

ANGER BOILS OVER AT DENIAL OF HEALTHCARE

Read the story on page 3



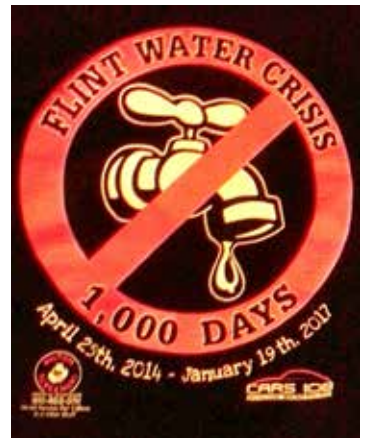
Susie Bell of Gilbert, Arizona, at a town hall meeting held by U.S. Sen. Jeff Flake (R-AZ). She said the health insurance she had saved her life when a doctor diagnosed her ovarian cancer at an early stage. Thousands are speaking out across the country about the government's immoral attempt to deny healthcare to millions.

PHOTO/JIMWESTPHOTO.COM

**IMMIGRANT
RIGHTS ARE
HUMAN
RIGHTS
PAGES 8-9**



**FLINT: THE FIGHT
FOR WATER AND
DEMOCRACY
CONTINUES
PAGES 2 AND 7**



3 Years Too Long: Fear, anger, and resistance grows over Flint water crisis

EDITORIAL

Editor's note: As we go to press, the Flint City Council passed a "bandaid" ordinance which enacts a one-year Moratorium on Water Liens. Meanwhile, the struggle continues for Suspension of Water Shutoffs and paying for poison.

Despite millions of dollars promised to replace lead service lines, the three-year nightmare of the Flint water crisis continues. The water crisis includes the dismantling of democracy through the draconian Emergency Manager system, continued toxic water flowing through the faucets, the highest water rates in the country, and health challenges as far as the eye can see. Meanwhile, just days after protest and rallies commemorating three years of the nightmare, over 8,000 residents received notices threatening water liens on their homes (which means eventually losing their homes) if they don't pay past-due water bills.

Bondholders Walk on Water

Recently, the city of Flint (ordered by the EPA), was given the option to essentially stay on Detroit water (now Great Lakes Water Authority) or keep it's contract with the Karagondi Water Authority (KWA), where the disaster began. (In 2014, the switch from Detroit to Flint River water by Dictate of Emergency Manager Darnell Earley created the water crisis until KWA was built.) "Stakeholders," such as the State, Detroit, Flint, paid consultants and others, met for weeks to cobble together the "plan."

Recently, Flint Mayor Karen Weaver announced Flint would stay with Detroit as Flint's primary source. Genesee County Drain



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

Commissioner Jeff Wright, who helped lead the charge in 2014 for the new pipeline, recently declared that despite Flint opting to now use Detroit as a water source, "the KWA will be made whole!" That means to date, JP Morgan, Wells Fargo Securities, and Stifel, all who underwrote KWA bond deals, remain unscathed. In other words, the bondholders will be paid no matter what. And what about Flint residents?? In response to the lien threat resident Timothy Abdul-Matin told the Flint Journal: "I'm really flabbergasted. We have people who have made a conscious decision to switch over to this water source (Flint River) without proper treatment and now they're threatening to kick us to the streets if we don't pay for it."

The wholesale transfer of water and water rights from public assets to private hands is well underway in Flint, Michigan. Even the poisoning of 100,000



The Flint "Three Years Too Long Coalition" puts forth demands at a march and rally on March 25. PHOTO/FACEBOOK

people did not stop this process. This is the untold story of what experts call one of the worst drinking water disasters ever. Lack of trust in the water is being matched by a lack of trust in government at all levels. (The current Mayor is facing a recall.) Water warriors

and water protectors are scrambling to figure out who are their friends and who are their enemies. As the poster child of environmental disasters, Flint must forge a new unity based on meeting the water, health and democratic needs of its people.

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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

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

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

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

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE EDITORIAL POLICY: Articles that are unsigned, such as the cover story and editorials, reflect the views of the editorial board. Bylined articles reflect the views of the authors, and may or may not reflect the views of the editorial board.

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

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Anger boils over at denial of healthcare

COVER STORY

At a town hall by Rep. Tom Reed (R-New York), a woman angrily told him, “I’m a veteran and I have single-payer and it has saved my life four times. There is no profit [for private insurance companies] in single-payer. We have to get the profit [out of health insurance]... We are human beings... You boil everything down to money. We are not money, we are a nation.”

She is one of millions in the United States who are angry and fearful about what Congress may do about healthcare in the wake of the House passing the Trumpcare bill on May 4.

The Trumpcare measure still has to get through the Senate, but if the House bill is any indication, we can be sure whatever finally passes will be good for the rich and the corporations, and bad for the rest of us. Trumpcare could condemn millions of us to suffering and death.

\$880 Billion in Medicaid Cuts

Most Americans who gained coverage under Obamacare got it through the expansion of Medicaid, and the Trumpcare bill would end the Medicaid expansion after 2020 and also cut back the Medicaid program. It would reduce federal spending on Medicaid by a staggering \$880 billion across nine years, starting in 2017. If you left Medicaid, even for just over a month, you wouldn’t be allowed to return to it. Medicaid provides health coverage to millions of Americans, including low-income adults, children, pregnant women, the elderly and people with disabilities. Cuts in Medicaid will have a particularly severe impact on the disabled.

It’s estimated the bill would cause 24 million of us to lose our healthcare coverage. And a big chunk of the Medicaid cuts

gets handed to the rich—the bill would cut the taxes of high-income people by nearly \$600 billion over ten years!

Older Americans would pay more for insurance and get smaller subsidies. The states could choose not to require insurers to provide a minimum set of health benefits, such as maternity care and emergency services. Those of us with pre-existing conditions could end up paying more than others for coverage. The Trumpcare bill could also increase costs and reduce coverage even for workers who get their health insurance through their jobs.

Why the assault on healthcare? It’s partly because the big private hospital chains and the private health insurers want Obamacare revamped because it’s hurting their profits. It’s also because less and less of our labor is needed in this age of computers and robots, and business doesn’t want to spend money (public or private) on providing healthcare for workers they don’t need. And the Democrats have been as much a part of the assault as the Republicans. When there was the possibility of passing Medicare For All, the Democrats chose not to.

Healthcare is a life or death matter. We have a right to it. The fight for healthcare makes it all the more clear that either the corporations are going to run this country in their interests, or we the people are going to take the country back from the corporations and run it in our interest. The healthcare crisis gives us an opportunity to fight forward. We don’t need to settle for Obamacare. The entire healthcare system should be publicly owned and healthcare should be free and available to everyone.

We can take the first step in that direction by enacting a national single-payer public insurance system: improve Medicare and expand it to cover everyone.



Nearly 2,000 people pack Arizona Senator Jeff Flake’s town hall. Millions are angry and fearful about possibly losing their healthcare in the wake of the House passing the Trumpcare bill.

PHOTO/JIMWESTPHOTO.COM



Protest in Atlanta, Georgia for healthcare for all. Medicaid cuts will have a particularly severe impact on the disabled.

PHOTO/JOHN E. RAMSPOTT

Healthcare: Will the people be crucified to profit the rich?

Our ruling class seems to be putting into practice Mark Twain’s advice when he once said, “Get your facts first, then you can distort them as you please.” The American people are becoming aware of the fact that president Trump’s promises of “terrific” healthcare and “coverage for everyone” really means terrific higher profits for pharmaceutical companies and the healthcare insurance corporations at

the expense of millions of us losing coverage altogether. As this awareness grows so do the protests.

On one side of the fight is the human right to healthcare for all Americans and on the other is maximum profits for the corporations. There is no middle ground. One exists at the expense of the other.

The moral question is, should the death and suffering of our children

who are poor, our elderly or disabled, or anyone with pre-existing conditions be the currency that finances corporate private jets, Rolls-Royces and mansions? This is the system that we are at battle with and it must be replaced by free universal healthcare for all.

Ultimately the fight to remove the profit motive from healthcare is the fight for a cooperative society where access to

the best health care—and everything else we need—is guaranteed to all. Then and only then can the Hippocratic oath taken by all doctors to “do no harm” have a real meaning. We can finally replace the imaginary banners that currently wave outside our hospitals that read, “Pay First,” with the more just banner that reads, “Everyone gets the healthcare they need.”

'I'm embedded in the homeless condition of humanity in America'

By Don Blumenthal

LAS VEGAS, NV — The medical community and hospital security had me hauled away to jail for being in the waiting room at Desert Springs Hospital just nine days into post surgery ... while I was SLEEPING for Christ's sake. No place is safe to sleep in Vegas. If you're not gambling, you have no business being here... I've been thrown outa casinos, off buses, slot parlors, Walmart, laundromats, Smith's—but HAULED TO JAIL for sleeping in a hospital waiting room? I've never heard of such a thing. I was all alone at 4:30 a.m., nine days after being cut, gutted and stitched. I was manhandled out of the ER and thrown into the backseat cage like I was a ragdoll.

There's a lot I can handle... I have done so for longer than I care to remember out here in the Urban Wild, but all this AND Trump on top of homelessness? It's just way too much. I ask every day how much longer can this total displacement and tortuous nothingness of concrete, neon and desert dirt hold me in its bond? With little more than Social Security retirement, is this small gutter gig to be my final resting place?

Living on my retirement and \$15/month food stamps is a high wire dance I somehow managed, but the clatter wheels of paying Medicare doctors and technicians, with their insistent and petty co-payments, (ridiculous) while chasing the medical protocol for referrals, specialists and jumping through their senseless Medicare hoops and hospital policies... I've survived! But I can no longer justify it anymore, not living like a bug or a half-human being on these streets of Las Vegas every day without contributing something.

Thanks for reading... I'm hoping to get some help out of this excruciating, bad situation and its dulling depression. I've been embedded in the homeless condition of humanity in America.

Editor's note: The People's Tribune received this statement through our website.

Community helps families living in storage units



Grandma and grandkids at flea market where families live in storage units.

PHOTO/MANUEL TORRES

Editor's note: This is an update of our story in the May, 2017 People's Tribune about the flea market in Texas that rents storage units without electricity, heat, running water, or bathrooms to families in need of cheap rent. All of the residents are trying to survive one day at a time. Some are only a step away from homelessness.

By Juan Torres

DONNA, TX — Following the issuance of an eviction notice by the city, the tenants at Fiesta Flea Market living in storage units made plans to move out. The media was called after numerous accounts of harassment



Homeless encampment in downtown Houston, a city known for its space and science contributions. Like cities nationwide, it cannot provide jobs for people, nor will it provide food or housing for those in need.

PHOTO/PAUL GARNER

Houston's war on the homeless

By Paul Garner

HOUSTON, TX — First came the ordinance that restricted feeding the homeless. On April 12 this year, Houston passed a ban on panhandling and tents. On the outskirts of downtown, under state highway 59, the homeless have gathered with tents and sleeping bags and built their own city. But the Houston City Council passed an ordinance that gave occupants 30 days to take down their tents. The city said the panhandling at medians throughout the city must stop immediately!

Below are some of the comments from residents in Houston's tent city as the city threatens to dismantle the encampment and limit the possessions of its residents. The *People's Tribune* asked: What do you think about the tent ban?

This is BS! There's such a thing as squatter's rights! And I grew up with this Mayor in Acres Homes! I have been waiting for a voucher from the city for two years! The city doesn't offer anything!

— Mama Love

I'm from Louisiana and it's the same way there. They don't care about us! They just want to make sure that they take away all our dignity. It's OK if we sleep on the ground and get dirty, have to deal with the wind, exposed to the elements, then we can stay, just no tents.

— T

Mayor Sylvester is an asshole! I can get a job? Without a house, what am I supposed to do with my clothes, how do I take a bath? They want to take our tents, we can't have grills and all our belongings have to fit in a three by three foot area! They don't tell us where to go!

— Sharon Cousins

They are only moving the tents... We can still sleep out here from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. We are also on the housing list ... but they shut down the vouchers.

— William

I been out here since 1982 and the homeless situation is getting worse! They are not trying to fix anything! They're just trying to push us further out of the city limits! These so-called

shelters only give you 90 days and then you're out. Out on the streets to get robbed, raped, beat up!

— Betty Thornton

The technology today makes things possible that were unimaginable 20 years ago. It's not enough that the banks have in their possession more vacant houses than there are homeless ... We have the technology to build a home with a 3-D printer!

Many of us view homelessness as a personal weakness rather than seeing that this is a failed economic system that can provide everything we need ... if we can buy it! If technology is rapidly making workers obsolete, then we can only conclude that there will be an explosive growth in homelessness as the capitalists turn their backs on the working class.

Or we will unite our class to free the bloated banks and warehouses of their vacant homes, food, medical supplies, water and all necessities of life and distribute them freely, according to need, and end this crisis of plenty forever!

It all starts with our unity.

by the management and threats that families either pay the last month's rent or the police would be called. The tenants called the media. Through the coordination of several activists, a local Baptist church from Weslaco provided transportation and gas. Also, an adult day care center provid-

ed trucks and vans. The County passed out vouchers for motel stays for eligible families and plans to take people to shelters.

Kindness was shared by everyone in the spirit of lending a hand to human beings without regard to nationality or legality.

These workers and their fam-

ilies, like so many who are being cast aside by the capitalist system when their labor is no longer needed, are fighting for their survival. They are pointing to a vision of a different society that provides what people need, independent of the present economic system. Si Se Puede! (Yes we can!)

First they came for the homeless

By Sandy Perry

The “First They Came for the Homeless” California speaking tour brought together some key leaders of the movement against homelessness from April 22 to 24. The tour was named after a grouping of houseless people that emerged from Occupy San Francisco and then organized a series of dramatic encampments confronting political officials in Berkeley, California. The name is in fact an accurate warning to all of us: the fascist daily persecution of the homeless today is the likely future fate of all American workers if we fail to defend and unite with them now.

The tour featured leaders from Berkeley, San Francisco, San Jose, Merced, and Los Angeles, each sharing the aspirations and lessons of their respective battles with the system. In addition to uniting these leaders, the purpose of the tour was to raise funds to finance broader circulation of the Peoples Tribune and amplify the voices of the homeless leaders whose articles appear in it.

The message of the tour was unique, because like the Peoples Tribune, it was political and strategic. It was different from typical speaking engagements by homeless individuals that attempt to create an “immersion experience” or “reality tour” to expose people to the realities of homelessness, or make people feel sorry for them.

Speakers on this tour had a clear-eyed assessment that the system necessarily creates homelessness in order to make money for profiteers. The question is not to make a pitch for sympathy, but to sound the alarm about



(From Left) Los Angeles’s *People’s Tribune* correspondent, Chris Venn, Stephanie Williams, organizer in her L.A. Skid Row community (humorously in a police hat), and Robert Aguirre of San Jose, organizer with H.O.M.E.L.E.S.S., visit Skid Row during the Los Angeles leg of the recent “First they came for the homeless” three-city California tour.

PHOTO/GENA MERCER

a system that has no respect for human life, and begin to organize the resistance.

These tour speakers remarked about their experiences with the tour and about the situation in the homeless movement:

“Money is the enemy, not the solution. Profit before people put us here. People before profit will fix it.”

— Mike Zint, *San Francisco/Berkeley, ‘First they came for the homeless’ and the Poor Tour*

“I am someone and I matter. Next is that we all need to believe it.”

— Gena Mercer, *Merced, California Central Valley Journey for Justice*

“San Jose destroyed the ‘Jungle’ camp in 2014, but it has not made any progress since then. They say they have housed

1000 homeless people, but that doesn’t count the new people who become homeless all the time. Thousands are still forced to live outside every night. The City sweeps their camps and illegally takes their possessions, but they always come back because there’s no place for them to go.”

— Robert Aguirre, *H.O.M.E.L.E.S.S., San Jose*

“It was a great privilege to attend and speak at the event and hear from those on the front lines experiencing homelessness and their grassroots efforts in the struggle to end homelessness.”

— Bilal Mafundi Ali, *San Francisco, Coalition on Homelessness and People’s Commission for Justice*

The tour visited San Francisco, the California Central Valley, and the heart of Skid Row in Los

Homeless movement speaks out about strategies and visions

By the Editors

In these pages, leaders of the homeless movement and others, speaking up against a broken system that puts people in the streets, tell their stories and describe their strategies and their visions. A system of private corporate ownership of everything we need, including housing, must be changed if our class—the vast majority of us—is to find housing and everything else we need to sustain our lives.

The voices you read here are of people waking up to this reality in their own lives and in those they see around them, and organizing for systemic change. The billionaire ruling class and its bribed politicians can no longer blame the victims of this broken system for its failures.

There is a mighty movement arising in this country and all over the world. An important part of that movement is alive in the tent communities and other actions that defy the rulers’ attempts to hide, isolate and criminalize the victims of private property and the capitalist system.

The *People’s Tribune* reports from the fronts of this movement, and has just completed promoting a national speakers tour featuring homeless leaders themselves. Read this and other stories, then donate, distribute and write for the paper; it is your voice, independent and reader-supported.

Visit peopletribune.org, call 800-691-6888, or email info@peopletribune.org.

Angeles. The message from the L.A. leaders was especially clear: the time has come to formulate a new paradigm. Merely reacting to the endless attacks is not effective.

What needs to be done, several speakers concluded, is to first build a community in and around a section of the homeless to assemble at least the nucleus of a fighting force. Then we have to enter the political battle to hold the government accountable for ending homelessness. In L.A. they are calling on people

to “disrupt the Mayor” until he answers their demands.

Political battle may start with confronting the government, but it also means organizing our troops, distinguishing who are our enemies and who are our friends, and uniting all who can be united in our campaigns for housing, basic human needs, and basic human dignity.

As one leader said at the end of the tour, “There are more of us than there are of them. The question is, how do we get ourselves united?”

Homeless, Not Hopeless

Sitting in my tent
More time spent
Defending
Pretending

Everything’s just okay
That I will make it through another day
Policy turns a blind eye
Do they want me to die?

My bones shake worse than earthquakes
So, this is by my mistake?
Say, by the hand of fate?
I’ll wait

Waiting to hear of something good
Fairy tale endings like Robin Hood
Can’t steal from the rich

While they oppress the poor

They won’t even let me in the store
“I’m hungry sir” I implore
Afraid of what they do not know
Here’s a real reality show

Hundreds dying by the year
Am I the only one to shed a tear?
This is not just my mistake
Left in the garden, broken rake

It’s something we all perpetuate
This continued misguided, misplaced hate
Maybe turn our eyes to our state
To open up the Golden Gates

— John Safari



Sebastian Higgs, of the Berkeley CA ‘Poor Tour’ protest tent community, wears a sign he made in solidarity with his immigrant brothers and sisters, many of whom are also homeless.

PHOTO/SARAH MENEFFEE

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Coal miner: ‘We need to get together and build a huge movement for a better future’

Editor’s note: Chuck Nelson, a retired 4th generation West Virginia coal miner, speaks with the People’s Tribune about the struggle for life itself in coal country.

People’s Tribune: Chuck, what did Congress do about the retired miners benefits?

Chuck Nelson: We won a permanent fix on healthcare, but many in Congress don’t want to give the miners their pensions. They’re afraid non-union miners will say, “You gave it to them, what about us?” Joe Manchin (Democrat, WV) is facing reelection and is worried about that. Any credit he can grab out of this he will. He had an opportunity when he was governor to help the miners, but didn’t. He always caters to the industry. Sherrod Brown, the Democratic senator from Ohio, played a big role in getting the healthcare bill passed, but Manchin wants all the credit. We need to keep fighting for the pensions.

PT: Tell our readers about work in the mines.

Chuck: After 29 years as a union miner, I lost my job and worked with Massey Energy. Massey came in and bought all the union companies, busted the union, and reopened them as non-union. The difference between union and non-union mines is unreal.

When I was a union “fire boss,” I made sure my coworkers were safe before going in

the mine. In non-union mines the company does the inspections. The ventilation system (that protects against breathing coal dust and dilutes the methane) can interrupt production if kept installed. So they take all the curtains down and put them back at the end of the shift in case the inspector comes.

I worked under these conditions. You couldn’t say nothing or you’re fired. You work until they say you can go home, 14-16 hours.

It’s right back to where it was before there was a union in the 1920s. You’re going to see more of what happened with the coal dust explosion that killed the 29 guys in 2010.

Massey ended my mining career because I spoke out over what happened in my community. My house was close to the mines. The coal dust settled on our community. You clean the house, return home after work, and have ¼-inch layer of dust on the coffee table, even in the refrigerator. You don’t see the dust you breathe—it’s fine particles laced with chemicals used in the coal cleaning process.

I couldn’t keep my mouth shut while people were poisoned. When I stood up with my community, they took my job and blacklisted me.

We relocated. We’re near where they blow the mountaintops off. The dust and toxins get



“The destruction of our mountains brings you to tears,” says Chuck Nelson. Mountaintop removal uses massive equipment to blow up mountains, reducing the workers needed to mine the coal. It destroys the land, air, water and health of the people in nearby communities where cancer is rising—all this to maximize profits for the industry. PHOTO/MARIA GUNNOE FLIGHT, SOUTHWINGS.ORG

in the air and streams. The scale of people sick here is unreal. It’s horrible what they get by with to maximize profits.

PT: Why did Trump carry the state? What’s next?

Chuck: They were shutting down the mines before the elections and laying off. People were desperate.

Hillary came in saying, “we’re going to put the coal companies out of business and take your jobs.” Trump came in saying, “we’re going to put the min-

ers back to work.” So it’s not hard to figure out. People blame West Virginia for Trump’s election but we only have five electoral votes.

We’re getting a bad deal. It’s rough to organize people when payday counters their understanding. The industry makes it look like it’s a war on coal. It’s told to our kids in public schools. By third grade, they’re talking about how good coal is. It’s brainwashing. That’s how these corporations divide and conquer. But once you sit down and talk with

people about the facts, they start getting concerned.

We need to get together and spread information state to state and build a huge movement.

And we need to get certain individuals out of office if there’s going to be a better future. That’s what Paula Swearengen’s campaign is about: a better future and a change from the same old political elites. Paula, a coal miner’s daughter, fights for the working class. Please give her your support. Visit paulajean2018.com [Read this story on page 8].

Keystone XL: Nebraskans uniting to fight pipeline

Editor’s note: The People’s Tribune interviewed Art Tanderup of Nebraska about the Keystone XL pipeline that has been approved by the Trump administration.

In our May, 2017 edition, Art talked about the danger to the Ogallala Aquifer, the largest fresh water aquifer in existence. In part two, Art refutes Trump’s claim that the pipeline will create jobs and emphasizes how the commonality of the need for water unites the pipeline fighters across the political spectrum.

By Art Tanderup

NELIGH, NE — The president talks about all the jobs the pipeline will create. Temporary construction jobs will bring people in but not jobs for a lot of local people. Only 35 permanent jobs; none will be in any of the com-



Nebraskans are fighting to protect the land and water from the pipeline. From left to right: Mekasi Horinek, Jane Kleeb and Art Tanderup. PHOTO/BOLDNEBRASKA.ORG

munities along the route.

A leak occurred last year on Keystone 1, in South Dako-

ta, 75 miles from where I live. It just happened that the pipeline crossed a highway, and to get

under the ground, had to be buried 30-40 feet. Thousands and thousands of gallons of oil and chemicals leaked out through pinhole type leaks which detection equipment missed.

A local farmer found it when it surfaced in his field; it had been leaking since it was installed, over a very heavy soil, so did not get into the groundwater. It ruined this guy’s field. They hauled the dirt out of there. Had that happened on my farm, it would have all been on the Aquifer.

Estimates are this could have been leaking for the lifetime of that pipe and it could have gone totally unnoticed. That’s where the jobs come in; people come in to clean up. The future is in renewable energy and that’s where the jobs *should* come in.

It’s amazing that our group of pipeline fighters come from

every political spectrum. Don’t know how many voted for Trump, sure it was half. But we could not approach from a Democrat or Republican type thing. It had to be approached from “Let’s talk about water, our environment, our rights,” these are the things that draw people together and all on the same page. Because if we were not together as a group of landowners, that pipeline would be pumping tar sands today.

We have been networking (with other people) in states doing the same things. There are pockets of resistance, and the goal is to get them to come together.

To learn more on the resistance visit BOLDNEBRASKA.ORG. To see part one of Art’s interview visit peopletribune.org.

Flint: Six arrested at ‘public’ meeting

Flint police use physical abuse and harassment to silence public

Editor’s note: As we go to press, the County prosecutor decided not to pursue any charges against the six. But the City can still charge them.

By People’s Tribune
Flint correspondents

FLINT, MI — Just days before the three-year commemoration of the living Hell known as the Flint water crisis, six residents were arrested. The arrest took place at a local church. The meeting was called by Flint’s Mayor to hear public comments regarding the future of Flint’s long-term water source.

The meeting was already primed for police aggression. The Flint Police Department had officers lined up in the large foyer leading to the sanctuary. They wore Bullet proof vests, standing

information as if they anticipated a social upheaval to ensue.

Six members of the public were told by the police they could not go inside unless they removed their hats, which also set off tensions. The atmosphere of harassment and intimidation escalated when the Police Chief Johnson opened the session stating: “Please don’t be in here trying to disrupt this meeting... I’m going to escort you out and I’m going to take you to the back door and then you’re going to jail.” (One woman was asked to leave when she uttered a curse word during the comment portion.)

Six people were indeed arrested, and supporters gathered at the police station waiting for them to be let go. The next day, dozens gathered at City Hall denouncing police tactics in general and the arrest of what is now

called the Town Hall Six in particular. One of those was manhandled and bruised to the point where she had to be treated at a local hospital after she was let out of jail.

After suffering water poisoning, threats of water shutoffs and liens, health challenges, with no democracy in sight, do we now face police brutality and intimidation for speaking out about it? The Town Hall Six, as of yet, have not been charged. The local Michigan ACLU has stepped forward to defend them if needed.

Nevertheless, the Town Hall Six are an expression of the growing mass of resistance against the Emergency Manager political regime here in Michigan that denies us democracy and the water wars it has wrought. Other Flint Voices in this fight such as Gertrude Marshall, Councilman



At a meeting to hear public comments about Flint’s long-term water source, some people were told by the police they could not go inside unless they removed their hats. In the course of the meeting, six Flint residents were arrested. CARTOON/CAMP PROMISE

Eric Mays, Pastor Reginald Flynn have also been arrested or jailed for daring to speak out. The Homrich 9 of Detroit (case pending) as well as the Reverend Edward

Pinkney of Benton Harbor (currently incarcerated) join these.

Meanwhile the fight for water, water rights, real democracy, and Healthcare continues.

A 500-pound rock broke my back in five places: A miner’s story and vision

By Douglas Hitt

HOT SPRINGS, AR — In 34 years underground, I had three very close calls.

First, I was at American Coal, and we were moving equipment. As I prepared to unhook the cable, the rope broke. All the tension in that rope and the hook securing

the equipment came flying into me. It was like the hand of God smacking me—it sent me flying through the air, shattering a bone in my finger.

My second close call came when I was standing by machine controls. A 4x5 foot, 2-inch thick rock, fell on me. It broke my hardhat, gave me a central disk

bulge, and cut my right arm to the bone.

The third close call, which put me on disability, happened in Arkansas as a shuttle car operator. I secured the ventilation curtain. As I was bent over, a 500-pound rock struck me and broke my back in five places. It bruised my heart, formed a blood clot in my lungs, and crushed my ankle. The coal on the mine floor trapped me face down. I yelled for help.

When the rock hit me, the cartilage where the ribs connect to the sternum was fragmented. At two miles underground, co-workers assisted me. When I rolled over, the pain was like fire. That mine later shut down.

I had difficulty getting rehired. When I finally got back in the mines, I couldn’t do the work. I came home and my legs were swollen and my back was killing me. My doctor told me my mining career was over.

Years ago, a study found that after coal is mined, if rock dust is applied over it, the danger of explosions is reduced. There is a lot of dust in the air from the process. You can’t come out of the coal mines and not have health issues. Even with water, dust suppression equipment, and air

scrubbers on machines, you still breathe in a lot of dust and silica.

There are injuries in every mine. We work understanding the dangers. But our benefits are guaranteed—lifetime medical, pensions, and security of knowing that if we survive, we will have secure retirements, and our families will be cared for. Those securities are paid for with our blood, sweat and dedication. Today, our guarantor (the US government) is working to abandon their promise to us.

If we want to continue to inhabit the Earth, we must invest in clean alternative energy sources. The problem is that all major coal companies invest millions and billions of lobbying dollars to a political structure run by a ruling elite. Corporations only care about their investors getting large returns on their “investments.”

My sons won’t have the quality of life I had because opportunities I had no longer exist, and clean energy opportunities are opposed by dirty energy stockholders. From my experience as a coal miner, I know that as long as you are healthy and productive, you’re OK, but once you’re broken, you’re tossed aside, and a new replacement “tool” is hired. You have no more value to those corporations than does the dust you are buried in.

We must make some fundamental changes. We can’t have a society of extremely wealthy and extremely poor. People need a quality of life from cradle to grave that is satisfying and can provide opportunities for secure futures for ourselves and our families. Corporations need to contribute to the societal structure that feeds their wallets.

Fighting for our future

By Richard Monje, Workers United

We’re at the end of an era. Right now our principal challenge is the construction of a new model of how people work and how they get the basic necessities of life. We’re no longer talking about a minimum wage. We’re talking about a guarantee of what society provides to us as we contribute to society. How do we distribute the wealth that is generated by the working people? Everyone has to set the task of solving the problem before us.

Knowing the experience of what happened in the past is absolutely essential, but the difficult part is to describe the vision of what we don’t see yet. Right now we need to create that vision and then build society around the model of elevating every human being to the level of a thinking designing person.

Coal miner's daughter runs for Senate to represent the people



Paula Swarengin

industry. West Virginia coal powered a nation. West Virginia and Appalachia have sacrificed with their blood for this nation.

But I've also seen what happens when we let coal barons loot our land and pollute our water. I've seen some of the most beautiful mountains in the world blown up. I've been to funerals caused by black lung. I've seen friends and family sickened. I've seen and smelled poisoned water.

We are family, we are friends, we are neighbors, and we are workers. We're not self-serving politicians or out-of-state industry executives. No one's asking for a handout. We're saying our mothers and fathers worked hard, and we will too, but not at the cost of our children's lives and not so someone else can get rich off our toil. The last time I talked to Senator Joe Manchin and told him about our polluted water and our families dying because of coal, he was more worried about serving coal barons than our children.

I'm ready to fight back. I'm ready to make sure every West



Paula Jean Swarengin's (right) campaign for Senate stands on the needs of West Virginians for clean water, healthcare, education, and a safe environment. PHOTO/PAULAJEAN2018.COM

Editor's note: Paula Jean Swarengin is challenging U.S. Senator Joe Manchin in the 2018 primary Senatorial election in West Virginia. Her campaign, which stands on the needs of the people of West Virginia for clean water, healthcare, education, and a safe environment, has significance for workers everywhere. The following is a statement from Paula Swarengin.

I am a native of West Virginia. I'm a coal miner's daughter, granddaughter, niece and step-daughter. As a child, I felt a deep sense of pride in our state's coal

Virginian has healthcare as a right. The America I believe in provides care for all, not just the few. I'm ready to raise the education standard so our kids can not only find good jobs, but so they can start families in West Virginia and create more jobs for our state.

The question we face today is: What are we going to do when the coal is gone? And make no mistake it's going. No one has given us an answer that doesn't

require the sacrifice of our health and our environment.

I believe our future is in building a 21st-century, clean economy. I'm ready to move our state to be a leader in renewable energy.

We have to depend on each other to build a future that is worthy of our children. I plan on primarying Joe Manchin for his U.S. Senate seat in 2018, and I hope you stand with me.

We're neighbors and friends in Appalachia. We should not be divided. We're one of the poorest states in the nation. It's time to fight back.

I'm ready. Are you?

Visit paulajeans2018.com for information and to donate for this important campaign.

You can't deport this problem



West Virginians tell Senator Joe Manchin to support refugees.

PHOTO/CHAD CARPENTER

Editor's note: Below we print, with permission, excerpts from an article which appeared in the journal Facing South: A Voice for a Changing South in March 2017.

By J.W. Randolph

What a nightmare.

[In March 2017], U.S. Immigration and Customs enforcement busted into a taco place in Raleigh County, West Virginia, as if this were Nazi Germany. Three men were arrested and face deportation, one of whom is married to a West Virginia resi-

dent and has been in the state for 20 years—and more importantly, each of whom is a human being who was simply trying to make it through the workday.

Perhaps this quote from “a local resident” represents the mentality of folks who think that sending brown people away will solve their economic problems:

“[I]t needs to be done, a lot of young folks need a job and why can't they get that job.”

Raleigh County is about 1 percent Hispanic or Latino. According to the American Community Survey, there are 502 individuals who self-identi-

fy as “Hispanic/Latino” and are of “Mexican” descent in all of Raleigh County. If every one of those 502 non-”folks” was A) a working-age adult, B) employed, C) employed at a place where a “folk” could go work, D) undocumented, E) rounded up and deported at taxpayer expense, and then F) a young person “from Raleigh County” walked right into that job, it would impact the unemployment rate by less than 1 percentage point.

Kids in Raleigh County can't get a job because most of West Virginia's politicians have treated coal like a religious idol.

The coal industry has eliminated *half its jobs* in less than a decade for West Virginia counties in Central Appalachia. That isn't because of workers of a particular descent, but because the coal seams are deeper, thinner, and of a worse quality—and the jobs are increasingly mechanized.

Life expectancy in Raleigh County is *five years less* than the national average. About one in five adults over 25 in the Beckley, West Virginia area don't have a high school diploma.

There is real economic anxiety in our region and country, but we cannot and should not racism our way out of the problems

that our country faces. You can't deport this problem.

I am grateful to know and follow the lives of so many amazing people across Appalachia working to solve many of the problems that are inherent in America, but also many of the problems specific to our region which has never

really gotten back from the coal industry what we put in.

Here is to a better future for our home.

J.W. Randolph is a husband and father who grew up in the hills of East Tennessee.

Water shutoffs to another 18,000 households

From a Facebook post by the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization

DETROIT, MI —In April, the Detroit Mayor and water department announced their decision to shutoff water to another 18,000 households, mostly poor people. A community research study led by We the People of Detroit found that homes where water was shutoff had a 1.5 times increase in water-related illnesses among patients who sought help at Henry Ford Health System. This is the making of a public health crisis!

A coalition of social justice groups is calling on the Mayor and the Detroit Health Department to deal with the outbreak. Our elected officials have a responsibility to address this matter, stop massive shutoffs on people too poor to pay high rates and institute a Water Affordability Plan based on 2% of income for water customers in poverty.

Inhumane treatment of immigrant women and children is America's shame

From the Editors

Journalist Sharon Lerner recently reported for The Intercept on letters she got from immigrant women describing the cruel and degrading treatment they and their children received upon entering the US and being detained, either by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) or by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Lerner writes that “Obama’s family detention camps were strongly condemned for their inhumane conditions,” and that things have gotten worse under Trump.

ICE’s South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas is one of three ICE facilities that house women and children in the U.S. The government pays CoreCivic, a private company, \$12.6 million per month to run the center. Women held at Dilley

reported that the water smells and tastes bad, and sometimes makes them ill. Lights may be left on at night, making it hard to sleep. The restrooms lack privacy. Medical care is inadequate. Kids come out of Dilley sick with stomach and upper respiratory illnesses.

The women also wrote of their experience in the “hieleras” (“iceboxes”) where they were detained by CBP right after crossing the border. There they were kept in frigid temperatures. “My daughter was purple from how cold she felt. They wouldn’t give us any blankets. Her lips and her hands and feet were all purple,” one mother wrote. Women were separated from their children and not allowed to see them. Guards told one woman they would put her children up for adoption.

Women said that they and their children often did not receive enough to eat or drink at



Children like this young girl end up in crowded unsanitary immigrant detention centers where many grow sick with fevers.

PHOTO/JERRY LARA, SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS

the hieleras. The bathrooms were filthy and smelled. Many said they were denied access to the bathroom, and soiled themselves as a result. “This is your punishment for coming here,” a guard told one woman.

A woman wrote that entering the US had always been her

dream, but the day she entered “was the saddest and ugliest day I could have imagined.”

Is this the America we want? Surely this torture of human beings does not reflect the true morals of the American people. And the assault on the human rights of our immigrant broth-

ers and sisters is an attack on all of us. If we allow a section of people to lose their rights, then everyone’s rights are in danger. Our only hope as a people today lies in unity with our fellow workers. We must not allow ourselves to be divided by the rich and the powerful.

We’ve got a world to win!

Editor’s note: The following excerpts are from a May Day speech by Ethel Long-Scott given to the ILWU, Local 10, in San Francisco, CA.

By Ethel Long-Scott

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — I bring you greetings from the Women’s Economic Agenda Project! I’m going to talk about advancing from a MOMENT OF RESISTANCE to a MOVEMENT FOR FREEDOM. I don’t have to tell you what a hell of an attack is being waged on all of us workers. The history of May Day is about how men and women in different parts of the world stepped forward to lead a class of exploited people, and how they understood the absolute necessity of the unity of the poor—across EVERY line that usually divides us.

Injustices are everywhere. Public services should benefit everybody! But our two-party political system has been captured by corporate money. President Trump’s proposed huge tax cuts for the wealthy, budget cuts, and austerity for everyone else and his savaging of the Affordable Care Act equals government of, by and

for the billionaires.

And now—guess what! Capitalism is breaking down. Its contract of paying workers enough to purchase the products of their labor cannot be sustained when humans are replaced by robots. Because capitalism is dying, the society built upon it is being shaken apart. We’ve got government by corporate America determined to preserve their wealth at our expense.

We are operating under 21st century fascism. Fascism is when corporations take over the government and run it for their benefit instead of for “We the People.” The billionaires and corporations need fascism to steal our public assets by privatizing public resources. It is actually a corporate dictatorship.

Here’s some hope. All these attacks are generating a new social force. The dispossessed-marginalized people are being forced out of the economy, and are growing daily as technology replaces human labor. The revolutionary changes in the economy are creating a new equality of poverty that requires class unity. We may be different colors, genders, cultures, but we are all under attack. We can’t win if we fight each other and ignore

the real enemy. Our government should benefit ordinary people, not the fortunate wealthy. It will take the united work of all struggling marginalized workers behind a new vision of an economy that works for all of us to win this fight.

Our vision is putting the robots that are killing capitalism to work on behalf of “We the People,” rather than more profits for the wealthy. The way to do this is to energize the rising new social force. This will be the fight of our lifetime, but we can do it! For the first time, it is possible to unite a section of the working class politically that can in turn influence broader sections of society in a fight for a cooperative reorganization of society. The wonderful new electronic tools can create an amazing abundance but it requires a major transformation in our thinking about how best to take advantage of them.

We need to go forward from a Moment of Resistance to a Movement for Freedom! Freedom from Want, Freedom from Hunger, Freedom from Homelessness, Freedom from Trafficking, Freedom from Racism, Freedom from Violence. We’ve got a world to win!



Justice for teen killed by Texas police

Fifteen-year old Jordan Edwards was killed by Texas police, who opened fire on a car of kids leaving a party. The boys in the car saw smoke coming from Jordan’s head.

In May, an officer was charged with murder. However, the family’s lawyer reminds the community that he is not yet convicted. The attack on Black youth nationwide, and others, by police is not separate from the attack on immigrant families and other sections of the working class. All of these struggles are part of the same struggle against an oppressive system that threatens all of us.

Whether we are fighting hunger, lack of housing, police killings, or deportations, we must stand up whenever one of us is attacked. We must demand justice for Jordan Edwards.

— The Editors

The March for Science: *Where do we go from here?*



One million or more scientists and supporters joined the historic March for Science in April, 2017. PHOTO/STEPHEN WOLFE

By Irving W. Wainer,
Ph.D., DHC

WASHINGTON, DC — On April 22, 1,000,000+ scientists and supporters joined the March for Science in 600 events in 50 states and 66 countries (into@marchforscience.com). Most returned one week later to join the People's Climate March. For many scientists these were their first steps into political protest. Brought to the marches by proposed cuts in science funding and the growing anti-science environment, we were determined to take a stand for science, humanity and our planet. It was a pleasure and an honor to join my colleagues and friends.

On May 5, an appropriations bill funding the US government for the rest of fiscal year 2017 was signed into law. The \$1.1 trillion bill included a \$2 billion increase in the National Institutes of Health's budget and none of the major cuts to science funding that inspired the March for Science. Did we win? No, the appropriations bill only funds the US

government until September 30, 2017. The proposed cuts in science funding were in the 2018 fiscal budget, so the struggle has only been postponed for a few months.

While the fight for science has to continue on many fronts, a key area is the defense of the climate change research and basic science in the EPA. Trump's 2018 budget proposes a 31% decrease in EPA funding, which would decimate the agency. It is vital to protect the EPA's budget; however, it is perhaps more important to look at what is happening to science at the EPA. In addition to removing climate change information from the EPA website, EPA scientists are being silenced and threatened. Scientific papers are now reviewed internally to ensure that they conform to the government's stated view on climate change. The makeup of the EPA's Board of Scientific Counselors is going to be changed. This board reviews scientific work and evaluates the scientists performing this work. The appointment of climate change deniers to this

board will destroy objective science within the EPA, threaten the jobs of EPA scientists, set a precedence for scientific performance reviews throughout the government, and endanger the academic peer review process.

It will not be easy to protect basic research at the EPA or anywhere else. Our current economic system has little use for the development of ideas that do not directly create profit or, even worse, expose its destructive nature. But this is what we must do if we are to save our profession and help save our planet. We need to develop an analysis of what is happening to basic science in a dying capitalist system and what it can become in a world based upon economic and social justice. We need to understand what role we can and must play in the struggle for social change and how to unite with this movement. The March for Science was the first step, now we must continue the journey to defend and expand science.

'Without justice there can be no love'

Editor's Note: Janice Jo Lee's album, Sing Hey, begins with three deep breaths, as if she's thinking through what she has to say before launching into a kind of slam-sung poem of tough self-talk. That opener, "All the Times You Were Silent," kicks off a seamless and stunning mix of soulful folk, blues and hip hop about struggling to pay the bills, standing up for one's self and fighting for justice and community.

Known for her music, poetry and theatrical work in Kitchener, Ontario, Lee offered great insight into her work when she spoke with the People's Tribune's Danny Alexander.

PT: Why do you focus on social justice?

Janice Jo Lee: When we talk about social justice, we are talking about society, which for me is made up of the relationships between people—friendships.

I believe strongly in what bell hooks says, that without justice there can be no love. If you love me, and I love you, we must be dedicated to do the work to build bridges across our differences so that they do not become issues. This is what I write about in my music, the struggles of loving the people around you.

PT: And music's role?

Lee: Music can transcend words because you feel music in your body, in your ears, in your head, in your heart, in your chest. There's so much joy in music, and I think that's necessary to prioritize as we build communities. To remember why we're doing this. It is very celebratory.

PT: Many of our readers have suffered from the poi-

soning of their water supply, and you sing about this subject. What inspired it?

Lee: The song is called "Oil in the Grand." It's a new song. It will be on my new album *Ancestor Song*. My song is directly tied to the oil spill in Michigan.

There's a pipeline that crosses the Grand River called line 9. It will be carrying diluted bitumen from the tar sands in Alberta all the way across Southern Ontario to Montreal. It crosses our watershed in Waterloo Region, the Grand River. It crosses Six Nations Treaty territory. And there has been a lot of organizing around stopping this pipeline and the reverse of its flow.

PT: Your album begins with a kind of political toolbox, but climaxes with some gorgeous pop music, like the wonderful "40 km to Pickle Lake." How did you see it fitting together?

Lee: My intention with the album was to put the songs I think are the most urgent at the front. Organizing, politics and education is the means, and living a fulfilled joyous wonderful life full of friendship is the ends.

"Pickle Lake" [a song Lee wrote about a time in her life when she had to walk all day to reach a store] ends with a sing-along on the oohs. I'm a folk musician. I want everyone to sing along always. It's a love lullaby for friendship...

My art is embedded in my community. Building relationships takes time, building trust takes time. I think if we were able to communicate and not be afraid about what we feel, be patient and understanding with each other instead of suppressing our feelings, we could be so much closer.



Janice Jo Lee. PHOTOS/(TOP) HANNAH MARIE, (BOTTOM) STEFAN CHIRILA

We have a right to healthcare

'The moral argument that we cannot cut poor people off from healthcare to lower taxes for wealthy investors has united people across the political spectrum.'

By David Apsey, DDS and Maureen D. Taylor, MWRO

The USA is rapidly approaching a decision point regarding health care. There is a growing consensus among American workers across the political spectrum that we all have the right to healthcare.

The private property holders don't want any part of this since workers are no longer needed to carry out production. Private property class interests dictate that they cut costs without regard for the deadly consequences for working class families. Tom Price, Health and Human Services secretary, has proposed policies that are estimated to cause 45,000 preventable deaths every year, up from 29,000 currently due to lack of access to health care.

The polarity has been fueled by the corporate plans to "repeal and replace" the Affordable Care Act (ACA) with the American Health Care Act (AHCA) and wipe 24 million Americans off Medicaid by 2028, resulting in an 85% increase in the unin-

ured while cutting taxes for the wealthy by \$800 billion by 2028. Medicaid is the state and federally sponsored (nationalized) health insurance program for poor and disabled people which also stabilizes hospital systems and pharmaceutical corporations. It is a lower quality plan of a two-tiered health care system. Most working people get employer insurance.

In response to the proposed Medicaid cuts, workers confronted their Representatives in "town hall" meetings all over the country to tell them what they are doing is immoral and the consequences would be clear in the 2018 midterm elections. The story was hardly covered in the media due to the explosive and unanticipated nature of this effective resistance.

The ACA was never a good plan for health care. Twenty-eight million Americans were left uninsured and although the Medicaid expansion helped approximately 15 million Americans gain insurance, premiums for private plans increased and services were reduced, leaving



People protesting the attack on healthcare outside Michigan Rep. Dave Trott's office because he refused to hold a town hall meeting. PHOTO/JIMWESTPHOTO.COM

people with higher copays and fees. After the contentious 2016 elections, people are realizing they will have to fight for what they need. Health care promises of "better coverage and lower costs" were met with the reality of private health finance. When people are added, costs rise; to cut costs, people must be kicked out. American workers who got on Medicaid due to the ACA are not taking kindly to losing that insurance. The moral argument that we cannot cut poor people off

from healthcare to lower taxes for wealthy investors has united people across the political spectrum.

Society is supposed to care for people and people are demanding healthcare whether they are working or not. Since most other industrialized nations have already implemented nationalized, single payer healthcare, they discovered that the costs are much lower than we pay in the United States. The people are healthier and insurance is no longer linked to employment. This is a political question since

the USA has plenty of resources to care for everyone. We have excellent quality hospitals with empty beds, plenty of well-trained professionals, superb research and our spending is more than adequate. There is no alternative anymore to fighting forward. Demanding government nationalization of health insurance in the interests of workers' healthcare is our marching orders. Everybody In, Nobody Out!! HR 676—Expanded and Improved Medicare for All—is the solution.

An untold story of poverty

By Jan Lightfoot

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO — Too many of us who are lacking money are afraid and ashamed to stand up and build a country of liberties. In a society that teaches that money is God, it is embarrassing to admit you lack money to pay the rent. In fact if there was a call to "help pay rent" for families, too many people would have too much dignity to admit they need help. Yet rents can be as much as \$1,000 a month or more.

Our government tells us there are only about 41 million out of 320 million people who cannot afford the 30 items of basic needs. And the newspapers do not get more advertisers by telling their readers the

truth. Even advocates for the poor often see no reason to combat the falsehoods. They tell you when three out of ten children do not have enough to eat, that they are warm enough, or have electricity to work on a computer. That is three too many.

There is no reason why all persons should not have an equal share of the creator's gifts. Yet the government of King Trump has reduced the amount of heat and electricity aid to children's families from say \$645, to \$200 a year. People need to stand up and realize it's not their fault that they are badly paid, and that the minimum wage is not a livable amount. There is a real income gap in America.

Half of the population of America is working for 1/2 of

their real needs. This disaster is due to the employers and the owners; it's not the employee's fault. We cannot continue to be ashamed and remain quiet about the greed of others.

We have to build a functioning/loving government.

It is time to say the truth—that nearly 4 out of 5 children lack enough nourishing food to eat. We have to stop those working for a living from being badly paid.

Sharing society's wealth is the answer to human poverty. Join our fight for an end to poverty.

Contact Jan Lightfoot at 719.465.3454

i do not know "what i am,"
except a worker

trying
to pay for groceries
like you

i do not know
what "race" to mark
on legal forms

or what "middle class"
means today

or where my next paycheck
is coming from...

all i know
is that the world
my parents gave me
doesn't work

and i'm pretty sure the only chance
that me and my fellow free-falling
millenials have
to keep on eating

is to make
the world

again

— Adam Gottlieb

The battle for democracy in Benton Harbor, MI

From the Editors of the
People's Tribune

Rev. Edward Pinkney, incarcerated for fighting the corporate giant, Whirlpool, on behalf of the poorest workers of Benton Harbor, has without fail written a monthly column for the *People's Tribune* for the last 15 years. This month the reverend asked the *People's Tribune* to say a few words about our experience participating in the Benton Harbor struggle and helping to shine a light on its political significance for all of America.

The *People's Tribune* met the Pinkney family (Rev. Edward and Dorothy) after the 2003 Benton Harbor uprising over the senseless police killing of the young Terrence T-shirt Shern. The uprising was a harbinger: it shook the corporate power structure in the region. It was a response to the poverty, racism, wanton police terror, murders and jailing of the youth. Underlying it was the automation and globalization

that had destroyed industrial jobs and devastated this once stable working class town. Suddenly the people had no future.

Around this time, the Whirlpool Corporation (that dominates the region), along with local, state, and federal governments, run by both parties, worked together to secure the corporate takeover of the town. Once industry declined, a grand redevelopment plan began, starting with the theft of a cherished lakefront park. The aim of the plan was to turn the town into a profitable playground for the rich. It included the driving out of the poor.

This same process was occurring throughout Michigan. Gov. Rick Snyder launched an undemocratic new form of rule as part of the corporate takeover of the state. Called the Emergency Management system, state appointed "dictators" came into Michigan cities, breaking union contracts, destroying public schools and handing public assets over to corporations and speculators. Local elected officials were shoved

aside. Democracy was denied.

The problem the corporate government faces is that the dispossessed workers now number in the millions. The corporations have to prevent people from uniting around their common interests. The successful statewide vote to stop Michigan's dictatorial emergency management system was a signal of the danger the corporations faced. The movement kept growing.

Rev. Pinkney warned about the growing dictatorship and his organization BANCO ran electoral campaigns to unseat Whirlpool's people in office locally. The government lashed out, arresting him on phony vote fraud charges to silence the movement. No evidence was presented at his trial, which saw the poorest of the community testify in his defense.

Today, a police state in the service of the corporations is on the rise in America to stop the movement for water, healthcare, education and other basic needs. This is why an uncompromis-



Rev. Pinkney, imprisoned on phony vote fraud charges resulting from his leadership in an effort to unseat a Whirlpool-backed mayor, speaking at a Detroit rally several years ago to turn the water back on for Detroit's poorest families. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

ing leader of the people like Rev. Pinkney is so key. He and the corps of leaders rising up today are leading the struggle forward. Like Rev. Pinkney, they are arousing the people with a vision of a different society. A movement of millions that is clear on where it is going cannot be stopped.

The *People's Tribune* thanks Rev. Pinkney, Dorothy Pinkney, Emma Kinnard, Pati Heinz, and everyone from Benton Harbor who contribute their stories and allow the *People's Tribune* to be a weapon in the struggle of the American people for a democratic world.

Johann Christoph Arnold

1940-2017



Johann Christoph Arnold.

the 1960s, his interest in the civil rights movement led him to the American South where he worked with Martin Luther King, an experience that changed his life.

Arnold was ordained a pastor in 1972 and served as a pastor until his death. His pastoral work took him into hospitals, nursing homes, juvenile detention centers, and Death Row.

Those of us who first met Pastor Arnold in the 1990s know that he worked tirelessly to achieve the united action of all those opposed to the injustices of that time, especially the Iraq war and the increased use of the death penalty in the United States.

Because he was a man of great patience, humility, and sincerity, Johann Christoph Arnold was able to play an important role in bringing together religious and non-religious revolutionaries in the fight to transform society. We are proud to have published his words and the words of other members of his religious community in the pages of this newspaper. The finest tribute we can all pay to his memory is to intensify the effort to unite the revolutionaries of all backgrounds in the fight to create a new, cooperative society.

From the Editors

With great sadness, the *People's Tribune* notes the passing of Johann Christoph Arnold, who died in Rifton, New York on April 15, 2017 after a months-long battle with cancer.

Arnold was a senior elder of the Bruderhof, a movement of Christian communist communities which originated in Germany in the 1920s. He was born in England, the country the Bruderhof fled to after being driven out of Nazi Germany because of their opposition to fascism.

As a young boy, Arnold lived with his parents in a Bruderhof community in Paraguay. There, the conditions of extreme poverty deepened his sympathy for the poor of the entire world. In 1954, he moved to New York. During

Rev. Pinkney's lawyers speak on recent Michigan Supreme Court Order on Pinkney's appeal:

"The Order of the Michigan Supreme Court for oral argument on whether prejudicial evidence was admitted at Pinkney's trial and whether the statute is valid is good news. The first would get him a new trial, which they probably would not pursue because he has already served his sentence. The second would dismiss the charges." — Hugh M. Davis

"It is clear that the Michigan Supreme Court has shown interest in the two issues it specified in the order. The first issue, involving the introduction [into the trial] of Pinkney's political and community activities that went beyond the recall effort of the former mayor, should be of great concern to all—even to people who do not support Pinkney and are against his political and social positions. A great deal of that political and community activity was critical of local officials and a local corporation. The use of this First Amendment activity to obtain a conviction is very disturbing." — Tim Holloway

My city Cries.

Pity lies under the Foot of the Heartless.
So much self Hatred Harnessed.
Catastrophe and Carnage are the Guidelines
for Modern Civilization.
Dedication to Devastation are the strongest
commitments.
Actions committed against our own Leads to
self Resentment.
I thought Life Matters.
Whatever happened to Aspirations of
Peaceful existence.
The Reality is lives are being wasted in an
instance.
Now's the Time to Rebel against this.
I'll lead the resistance.
Ensure every block has a Healing Corner.
Do away with the Guns Concealed on
Corners.

More Life Less Coroners.
The time is now for All who's willing.
Let's Break through these invisible Ceilings
en Route to our Potential.
Its time for the Men to use their Credentials
to be more positively influential.
The Change starts now.
Offsets feelings of Anguish with Acts of
Love.
The Time is Now.
The Youth want to Live.
The time is Now.
Mindstate must be altered.
The time is Now.
Before the City is All cried out!

— Ollie Woods