



Detroit parents and kids join teachers who staged a sick-out over pay threats. The district has been taken over by state government via an emergency management dictatorship which stripped the elected school board of its authority, closing schools, and essentially dismantling the public school system. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

## HOW WE CAN FIGHT THE CORPORATE DICTATORSHIP

[Read story on page 3](#)



# The elections and a vision of a new society

## EDITORIAL

McDonalds has announced they will open 25,000 robot-run restaurants. Amazon is replacing human stock pickers in its massive warehouses with robots. We're living in revolutionary times. As robotics and computerization transform all existing industries, human labor is being permanently eliminated.

We already see the social consequences. People are banding together, trying to survive in makeshift tent cities, in the streets, even in swamps. The homeless, along with the immigrants who are declared "illegal," the jobless youth who police shoot down like dogs, and all others deemed a threat to private interests, are the target of a new fascist corporate dictatorship.

A true class war is shaping up. On one side is the ruling class: the billionaires and their corporations, their twin corporate parties, and corps of highly paid, privileged media pundits, intellectuals, and so-called labor and community leaders.

On the other side is a new class of workers who are becoming destitute, forced out of their jobs by electronic robotic production. This new class is in urgent need of a government that will provide the shelter, healthcare, education, water and other necessities they need—whether they have money to pay for it or not. Yet, as Flint shows, this new class has zero value to the corporate-government. Its labor is no longer needed for profit-making. Even the democratic right to elect its own representatives is stripped away. The ruling class needs a dictatorship to contain their fight for life itself.

Who will speak for the poorest among us? The ruling class cannot and will not. This is because the new class, if united politically, has the potential



**A young man sleeping outside a San Francisco McDonalds that is installing automated order-taker kiosks. The disastrous social effects of automation for the 99 percent—when owned by the 1 percent—is happening before our eyes. Can we envision a new society where automation is used to create a world without want?**

PHOTO/SARAH MENEFFEE

to lead all who can be united to a new society that overturns the rule of the billionaires. This new revolutionary social force must speak for itself.

The rulers see the handwriting on the wall.

As the various sectors of the ruling class battle over the presidency, they are utilizing this election to deepen the historic divisions within this new class. They understand that, regardless of color or nationality, this new class will eventually be forced to unite around a common demand for a society where everyone's needs are met. Call it socialist, or whatever—such a society will be based on government ownership of the giant corporate entities that are today producing—but not distributing to the people—the world of plenty the new technology is creating.

This is why this election is

so important. It is an opportunity to get the vision of this new society out. It is a means to help unite the new revolutionary class around its common interests. The Sanders campaign offers a huge opportunity to do this. The campaign's demand that government serve the people, not the billionaires, opens the door to educating people about the kind of society we could have if the people controlled it.

Revolutionaries must use this election to help build a powerful movement that forces the government to provide for people's needs. Having such a government necessitates that the giant corporations be taken out of the hands of private interests and put under government control. The real question is: which class will rule society?

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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.

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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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# How we can fight the corporate dictatorship

## COVER STORY

According to a famous story, car manufacturer Henry Ford and labor leader Walter Reuther toured a new automated engine production plant during the mid-1950s. Ford reportedly commented that all the machines in the plant didn't pay union dues, to which Walter Reuther replied that they don't buy cars either.

If you find the logic of this story funny, keep in mind that the corporate dictatorship that is sweeping across Michigan today is no laughing matter. Also keep in mind that when capitalists replace workers with machines to ensure higher profits for themselves, it's just a matter of time before producing more and more things with less and less people becomes producing everything with no one. If no one has a job, how are people supposed to buy the things they need to survive?

Obviously, long before that point is reached people are going to rebel. It is under these circumstances that the ruling class is imposing a corporate dictatorship spearheaded by the emergency manager laws of Michigan. Emergency Managers, appointed by the governor, come to your city and replace democratically elected officials like mayor and city council, void union contracts, dismantle public school systems, and sell off public city assets to corporations for pennies on the dollar.

These emergency manager laws, dubbed the "dictator laws" by the people of Michigan, were overwhelmingly voted out in a statewide referendum, only to have the corporate owned legislature reinstate a new version that is referendum proof in "democracy be damned" fashion.



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

The whole world is now finding out that it is these same Emergency Managers, who receive their orders directly from corporate Governor Rick Snyder, who made the decision that poisoned the entire population of Flint with polluted water. In spite of that fact, the emergency manager system continues and the people of Flint continue to get polluted water along with a water bill each and every month, adding insult to injury.

Flint resident Antonio Nelson summed up the situation when he said, "Politicians have made their decisions that got us here. Now, it's our time. The people with

less income will make more of an impact and guide the discussion to make change for the better." Truck driver Jimmie Stephen added, "The Environmental Protection Agency (E.P.A.) had a job to do, and they ignored it. None of the politicians have helped us. I think the community is just going to have to band together to resolve our problems."

In fact, it is the American people, many of them the least among us, and not government on any level, that has mostly come to the aid of the people of Flint with bottled water and caravans and whatever else they can spare.

This nascent unity is spontaneous and will be short-lived if not expanded upon, but it is unity none-the-less. Without this unity, we stand no chance against the fascist corporate dictatorship that is coming to all of America.

Imagine for one moment what could be done if the machines that are replacing your job were owned, not by the capitalists in order to enrich themselves, but were owned by we, the people, in order to enrich us all.

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— People's Tribune Editorial Board



# Hunger strikers speak out against police murders

By Sarah Menefee

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — On April 21, five individuals known as “The Frisco Five” began a hunger strike at the Mission Police Station in San Francisco. They were protesting the string of police killings and the ongoing police brutality in the city, calling for the resignation of Police Chief Greg Suhr. The names were read at a rally and repeated for the number of bullets pumped into their mostly young, Latino and Black bodies—four in the last two years, and many before. The last straw has been the execution-style killing of Mario Woods and the gunning down in a rain of bullets of recently-evicted homeless worker Luis Gongora outside his tent in the Mission District, only seconds after the police arrived on the scene.

Initiated by Maria Cristina Gutierrez, owner of a local day care center, along with her son Ilyich Sato, who is an activist and a rap artist under the name Equipto, the hunger strikers also include Edwin Lindo, Sellassie Blackwell, and Ike Pinkston.

Maria Cristina told me about her decision to start the hunger strike: “I was talking to young people about the importance of radical actions. When they murdered Luis Gongora, I told my son, ‘Mijo, I’m gonna go on a

hunger strike’. We have to fight for our rights. There is nothing else to do, because they don’t listen to us.”

“We can no longer watch our community be targeted, murdered. We can no longer support a department that is wrought with corruption, criminal behavior, racial profiling and murder,” Equipto wrote in a Facebook post.

On May 3 about a thousand people, led by the hunger strikers, marched on City Hall, demanding to meet with Mayor Lee, who wasn’t there. On day 17 the weakened hunger strikers were hospitalized, and their supporters asked them to start eating again, so they could continue to lead this movement for justice.

On that day the police raided the occupation, barricading it off and spraying the area with “green death” disinfectant. That night, supporters marched to City Hall and occupied it for five hours, until brutally attacked and evicted by the police, who arrested 33 people. On May 9, an all-day spirited gathering at City Hall continued to up the pressure.

These police killings have taken place in rapidly-gentrifying neighborhoods, in the most expensive, high-rent city in the U.S., where evictions and displacements are reaching crisis proportions. The police



At San Francisco City Hall, supporters of hunger strikers protesting police killings were shoved and manhandled by police; there were 33 arrests. PHOTO/JOE RIVANO BARROS

have become the armed wing of these removals. These attacks, increasingly on anyone no longer exploitable by the corporate ruling class for its own profit, are symptoms of a system that is dying and needs to be replaced.

This movement, galvanized by the hunger strike and beyond,

is bringing together people of all ages, backgrounds, and colors. Their demands are that the police be held accountable, and that government respond. Their cry is Enough is Enough! Their cause and vision is of a new way of living and being, based on economic and social justice. They are

showing what can happen when people come together around that vision—something unstoppable.

*Update: On May 19, the day police shot and killed unarmed Jessica Williams, 29, in her car in the San Francisco’s Bayview district, the firing of Police Chief Suhr was announced.*

## Homelessness and the new world we could have

From the Editors

This society is dying right before our eyes. Capitalism has advanced to the stage where human labor is becoming obsolete. The micro-chip processor, introduced into production in the 1970s and ‘80s, has caused permanent unemployment in the once labor-intensive industries of the Rust Belt and beyond. Scores of formerly productive human beings continue to be tossed out into an abyss—the cold, heartless streets—where the government terrorizes the encampments of the now homeless workers.

It is testimony to this immoral, dying system, that one million people have experienced homelessness at some point in L.A. since 2009. Local laws are passed in many cities outlawing the survival activities of these throw-away workers. Police give citations for sitting and lying down in public. In Los Angeles, it is now against the law

for the homeless to have more belongings than what can fit in a garbage can! And in “progressive” Seattle, a private company is paid \$240 an hour for a three-man crew to remove homeless encampments.

The homeless are approximately 40% white, 40% Black, 11% Latino, 35% in families, 20% children, 72% urban, 21% suburban, and 7% rural. Their common condition ties them together across formerly divisive lines of color, religion, and region.

These homeless workers are members of a class that no longer is needed by the billionaire owners of our economy. This new class (which includes more than the homeless) increasingly has no place in a society that uses less and less labor every year. While labor-less production with robots creates an abundance of the necessities we need to survive, this society is based on private ownership of the means of producing these necessities, and

the assumption that people have jobs. The ruling class will not feed, house, clothe and care for workers they no longer need at the workplace.

It is possible to end homelessness today. There is plenty of empty housing and everything we need to live a decent, cultured existence. What stands in our way is a system of private property that makes housing, and indeed all the necessities we need to survive, “commodities” to be sold in the market only to those who can pay.

We need a new society that ensures housing as a human right. We need unity as a working class around the demands of the destitute if we are to overcome the growing fascist assault on our rights as human beings to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!”

With unity and cooperation, workers could create a world of peace and plenty. We could govern ourselves, distribute the necessities of life to all, and ensure the survival of our fellow human



Leslie, a homeless woman in Santa Ana, CA., said her husband recently went missing. She said if she had one wish it would just be to see him again. PHOTO/DAVE GUZMAN

beings! The first step toward that new society is to unify our struggle by demanding that the government provide for the needs of the growing class of destitute workers—not for the billionaires.

### *The Magnificent Mile*

Sign says:

Homeless.

Need haircut. Job.

Train pass.

Sign says:

Homeless. Need food.

Medicine. Lost everything.

Sign says:

Now Leasing.

Steps from shopping & nightlife.

Transportation.

— Eric Allen Yankee



# Hundreds of homeless forced from encampment in Eureka

*Editor's note: On May 2, an estimated 50 officers from the Eureka, CA Police Department tore down a homeless encampment of around 200 people who were living in a cold, wet marsh, destroying their community. People driven out were seen lining the streets of Eureka, crying, carrying everything they owned, pushing bicycles and carts. The Eureka police chief vowed to arrest anyone who returned to the campground. In the following article, Kathy Srabian writes on the website "Redheaded Blackbelt," in December, 2015, about the immoral conditions under which people were forced to live.*

By Kathy Srabian

EUREKA, CA — I need to break people's hearts. I need to share with them the cruel horror of the marsh. It is the coldest, windiest, wettest place around here and yet this is where our homeless are pushed into. Well, EPD [Eureka Police Department] does not tell them to go there exactly, but they do say it is the one place they will not enforce the no camping laws.

I have walked through there offering to take people out to the shelter or the rescue mission. No takers. They will not leave behind their dogs. They will not be separated from their partners as the Rescue Mission requires. Some have had very bad experiences with shelters. One woman said she was raped. Even though it did not happen up here, she protects herself by never entering another "shelter." And so they stay in the marsh where trails have become rivers and grassy areas are lakes.

The... water does go down but tents are left damaged by the winds. Repaired tents usually do not stand up to the next storm.

Many are women. Many are older. Many are tired, broken in spirit by strings of bad luck and poor choices. Yes, there are drugs. Yes, there is mental illness presenting the chicken and the egg effect. Which came first? When the storm hits does it matter? Human beings cold and wet, cold and wetter, then colder, then getting sick, then sick and cold and wet because they are in the worst place, The Marsh.

Dry socks are brought down,

blankets, tarps, warm jackets but as long as they stay there these offerings are just the smallest short term patch jobs.

In order to leave the homeless campground, residents often require rubber boots or even waders, according to homeless advocates.

Why don't they leave? Why don't they go somewhere else? Because there is nowhere else they can go to. Would you leave your dog behind? Would you risk the sum of the possessions you had to leave to a place you did not know? Would you in the cruelest of conditions leave your partner?

Eureka City Hall has been reluctant to declare a Shelter Emergency but it will be up for discussion at the next meeting. Discussion. Discussion does not keep one dry in a storm but it is a step in the right direction. Many neighbors and citizens are asking the City to help these people, to provide them a safe, a better place to be. We have parking lots more sheltered and better drained than the marsh.

It's a heartbreaking situation.



A makeshift tent in a cold, wet, marsh in Eureka, CA where up to 200 homeless people lived before their encampment was destroyed by police in May. PHOTO/KATHY SRABIAN

## 'We have the right to rest,' says homeless woman

By Gena Mercer

MERCED, CA — I got a chance to do something last month that made me want to tell everyone about it. There was a bill brought forth to a Senate committee, SB 876, the Right to Rest bill. That was the first time I had ever been to our State Capitol, which is in Sacramento, California.

I was amazed that the building was so beautiful. I got to go to the Senate Hearing Room and watch government live. The Right to Rest bill was turned down. What I learned was that without more voices and more support from everywhere, next year the same could happen for all of the homeless. Your voice does matter. I'm homeless. I come across a lot of homeless every day and I tell everyone this: If you don't stand up for yourself, the police will always harass you if they know that you don't know your rights. This can lead to an easy ticket. Stop letting them.

The Right to Rest bill would stop the harassment and the tickets. Then the homeless would stop getting run off public places. We have the right to rest. I know from experience. I go into a store to buy something to eat or drink, then I go outside and find



From Left: Alise, Mark and Gena at a hearing in Sacramento, CA on the homeless right-to-rest law. PHOTO/GLORIA SANDOVAL

a spot to sit to consume what I purchased, only to have a store worker call the cops. Most store workers just call the cops; not many will come out and tell me to leave. They are afraid of me.

In California, 83 cities opposed the Right to Rest bill. We must take a little time to get some information. Write your congressman, the governor, your senators and make your voice be heard. And for you non-houseless persons, do the same.

Get information. Write letters. Let our government know that we're not going to take it anymore. I for one have had enough. Most of us are not houseless because we want to be, and we are not all bad.

And we need support to help provide public restrooms. These things would not just be for the houseless. It would help everybody in the community. So stand up. Thank you.

***The People's Tribune  
brings solutions and vision.  
Help get it out in the  
homeless communities!***

The *People's Tribune* devotes much of its coverage to homelessness, its cause, the solution, and a vision of the new society where every single person can thrive. As automation takes over the jobs, more and more people are permanently cast aside. Driven into homelessness, people band together, building whatever community they can, in tent cities, forests, and even swamps, only to be arrested and driven out again.

Somehow, we have to come together and build a powerful united movement that demands that the government provide for our people rather than for the billionaires and their corporations. The true purpose of government is to provide for the needs of the people. This battle for the government to be the people's government is key to the fight for a new cooperative society—where food, housing, education, healthcare and other necessities are provided to all simply because we are human beings.

— The Editors

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The *People's Tribune* welcomes your comments on our articles, 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](mailto:info@peopletribune.org) or call 800-691-6888 toll free.

— The Editors



## Emergency manager law dismantles democracy

The dismantling of democracy is wreaking havoc in Michigan. A corporate dictator law passed in 2011 authorizes the governor to dispatch Emergency Managers (EMs) around the state, wielding unprecedented power by replacing the local elected officials. Governing by edict, EMs can shred labor agreements and sell off public assets like water to corporations. This draconian system

ushered in the poisoning of Flint, the massive water shutoffs in Detroit, the ongoing dismantling of public school systems, and the persecution of activists like Rev. Edward Pinkney who fought this dictator law.

Michigan was once the center of manufacturing. The law seeks to contain the struggle for survival of workers now driven into poverty by globalization and technological advances.

In the brave new world of the emergency manager system—which is now spreading to other states—workers have no rights the corporation is bound to respect. However, as the articles on these pages show, a new dynamic revolutionary social movement is unfolding! Within the unity built lies the hope for a new society where humanity can thrive.

— The Editors



## Mothers, women of Flint 'die in' at city's water plant

Courtesy of Desiree Duell

FLINT, MI — On May 16, arriving in a packed van, a group of women protesters stage a die in upon the steps of the Flint Water plant. The Flint water crisis has generated an uptick in miscarriages and other women health issues. Many participants dressed in white painter's suits with red paint to present a visual representation of the damage caused

(Left) Protesters stage a die in upon the steps of the Flint Water plant in protest of women's health issues due to the poisoned water.

PHOTO/DESIREE DUELL

to women's reproductive systems. "I shared my story of losing twins during the water crisis because it is essential that people know that this is not a short-term, painless ordeal that we are going through in Flint," said Nakiya Wakes, a Flint mom. The protesters left under the threat of trespassing charges, but they remained until the 20-minute performance activity was finished. The women want the problem solved now.

## 'They're not helping me,' says man with high lead levels

*Editor's Note: The following is a portion of Aaron Stinson's testimony at the "Two Years Too Long" commemoration rally of the Flint River water poisoning in Flint, MI. Arron is 39-years-old and had the largest recorded level of lead in Genesee County, MI.*

My name is Aaron Stinson for all you that don't know me or may have not seen me. I have the high-

est lead level recorded in Genesee County. I was tested February 7 and I came in with a lead level of 27. I was retested in March; my blood lead level is 19.1.

I've done interviews with all of the local television stations, CNN; they even asked me to come down to the democratic debate and ask three questions on behalf of the people of Flint, as far as how we feel about the water

situation. I emailed my questions that were asked on the air.

What concerns me about the whole situation... we're being told that we can bathe in the water, we're being told that we can still drink the water, it's safe to consume, we're still having people getting sick, we're still having people not getting tested, we still don't have the full support... people, we need to spread the word.

I'm not going to sit up here and scream at you and talk your ears off. Please share what you know. I'm standing up here looking like a healthy, young, Black male. I'm sick people. Lead is in my body. I don't know how it's going to affect me. My health-care providers are not helping me medically. They're not helping me in any way.

## Los Angeles to Flint: Dirty pipes, poison profits

*Editor's note: On April 24, Black Lives Matter: Long Beach, in coalition with a number of Los Angeles organizations, organized a demonstration in front of Veolia North America, a corporate privatizer of water, to bring attention to the water crisis in Flint and connect it with the privatization of water in the Los Angeles Area. Comments below are by one of the rally organizers, Audrena Redmond.*

By Audrena Redmond

SIGNAL HILL, CA — The City of Flint, Michigan paid Veolia, the largest private operator of municipal water and sewer systems in the U.S., \$40,000 to conduct an analysis of its water system. In its report, Veolia said the water was safe. We don't know why these

children have rashes. We don't know why one of a set of twins is losing weight and deathly ill. We don't know why that is happening. We don't know why the people in Flint have developed brittle bones. We don't know why the people in Flint say they have breathing infections. We don't know why that is.

Veolia said, maybe it's the aesthetics of the water. We can do something about that. We can treat the water so it is the right color. We can treat the water so it doesn't smell so bad. Notice, no one said anything about the lead in the water coming through the pipes. Irreversible damage is what lead does to all, but especially children, infants, toddlers, and babies in utero who will face a life of physical, emotional and mental health problems.

I'll bet you that these same people who thought it was right to switch the water over and not treat it will be the same people who will argue against providing the services these children and adults will need to move forward. And that, my friends, is systemic violence. It all runs in a circle, over and over again.

And here this company sits, right here in Signal Hill. As a matter of fact, this is one of three offices in the Long Beach area. You'd never know they were here. Look at this (Audrena is pointing to a fence without any name on it), you'd never know this is a transnational company responsible for water treatment throughout the U.S. In fact, they're being sued by multiple cities now for doing two things: poisoning people and jacking up

their water rates.

You take the city of Pittsburg. They've seen their water rates increase by 600% in five years because Veolia has taken over the management of the water services and has told the city the way you raise money is to jack up water rates. The same thing happened in Detroit. People were losing their homes because they couldn't pay for their water. And you know how they got us? Cause we can't live without water. Veolia lied and people died.

Veolia is doing dirt right here where we are. In Watts, for example, there is supposedly an Exide Company cleanup. I say "supposedly." So we're here today to say to Veolia, "We've got our eyes on you. We see you. We know you're here. We will be back."



## Detroit teachers and parents join 'sickout'

By Hans Barbe

DETROIT, MI — When the Emergency Manager for Detroit Public Schools (DPS), Steven Rhodes, announced there were insufficient funds to continue paying teachers what they are owed after June 30, the Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT) refused to report for work. Hundreds of parents and students then joined them in a protest outside the Fisher Building, where DPS main offices are.

This action shut down all but a handful of schools in the district for two days. Organized as a "sickout," where teachers call in sick en masse, the situation as a whole was referred to by DFT members as a "lockout," since expecting them to work for free is as good as keeping them from working at all.

Other than being paid, the DFT demanded a forensic audit of DPS and for the state to absorb its debt. According to DFT member Emma Howland-Bolton, that's because in 1999, the district was taken over by state government via an "emergency management" dictatorship, which replaces an elected school board. Since then, DPS has been saddled with hundreds of millions of dollars of

debt, missing/mismanaged funds, expanded and suspicious administrative, vendor and consulting costs and no mechanism for accountability. An end to "emergency management" is among the DFT's demands.

"There's no accountability under this system," says Howland-Bolton. "Someone is making millions and millions of dollars off all this. It's not me. It's not my students. DPS only spends about \$7,000 per pupil and half of that doesn't even go to education. It goes to debt service... I've been teaching for six years and I'm making less money now than when I started... \$48 million was recently given to DPS as a bailout. Nobody knows where it went. Then there's another \$30 million missing from the pension fund... This is only possible with no oversight."

Indeed, before the state took over, DPS was the largest landholder in Detroit, financially stable and even had a budget surplus. But since then, Emergency Managers have closed more than half of all the schools in the district, accumulated hundreds of millions of dollars in debt and are now balking at paying their teachers for work they've already done.

Meanwhile Michigan's state



Detroit Teachers refused to report for work in a sick-out over the Detroit Emergency Manager's announcement that there were insufficient funds to continue paying teachers what they are owed after June 30. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

legislature, which hasn't pursued the demand for a forensic audit, is capitalizing on DPS' instability to craft bills splitting the district into two: one district gets a clean, debt-free slate, while the other is responsible for the past debt of hundreds of millions of dollars, keeping it vulnerable to continued dismantling and privatization.

For Howland-Bolton, it's about the students. "Seeing them legislate away education is so horrible when you're hanging out with these kids," she says. Despite the struggle facing them,

it's that concern for their students' well-being that pushes the DFT to continue fighting. "I'm blown away by our membership," she says. It was the grassroots membership, not the official leadership, that organized community meetings, carried out the sickouts and introduced the people's demands into the conversation. With their will for a strong school district measured against those capitalizing on the situation, the teachers, parents and students of DPS are struggling to win.

## 'There are no pets in flint!' resident says

By Maureen D. Taylor, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization

DETROIT, MI — Walking door to door in Flint, MI, to ask residents about their need for water, or water filters, or access to health care exposed the absolute horror of this nightmare. What we see on television does not compare to what the residents really have to face and try to live through.

At one home, I met a granddad who introduced me to his

two-year-old grandbaby who recently had open heart surgery. Seems that since the child was born, the family had been preparing her infant formula and all other meals and all baths using the poisoned water coming through the pipes. I met a woman who showed me the scar left after a tumor was removed from her stomach—another little gift, she called it, found in her after drinking poisoned water for the last almost two years. I met retirees who showed me handfuls of

hair that come out after merely stroking the head. I met others who showed me the teeth that fell out while brushing them. At home after home, I met wonderful men, women and children who are living through the most dastardly crime committed against our fellow countrymen in modern history.

The two year anniversary of the Flint water crisis was just days ago, marking the day when public water was switched from clean Detroit water, to the polluted and lead-filled Flint River. The people in Flint didn't matter, so the risk of allowing poison to flow through the pipes into their homes was not important enough to take the necessary precautions. The people in Flint don't matter today, because the same poisoned water still flows through the pipes and into their homes. The water filters last at best for 30 days, so many of the families I spoke to needed new ones and needed both water and new filters delivered regularly since they had no

transportation. All of this because of the imposed Emergency Managers who thought it too costly to pay for clean and safe water.

That two year old, that stomach-scared woman, those retirees, and the man with his individual teeth in a cup will live and die with the after effects of this great American tragedy and even beyond since lead poisoning imbeds itself in the DNA of the affected person.

The last home I visited had a pet feeding dish on the porch. I declined the invitation to come inside, suggesting that I was afraid of dogs and cats, to which he responded, "THERE ARE NO PETS IN FLINT... we gave them water to drink and that was that."

What kind of country would countenance this? What kind of system would tolerate this? What kind of people would allow this? America... you had better get with the program and start to see that a new world is necessary. You Get What You Organize To Take.



# Healthcare and Democracy: A political public health emergency

By Rita Valenti

ATLANTA, GA — “As registered nurses, we are compelled to advocate for all our patients, whether at the bedside or in our neighborhoods and communities. To that end, we, the National Nurses United, on behalf of the nurses of America, declare a public health emergency in Detroit... And we demand the guarantee that all Detroit residents have immediate and full access to clean water.” National Nurses United declares the city of Detroit a Public Health Emergency Zone, July 2014

Over 91,000 Detroit homes had been disconnected from life essential water. Today, a new round of cut-offs is underway targeting another 20,000 homes.

Meanwhile, Flint residents (except pregnant women and young children) are still being asked to drink filtered water that’s running through lead contaminated and corroding pipes. Just two months before the nurses righteously declared a public health emergency in Detroit, Flint’s dictatorial Emergency Manager switched the city’s water supply to the highly polluted Flint River.

Both Detroit and Flint were subject to Emergency Managers who, under Michigan Public Act 436 have complete power to void union contracts, seize public assets from parks to pension funds and eliminate the authority of any elected body. The kind of austerity imposed on the cities of Flint and Detroit requires the destruction of even limited democracy.

To willfully shut off water to Detroiters and to arrogantly dismiss the complaints, illnesses and even deaths of Flint residents demands a sustained and unlimited public health response. No half measures, no untrustworthy promises, and no failure to hold accountable the corporate state structures and Governor Snyder responsible for these unconscionable acts will be accepted.

Though they were disenfranchised, the people of Detroit and Flint are not deterred. They have brought these criminal acts to light nationally and internationally, through their independent and collective actions. An inadequate Medicaid expansion has been promised but what of the lasting effects of this kind of

trauma? Thousands of children have been put at risk from lead laced water, a potent neurotoxin. Families are suffering unimaginable stress that’s taking a physical, mental and spiritual toll. As the public health crisis in Flint unfolded, it has exposed the political crisis at its heart. The working class of these cities was essential to stretching America’s industrial democracy rooted in militant history like the Flint sits down strikes. Their fight to stop the water shut-offs, replace all the pipes in Flint and immediately, expand Medicare for All is a fight for working class democracy for all! The crisis is nationwide and so must be the response.

New Orleans taught us that assaults on democracy and healthcare multiply after the cameras and posturing subsides. Michigan is a harbinger of the future. We cannot “go back” to an industrial democracy in this era of labor replacing digital technologies. The democratic vision today is one that guarantees free universal access to clean water and all life’s necessities, especially healthcare through public ownership and administration of life sustaining resources.



Flint mom, Lee Ann Walters, was lauded by Pen America in New York for her courageous stand in exposing the Flint water crisis. PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK

## Public healthcare is ‘waste’ in the eyes of the super rich



This protest condemns the water shutoffs in Detroit. Not having running water in your home is a health hazard.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

By Al Gladysck

DETROIT, MI — Underneath the growing division of society into the super rich and the super poor is an ideology that goes by a lot of names—“lean” or “agile” to name two. That ideology is meant to express the drive for profits in reaction to the development of electronic production (robotics) that is making human labor superfluous in the production of our human needs. Our lives are becoming “waste”—unnecessary to the functioning of production and in society.

Public Healthcare is “waste” in the eyes of the super rich. Public Healthcare is being dismantled and privatized.

Iowa is a prime example. Medicaid is being completely privatized. The state has

hired private for profit insurance companies to completely manage the publicly financed healthcare of the growing “super poor.”

The publicly owned Veterans Administration healthcare system is being dismantled and turned over to private healthcare. Thirty-five percent of Medicare is now controlled by private insurance companies. Seventy percent of Medicaid is controlled by private insurance companies. In rural areas and inner cities across the country public hospitals and clinics are closing down. Our tax money is being turned over to the private for profit insurance companies, hospitals and clinics.

They are trying to make healthcare more profitable. This means eliminating healthcare for workers they don’t need. How are we to survive? We cannot look backward. There is no return to the “good old days” of going to the job every day. The jobs aren’t coming back. The robots are taking them. We have to find a way to distribute the abundance that robots, science and new technol-

ogy makes possible without people having jobs.

As robots replace human labor, the struggle over wages is step by step giving way to the struggle over how to meet human needs without a “job”. We must look forward to the future and solve this antagonism.

While the call of the “super rich” is the private ownership of public healthcare, our call must be the public ownership of private healthcare.

This will not happen overnight. We must organize ourselves to eliminate the conditions of poverty since the rulers are organizing to eliminate the people falling into poverty. We, the people, have a right to the necessities of life, including healthcare. This is a political struggle over which class will control society, and will the robots be under the people’s control and used to make life better, or under capitalist control and make life worse. We have to fight forward to a new society. Public Healthcare for All must become our call. The alternative is unthinkable.

### The Contradiction

They have endless money for war  
And military expedition,  
But no clean water for the poor  
Poisoned people of Flint Michigan?

— Matthew J. Lawler

# The revolutionary Prince

By Danny Alexander

KANSAS CITY, KS — Just four days after Prince's death, journalist Kevin Gosztola wrote an article called "The Protest Songs of Prince." He began by summing up the grief in the social media. "A portrait has emerged of a humanitarian artist...who sought to find ways to uplift people who were struggling." It then detailed various actions Prince took to champion women artists, support Black Lives Matter, fund green initiatives and get technology in the hands of the poor. The article ended with a head-spinning list of Prince's political song lyrics—everything from 2009's "Colonized Mind," which equates the two-party system with fascism to 2016's "Baltimore," which memorialized Michael Brown and Freddie Gray, repeating the marchers' refrain, "If there ain't no justice, then there ain't no peace."

Such articles are impor-

tant because they help to rescue Prince from corporate media that almost exclusively focused on him as an oddball. In 1993, when the artist changed his name into an unpronounceable symbol to escape a restrictive contract, few talked about music industry exploitation and artistic freedom. "The Artist Formerly Known As" was treated like a joke.

But to Prince's fans—as widespread and diverse an audience as any in the last four decades—his moves weren't jokes. In 1981, when Prince first played *Saturday Night Live* with his band the Revolution, he kicked off the performance by shouting, "Down with war!" The band launched into its anthem "Party Up!," a lean, hard rocking blend of the new energy at the moment, as punk as it was funk. At the end of the song, he and the band repeated the chant, "You're gonna have to fight your own damn war 'cause we don't want to fight no more," his mic drop

and exit from the stage a bold exclamation mark.

His career bolstered the careers of many others, from Mavis Staples to Janelle Monae. According to the AFL-CIO, he paid union dues for forty years to both Minneapolis's American Federation of Musicians local and the local Screen Actors' Guild. He taught young musicians how to fight.

In a recent radio interview, Toronto rapper k-os recalled how Prince pushed him to understand his business dealings. Ultimately, the star wanted the up and coming musician to think of the bigger picture. "You can't depend on a record label in these days and times. It's gonna change, man. He's like 'It's right around the corner. Everything's going to change.'"

Despite the tragedy surrounding Prince's death, he should be remembered as an artist who reached out to others and fought the system. He dreamed



of an "Uptown" world where all races would be free and united; he called for a new breed of leaders to "Stand up, organize!" He rejected old ideas that lead to war and embraced a new world of love and music. When he presented the Grammy for best album last year, he famously stated "Like books and Black lives, albums still matter." In the mid-

dle of a party, he never stopped pushing us to think.

*Danny Alexander is a Kansas City area teacher and journalist who writes about music and politics. In March, his new book, "Real Love, No Drama: The Music of Mary J. Blige," was published.*

## Juneteenth 2016 and the possibility of class unity

By Chris Mahin

Born out of the Civil War struggles against slavery, "Juneteenth" (June 19<sup>th</sup>), has always been a time to celebrate what's been won and to soberly assess what's ahead for all workers.

The United States is vastly different today than it was at the end of the Civil War. After the defeat of the confederacy, the ruling class needed a way to keep most Blacks on the plantations working for virtually nothing. From this came the vicious system of Jim Crow, which subjected all African Americans, regardless of education or wealth, to the same oppression, segregation and discrimination. This created a distinct people with common interests.

Today, we live in a country where President Barack Obama, speaking recently at the commencement of Howard University's Class of 2016, could say of African Americans: "We're no longer entertainers, we're producers, studio executives. No longer small-business owners, we're CEOs. We're mayors, representatives, presidents of the

United States."

While President Obama's comments accurately portrayed the integration of the African American elite into the top of society, the reality is starkly different for the vast majority of African Americans, who are workers.

In the past, the brutal, legal discrimination against all African Americans reinforced the isolation of the Black masses and created a common bond between the Black impoverished and the African American elite. At the same time, racial ideology, backed up by social privileges granted to white workers over Black workers, kept Black and white workers apart. Unequally oppressed and exploited, they could not unite. Those circumstances made the unity of the working class across color lines impossible.

Today, a new impoverished class of workers, of all colors, has been created by labor-replacing electronics. African Americans are at the heart of it. This new class consists of employed and unemployed sectors. Today, more than one third of the work force consists of part-time workers, contingent workers, and those

working either at the minimum wage or for less than it. Today, a unity of the new class created by electronics is possible. The class is fighting for a new society that will meet its needs.

This Juneteenth, the urgent task of revolutionaries is to spread a message far and wide, to propagandize the new class about the importance of uniting around a common, class program: to create the new society electronics makes possible—a cooperative society without poverty and racism!



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

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# Live Community Culture

By Angelina Llongueras  
and Adam Gottlieb

CHICAGO, IL — A spectre haunts the Americas, a spectre composed of millions of artists who have united to rescue communities from the attacks of the corporative dictatorship that destroys us with its death doctrine. Neo-liberalism (call it neo-fascism) has been imposed by the mafias who unlawfully hold power by means of the brute force of their armies and police corps, by means of their corruption and secrecy, and backed up by the U.S. military and trade agreements like NAFTA.

The activists resist this doctrine of engineered wars to sell weapons publicized by genocides; of design wars to colonize lands and turn them into golf courses for the rich; of bombings to steal oil and natural resources, drown children, and destroy the sea, the rivers, the subterranean water, the water we drink, we bathe in, we are healed with. We must resist the terrorism-implanting wars that frighten people into docility, when corporations and banks want to uproot their rights to

home and livelihood, to healthy food, to drinking water, to free education, to labor with justice, i.e., with rules, to live in peace, to retire with dignity. The Live Community Culture movement (LCC) is a response to this in Latin America, and it is now beginning in the U.S.

Already organizations and individual cultural workers throughout Chicago are engaged in the effort. LCC is about recovering collective memory, remembering who we are and how we have survived in spite of efforts of a corporate dictatorship to suppress us. Even in the Midwest thousands of years ago, before banks or states existed, central places arose where peoples could converge, share and exchange cultures. In this fashion our peoples circulated, met, rested, and created music, dance, poetry, theatre, art, joy and collective wisdom.

Today that spirit lives on in countless disparate groups and grassroots organizations. What unites each of these groups is the descent into the hell of poverty that corporatism enforces. As an antidote to this, Live Community Culture proposes an encounter of

the communities with themselves. Bringing the communities together transcends isolation and builds on our commonality, because we are not isolated beings but community beings.

Live Community Culture began in Latin America and has held two Intercontinental Congresses. It has begun in Chicago and is connecting some of the local groups of artists and activists. Artistic expression that comes from the people reflects the joys and struggles of the people in their battle for survival. LCC brings cultural workers together in a way to bring the people together.

The art of the revolution is growing. It is bringing a certain consciousness to the people, a social consciousness, an understanding of what our society is and the relationship between people and classes. This is the responsibility of any serious human being, especially those of us who are the cultural workers today.

*The first Day of Action for LCC in Chicago is June 11th in Rogers Park. For inquiries and to get involved, check out [livecommunityculture.org](http://livecommunityculture.org)!*



PAINTING BY JIM SPITZER FOR 100 THOUSAND POETS FOR CHANGE

“We poets, wee little Poets, wander the landscape of the soul, seeking answers where there are only questions, pursuing truth in the land of so many lies, pushing forward a better world of imagination and hope. Before us is an empty page. What words we use is our choice. We speak of what is and what can be. Like a drop of water, One poet, with 100 thousand others, can change the landscape of mountains.”

— Kurt Sahlmann, on Facebook

## What will new financial austerity law impose on Puerto Rico?

*Editor's note: The draconian new law this article discusses is being debated in the legislature.*

By Pedro A. Rivera

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO — Financial crisis and an un-payable debt have become the ideological media propaganda regarding the social and economic problems that cage Puerto Ricans within our colonial archipelago.

According to recent news reports, the notorious International Monetary Fund, a financial henchman of indebted countries throughout the world, Puerto Rico should look at itself in the mirror and see a future of “diminishing jobs and increasing migration.”

Facing a panorama of decreasing economic growth for the next five years, following a steady economic recession since 2006, local economist Vicente Feliciano, a hired gun at the service of financial capital, has shamelessly declared that, “It is best to face a horrific end than to choose an endless horror.”

What could economist Feliciano and the rest of the hired guns like him possibly mean when parroting such an apocalyptic commentary? Feliciano and

other servants like him are referring to the economic prescriptions announced by the Puerto Rico Oversight Emergency Moratorium and Finance Rehabilitation Act, ironically known as P.R.O.M.E.S.A., which means, “promise” in Spanish.

P.R.O.M.E.S.A. “promises” a scenario that is even more horrific than the one already caused by venture finance vultures in cities like Detroit and Flint. Puerto Ricans are desperately migrating to the U.S. mainland in search of better opportunities, trying to escape the economic hurricane unleashed by the mortgage bubble burst which left millions of families homeless eight years ago. Eight years, the same age of a child whose school will be closed by P.R.O.M.E.S.A. as soon as it begins to deliver its financial prescription for Puerto Rico.

P.R.O.M.E.S.A. intends to abolish the federal minimum wage for workers under 25 years old; government workers’ right to strike and collective bargaining, along with massive lay-offs. Cuts in health, education and public transportation services are also in store. Furthermore, P.R.O.M.E.S.A. has also pledged to eliminate “costly” environmental protection laws.



May Day March in Puerto Rico against the country's emergency managers' policies. The banner in the photo says, “Indebtedness is our future.” PHOTO/PEDRO ANGEL RIVERA

Finally, this infamous emergency financial control board will require complete control over the budget decision making process, leaving the colonial government of the island with only the ceremonial power to implement austerity plans outlined by the U.S. plutocratic dictatorship and its Puerto Rican junior partners, which means even less political autonomy than the one obtained by the Puerto Rican government in 1952. Hence, P.R.O.M.E.S.A.

vows to formalize the plutocratic financial dictatorship over all vital aspects of Puerto Rican life since the U.S. Federal government sent its army to invade us in 1898.

Facing such a naked political disenfranchisement leaves the Puerto Rican people on the island with very little, if any, power within the current governmental system. A growing number of Puerto Ricans are beginning to ask, why should we vote for

a government incapable of making the most basic policy decisions? How are we going to fight corporate Fiscal Control Boards like P.R.O.M.E.S.A. who demolish national, state and ethnic borders, destroying whatever formal democratic powers we still had in places like Detroit, Flint and Puerto Rico? What are we going to do to fight and organize against this growing neo-fascist plot that makes our lives increasingly unbearable?



# We were conned: Big business funded California's shift to "top-two" primaries

By Dave Ransom

SACRAMENTO, CA — If the Republicans field enough candidates in the June primary to severely split their vote, Green Party gubernatorial candidate Luis Rodriguez could place second and face a run-off with Governor Jerry Brown.

That would be an important step in the battle for a political party of, by, and for the 99 percent—as the one percent changes the rules.

When Californians adopted the state's "top-two" primary system in the 2010 election, they were confident it would strengthen democracy. That's what they'd been told.

What they hadn't been told was that the measure had been bankrolled by some of the state's biggest corporations, among them Chevron, Walmart, Oracle, Intel, and PG&E.

They probably had not realized that they were voting to ban write-in candidates in the general

election.

And only veteran Sacramento watchers were aware that the corporations were covertly funneling their contributions through a political finance committee put together by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, his "California Dream Team."

In fact, the people of California were being conned into undermining their own democracy and remaking their electoral system to best serve the interests of the richest one percent, the capitalist ruling class.

Under the new system, every candidate of whatever party runs in an "open" primary in June. The top-two vote getters go on the November ballot.

Publicly, supporters of the "top-two" system told voters it would give independent voters a voice in the primaries and give non-traditional parties a better chance to win.

Privately, they sang a different tune: the system would assure that only "moderate" candidates



California voters.

PHOTO/JOSEPH SOHM

would appear on the November ballot.

"Moderate" means pro-business, pro-corporate, pro-capitalist—the candidates of, by, and for the one percent.

In fact, the top-two primary that the one percent has crafted is eerily similar to the "cross-over" primaries in the South, where voters can vote in either the Republican or Democratic primaries.

In the "Super Tuesday" primary of the 1988 presidential campaign, Republican George H.W. Bush faced Democrat Jesse Jackson in the South, winning racist cross-over votes—and

then he used the notoriously racist "Willie Horton" ads to defeat Michael Dukakis in November.

California is more and more taking on aspects of the South. When the cost of living is taken into account, for instance, it has the highest level of poverty in the country, nearly 25 percent – and the 99 percent is restless.

Historically, Californian's look first to the ballot box to make change. Now corporate California is using sleight-of-hand to erode that possibility. Now the same forces that engineered the top-two system are talking about ending California's

ballot initiatives.

The one percenters deeply fear that in a true democracy, candidates of, by, and for the 99 percent would win—and that such a government might well expand political democracy into economic democracy and run the economy for the good of the 99 percent.

All that can still happen. But, as a first step, it will take building a true, active party of the working class and turning out California's millions in primary elections—starting this year.

## New book on homelessness: *Dispatches from the War Zone*

By Eduardo Castro

MERCED, CA — Independent journalist Mike Rhodes has been involved in homeless issues in Fresno, California since 2002. His tenacity as an investigative reporter has made it possible to gain insight into why homelessness has not disappeared. By coming into direct contact with the homeless, public officials, and through probing into the Freedom of Information Act, he has been able to write a new book that speaks to the reality of being homeless in America. In the book he talks about the manifestations of a political and economic system that is not meeting the needs of the people. He indicates that organizing is an integral component in making changes.

The book provides insight into how city government policies have had a negative impact on the homeless population, revealing the inner workings and motives of the Fresno city government.

Social service providers such as Fresno Rescue Mission and the Poverello House, get millions of dollars to "manage" homelessness, but have no intention of ever ending it. The homeless receive the short end on how the monies are used. Through a 10 year plan to end homelessness, the service providers and City Hall dazzle the public as to how they are addressing the problem. Yet, homelessness continues to grow.

During the term of Mayor Alan Autry, a homeless radio marathon hosted by Jeremy Alderson included the Fresno County Supervisor, two Fresno City Council members and the Mayor. The program allowed local homeless residents to voice their concerns that the 10-year plan to get rid of homelessness was not working. It attracted national attention.

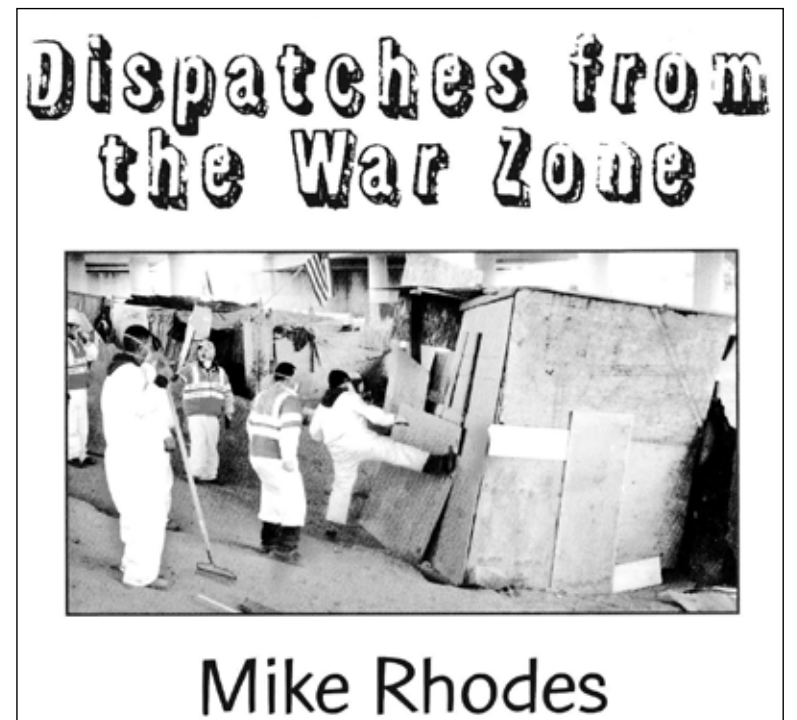
The book does a great job of outlining the policies used in dismantling the main encampments in downtown Fresno. It started

with the city council approving several anti-homeless ordinances. These made it harder for the homeless to live and survive out in the street. With the Mayor's approval the Fresno Police Department and others were given the authority to destroy the encampments.

Before 2007, a class action lawsuit was filed in federal court over the destruction of property of the homeless. The homeless were able to win a victory by settling their claims for \$2.3 million, as financial reimbursement for personal items destroyed. While being a significant victory in itself, it did not stop the city from the continual destruction of homeless encampments.

Housing First, a pet project of the subsequent Mayor Swearingin, was supposed to provide a voucher program to provide the chronically homeless with apartments and social services—but this never happened.

In the book, the author seeks to open the minds of the gen-



eral public as to what homeless people have to face on a daily basis, and to see them as human beings. More than that, it seeks to empower them and to develop a broad movement to end home-

lessness. The author wrote in the book I purchased, "Together we can end homelessness where another world is possible."



# 'The system is rigged,' says Rev. Pinkney from prison

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

MARQUETTE, MI — You will never ever see me associating

with Michael Jordan or LeBron James: they believe in the system, the establishment. They're rich. I'm poor. But I am here



Rev. Edward Pinkney speaking at a U.A.W. local in Detroit.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

to tell you the system is rigged and corrupt.

Anytime an economic system doesn't feed, clothe, or house its people, it must be and will be overturned and replaced with a system that meets the needs of the people. We must stand up and demand the government serve the people's interest and not those of the corporations.

I was charged with five counts of forgery on a recall petition and then convicted by an all white jury that was motivated by something other than the truth. But the problem here is bigger. I was convicted with no evidence, no eyewitness, no confession. The only thing the jury had was the rigged jury system, the government, and Whirlpool, the corporate giant calling the shots.

I was convicted by this rigged system, which feeds its listeners the stale bread of hatred to keep everyone divided and spoiled of racism. It is a system that won't protect the lives of its own citizens seeking justice if you are poor—whether black,

white, brown, red, or yellow. It's me today. It's you tomorrow. It's not one thing, it's everything. The poor—black white, brown, red, or yellow—cannot passively accept this evil and stand on the sidelines of the struggle for justice. It is a fight for us all.

I was one of the first to speak out about the emergency manager law, which allowed non-elected people to take over cities and school districts, replacing local officials, selling public assets, privatizing public services, dismantling collective bargaining agreements, and more. They are dictators in the service of the corporations. Between 2010 and 2014, Benton Harbor had two different Emergency Managers. They stripped the elected city officials of their power and locked them out of their office.

The emergency managers went from city to city throughout Michigan taking control. This includes Flint, where residents accuse Gov. Snyder, the Emergency Manager, and other state officials of poisoning a city of

100,000 with contaminated water and then requiring payment. The city, under a state-appointed manager, switched from Detroit water sources to the Flint River water, but did not add corrosion control, causing lead to leach from old plumbing.

It is imperative that the atrocity unfolding in Flint sharpen our understanding of the true nature of the corrupt corporate power structure in this country. This includes the whole damn criminal justice system which is corrupt from top to bottom, and which is designed to destroy the poor—blacks, whites, brown, red, yellow and all others.

The attack on democracy in Benton Harbor and, around the country, shows that the corporate power structure is determined to crush anyone who stands in its way.

We must confront the rigged system in its entirety and expose their hypocrisy, which has no limits. We must confront them with a movement united around justice for all.



Press conference after the Court of Appeals in Grand Rapids, MI heard the imprisoned Rev. Edward Pinkney's appeal.

PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK

## Activist for the people jailed – Governor poisons city, remains free

From the Editors

On May 11, Rev. Pinkney's appeal was heard before a three-judge panel of the Michigan Court of Appeals. The courtroom was packed with supporters. Each lawyer's arguments were immediately followed by questions and comments from the judges on the panel. Rev. Pinkney's lawyer, Tim Holloway, as well as Mark Fancher of the ACLU, presented arguments in support of Rev. Pinkney. The prosecutor presented arguments against.

The prosecution would very much like this case to be about forgery on a recall election petition (to oust a corporate mayor) even though there is no real evidence of this. The prosecution would have people believe that Rev. Pinkney's free speech and activism are evidence of a crime. This is nothing but a legal slight of hand, meant to shift everyone's attention away from the political nature of this case.

But, it also opens the door to asking, wouldn't Mayor Hightower and his friends at the Whirlpool Corporation desire to keep

Hightower in office as his popularity was slipping? And, if so, did any of these corporate forces ever get their hands on those recall petitions? If this has no merit, then why was the jury instructed that they could convict without evidence?

This couldn't work on just any jury. It had to be a special jury. An all white jury for an all Black town. In addition to this, there had to be the less visible class differences. That jury was from affluent areas with incomes many times greater than Benton Harbor, which is the poorest municipality in the state. Lastly, no one on that jury has had to live under the rule of the dictatorial emergency manager system like the rest of Benton Harbor and other cities in Michigan. If you are from Benton Harbor, this is as far away from a jury of your

peers as you can get.

This is how open corporate dictatorship in Michigan silences opposition.

Their evidence, their juries, their courtrooms, and their emergency manager system, are all the very danger that Rev. Pinkney's activism in Benton Harbor has been trying to warn the American people about.

America is in danger of a complete dictatorship. We can and must win this case—and every other attack on the leaders of the people—in the courtroom of public opinion. Our first argument must be: How can a corporate governor poison the entire city of Flint and ruin the future of its children and remain free while an innocent country preacher is railroaded to prison, doing felony time for a trumped up misdemeanor?

## Voices of Benton Harbor

Our local government has a little more voting power now. But [the state of Michigan] still has us under Emergency Managers. There's some kind of group that oversees things. They already got everything they wanted—like the land. They were on their way to getting rid of the Benton Harbor dispatch, Fire Department, wanting to merge it with the St. Joseph Police so they could come over here and make arrests, just like the old dirty South. When you go up there [to city government] to make an issue, they try to make a joke. I am no joke. I tell them, "Don't play with me, just because I'm an older woman." Some will try to put you down when you try to rally for justice. Because of what they did to Rev. Pinkney, they got everyone afraid. I ask, "What are you afraid of? Pinkney is paving the way for a lot of other people. He will reap the good." They have thieves in government here that steal millions and get no time when caught. They put Rev. Pinkney away for nothing. It's all political.

— Emma Kinnard, Benton Harbor

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