covers and editorials. Your feedback helps us stay on course as a paper that points the way forward to a new cooperative society. Email info@peopletribune.org or call 800-691-6888 toll free. — The Editors

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Rev. Pinkney is face of opposition to Michigan's dictator law



By Rev. Edward Pinkney

MARQUETTE, MI — I now know, I now believe I know, how the twenty Blacks from the Dutch ship Jesus at Jamestown, Virginia, August of 1619, felt to be brought and sold, and then become slaves.

I now know, I now believe, I

Rev. Pinkney speaks: Now I know

know how it felt to be a slave, tortured, beaten, mentally and physically destroyed, and the country said it was alright.

I now know, I now believe, I know, how the Jews felt in Nazi Germany in a concentration camp on their way to the gas chamber of the death camp. I now know, I now know. I believe I know. I now know, how it felt when the police dogs tore into the march lines and the high-powered fire-hoses knocked the children along the pavement down, like tumbleweed.

I now know, I believe I know, when I hear of cops shooting up Blacks, I know that's part of their tradition. They have always shot

up Blacks and in fact most of their heroes are somebody who has killed a lot of people.

I now know, I now believe I know, how it felt to be tortured and there is nothing you can do about it. The torture, the agony of the mind and body. The inflicting of extreme pain mentally and physically. The torture is used as a means of persuasion.

I am standing in Marquette Branch Prison, better known as the concentration camp of America, where prisoners from various parts of the State are assembled to be tortured. I have been tortured.

I have been tortured, but I am still standing. I have been tortured

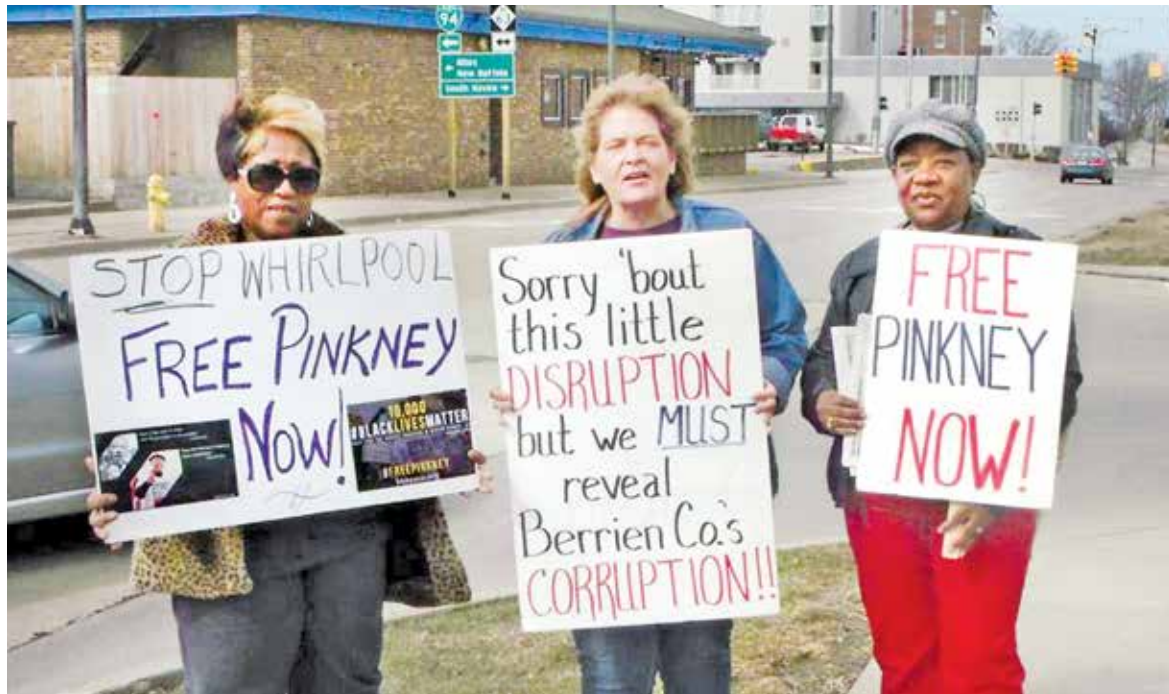
mentally, but I am still standing. I have been tortured physically, but I am still standing. They wrote me 8 misconduct tickets, but I am still standing. Correctional officers threaten, harass, and intimidate me, but I am still standing. A coward can sit down, but it takes a man to stand. I am Rev. Edward Pinkney, standing for the people.

Lord, I do not know all the things that are wrong here at Marquette Prison, the concentration camp of America. The black mold in the two-man cell is devastating. The black mold is taking over the prison, the black mold is everywhere. We now have asbestos in the middle of the floor. This

prison has many health problems with the black mold and asbestos.

I now know, I now believe, I know, how it felt to be tortured. I am being tortured.

Editor's note: In the May edition of the People's Tribune, Rev. Pinkney will discuss the suspicious death by hanging in the Berrien County jail of Martell Hadley, age 24. Some in the community liken this case to Sandra Bland, who died by hanging in a Texas jail. Neither was suicidal. No one has been held responsible in either case.



Dorothy Pinkney speaks out

"If the government and corporations can merge together and send innocent people to prison without any evidence for a crime they didn't commit, then the Government and Corporate officials who have committed crimes against humanity with the evidence of genocide in Benton Harbor, Flint, Highland Park, Detroit and other cities throughout Michigan should be in prison and the innocent set free. We are dealing with a Criminal Enterprise and we want justice to prevail."

— Dorothy Pinkney

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

Free Pinkney! Monthly protest in Benton Harbor

By Pati Heinz

BENTON HARBOR, MI — Every second Tuesday at 11:00am at the Berrien County Court House is where you will find us! I continue to support Mrs. Pinkney in her efforts to #FreeRevPinkney, and to bring attention to the injustices of Berrien County. Now that the weather is warmer, I really hope to see more people come out and practice their Constitutional Rights!! I KNOW there are more than just a few people who have felt the painful injustice of this system!! THAT is why more people should be out here!! I promise you, being silent isn't going to save you. It just makes it seem like you're OK with the things that go on, at OUR expense!!

OCCUPYTHEPGA
RALLY&MARCH

May 28, 2016, 11am

City Hall Steps, 200 E. Wall St., Benton Harbor, MI

Democracy and human rights are non-existent here

Murder of Benton Harbor residents
Gentrification and genocide by Whirlpool Corp.
Theft of public parks for luxury golf courses
Snyder's Emergency Manager dictatorship
Free political prisoner Rev. Edward Pinkney
Justice for Martell Hadley, found dead in Berrien County Jail

Stand with us in our struggle for freedom

Stop the Corruption in Berrien County



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