

BILLIONAIRE TAX CUTS = MORE HUNGRY CHILDREN



This 3-year-old is among the one in five U.S. children who go hungry at some point during the year; 49 million Americans lack nutritious food regularly. Meanwhile, moral outrage grows at the federal tax bill that gives trillions to the rich and sets the stage for slashing social programs. See pages 3 and 9. PHOTO/DISCHA-AS, SHUTTERSTOCK



**A CALL TO
END POVERTY
PAGE 3**

PHOTO/STEPHANIE WEATHERBEE



**HOMELESS DEMAND
THEIR RIGHTS
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2018: Let's build the revolution for a new society

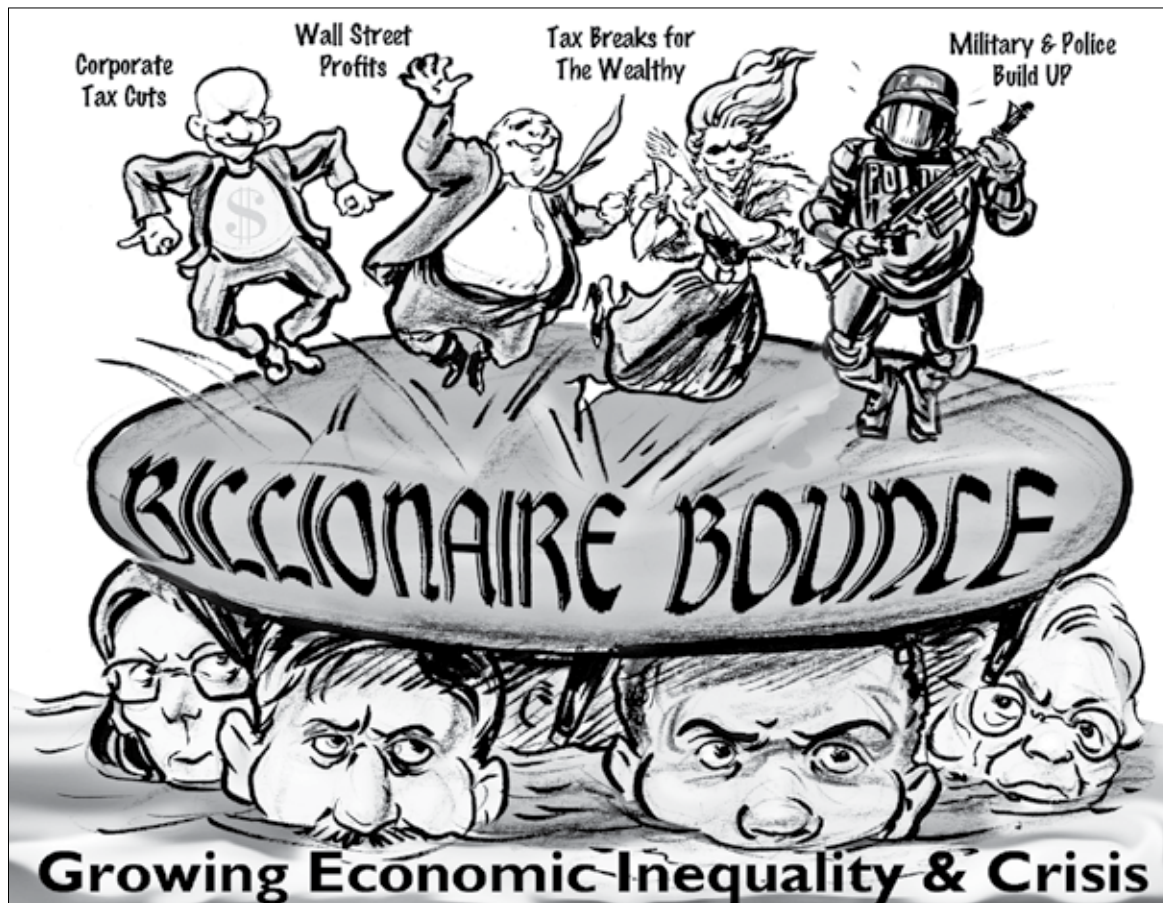
EDITORIAL

It is a New Year and every "New Year" we make resolutions and declare how we will better ourselves and our lives in the next twelve months. We look back on the previous year to analyze whether or not we made good on our resolutions. This New Year let's look back on what we, the people have experienced in 2017, what we have accomplished, and examine what resolutions we need to make for the future.

Last year was one of deteriorating conditions for millions of us. Despite the valiant efforts of "we, the people" to come to the aid of our brothers and sisters in distress, providing aid to hurricane victims from Puerto Rico to Houston, standing with the water protectors at Standing Rock and elsewhere against a destructive pipeline and for protection of our environment, fighting the fascist emergency manager law and the corporate effort to takeover water in Flint, protesting the increasing police brutality across the nation, and marching for health care and immigrant rights, for housing, education, against racism and sexism, (the list goes on), we, the people find our government aiding the corporations at our expense.

Story after story reveals a government blind to the cries of the people for housing and health care for all; a government that is more and more an outright front for corporate shareholders, billionaires, and millionaire wannabes.

The reality for a growing section of American workers (fifty percent of us are living in or on the edge of poverty) is economic starvation and ruin. An estimated 6.5 million youth are now homeless. Hungry children in rural America are breaking into neighbors' homes and stealing food from their refrigerators. Young



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

single moms are car-pooling an hour's drive to sell their plasma to buy food for their kids. Children are selling their bodies on the streets to help support their families. It is winter. Our homeless brothers and sisters are forced from their tents, roused from sleep by cops at the orders of our elected officials. They're scattered to die in the cold, while public housing is destroyed. Public property is given to private developers, turning cities into playgrounds for the rich. The holiday season of "Good Will Towards Men and Peace on Earth" has ended. Charitable organizations are strained to the limit. We have a system that protects the "rights" of corporations over the people's "rights" for life itself.

The decimation of our class by the economic revolution cannot be stopped by any one leader or by reforming the system.

Labor-replacing technology is here to stay and is being introduced in every category of jobs. Some are forced to work three poverty-wage jobs to keep a roof over their head as a result. Meanwhile, in the face of mounting oppression by the corporations and their government, unity of those who are fighting for their survival is what we are in the process of accomplishing.

Let us resolve to fight forward to secure a future with a vision of a sustainable society based on distribution of the abundance produced today to meet the needs of "We, the People," whether we can pay or not. Let's move onward to build the revolution for a new society that is truly governed by us in our common interests.

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Prisoner donates week's pay

A prisoner showed his appreciation of the *People's Tribune* by donating \$2. Prisoners make about 37 cents a day, so the donation was more than one week's pay. This donation challenges us all! Won't you also donate?

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PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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

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

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

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

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

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Bloated billionaires get a tax cut while millions go hungry

COVER STORY

The corporate tax cut bill that bulldozed through Congress late in 2017 was yet another crushing burden that “the 1 percent” loaded onto the backs of the American people, millions of whom are already suffering.

The House and Senate passed differing versions of the bill, with the initial Senate version hustled through in the dead of night. As this article is being written, House and Senate negotiators said they had agreed “in principle” on a final bill.

While its backers claim the bill is a \$1.5 trillion tax cut, in fact the total tax cut is \$6 trillion over a decade, almost entirely for the wealthy and corporations. This is offset by \$4.5 trillion in tax increases—all of which will be paid by those of us who are not rich. It will be the largest tax cut, and the biggest tax increase, in American history. The Democrats did nothing to stop it.

The bill also sets the stage for a massive assault on social programs, including Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security (see page 9). It will do damage to Obamacare. We are watching the government abandon any responsibility for helping the people, while handing trillions to the rich and the corporations. This is happening at a time when the already poor are being crushed and the so-called “middle class”

Combined results of federal tax and budget plans:

- **Destroy any federal responsibility for the public’s health.**
- **The richest 1 percent get 65-80 percent of the tax cut benefits.**
- **Corporations get a permanent tax reduction from 35 to 21 percent.**
- **Medicaid cuts to millions of children, elderly, mentally ill, by over a trillion dollars.**
- **Medicare would be cut by \$473 billion by 2025, setting the stage for privatization.**

is being driven into the ranks of the poor.

President Trump and Congressional Republicans have lamely tried to cover up this shameless robbery by implying that the tax cut will bring back jobs to the United States. This argument is supposed to fool voters who are sorely in need of jobs in the Rust Belt and other economically abandoned areas. If anything, the bill gives businesses incentives to buy more robots

and hire fewer workers, and to shift more jobs overseas.

While the bill gives workers a small, temporary tax cut, the benefits enacted for the rich and the corporations are permanent. And the bill adds \$1.4 trillion to the government budget deficit by 2027.

Electronic and robotic production has replaced most human labor in assembly-line workplaces since the 1970s. As technology improves, it has been replacing service-sector jobs even more rapidly. Ultimately, all jobs are threatened with elimination. We are tumbling into a worldwide economic and political catastrophe. Neither Democrats nor Republicans can or will stop this process.

The system does not need to hire millions of us to do a day’s work for a day’s pay any more. Part of the money that formerly went to wages now goes onto Wall Street and the global financial markets. So does part of the money that funded the social safety nets, public education, mental health, infrastructure and many other services. The rest goes into the military- and prison-industrial complexes, militarization of the police, and suppression of our democratic rights, all of which is aimed at protecting the sky-high pile of money and private property in the hands of the 1 percent. The tax bill is the latest assault on a working class that the ruling class no longer needs, and a desperate effort by the billionaires to maintain their profits.



Protesters rally outside Speaker of the House Raul Ryan’s Wisconsin office against the proposed tax bill that gives billions to the rich and destroys social programs for the rest of us. PHOTO/CHARLES MILLER

Inside the power circles of America, they are having a Babylonian feast like King Belshazzar did in the Old Testament. But the handwriting is on the wall. The message says the billionaires are being weighed in the balance of history and found wanting.

Since the capitalists no longer need us, why should we save them from their doom? We could instead move toward a reorga-

nized, cooperative society based on public ownership of the corporations and public ownership of the new technology.

We can start by uniting around our common need for food, water, homes, health care, and other necessities, and demanding that the government guarantee people’s basic needs are met. Unity like this is an unstoppable force.

Campaign calls for moral revival to confront systemic poverty

By Bob Lee

In December, the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival held a press conference and other events in Washington, D.C., to help launch a campaign of direct action, civil disobedience, voter education and mass mobilization aimed at challenging the evils of “poverty, systemic racism, militarism, environmental devastation, and our distorted national morality.” The organizers hope to mount large protests on 40 consecutive days in 2018, in at least 25 state capitals and other locations.

At the Capitol building, the

campaign attempted to deliver a letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell condemning the tax bill that was before Congress in December. The letter called the bill a “gross act of violence ... against our nation’s most vulnerable to serve its richest and most powerful.”

At the press conference, speakers testified as to their personal experiences with homelessness, poverty, and having loved ones die for lack of health care. The Rev. Dr. William Barber, co-chair of the campaign with the Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, said that, “We are a nation that guarantees corporations welfare, but we do not guarantee the basic needs of

the poor. We have 400 families in America who make an average of \$97,000 an hour, while we arrest people who simply want \$15 an hour and a union.” He also noted that “53 cents of every discretionary dollar paid in federal taxes goes directly to the military, to the war economy ... They will say we don’t have the money [to eliminate poverty], but we found \$4 trillion to wage unnecessary war. We have the money; we don’t have the moral capacity to face what ails our democracy.”

Rev. Terri Hord Owens asked the audience to “imagine what kind of society we could have if we submitted our resources, the

production of those resources, the stewardship of those resources, and the distribution of those resources to the almighty hand of God, to the love of neighbor. We would indeed have a different

society. ... We have to dismantle the systems that oppress us all and hold our country hostage.”

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

The *People’s Tribune* welcomes your comments. Your feedback helps us stay on course as a paper that points the way forward to a new cooperative society. Email info@peopletribune.org or call 800-691-6888.

— The Editors

Allow the homeless to say what is needed

Editor's note: This article is excerpted from a Daily Cal interview with Mike Zint.

BERKELEY, CA — The thing I hated most during winter was going inside. I knew I would have to go back outside, into the weather. Rain and cold, combined with wind is miserable. You want to be in the sun, basking in the warmth, but again, the wind takes the heat away. Staying wet for a few days happens. Having soaked feet is constant. Replacing socks is needed. You also truly appreciate a cup of hot soup. It warms the hands and the belly. Unfortunately, that relief lasts about five minutes.

Add cops, disastrous services, and no real desire to put in affordable housing, and you have a sense of constant despair. The knowledge that every city wants you gone, and will chase you around, gives you a sense of hopelessness.

Drugs, alcohol, or insanity? Take your pick. Those are the only real escapes.

Right now, it's pouring out. The homeless are struggling to stay dry. Many will fail. Their bedding will be wet. It will stay that way until the sun comes back out. The longer that takes, the worse the sleeping becomes.

The next six months are the hardest. I made it through by remembering the summer months. I knew they would be back.

In the winter, some will go to the shelters. Once they are full, those that are left will try to stay as dry as they can in doorways or under overhangs. There are also those who will stay where they sleep, if a shelter is built. I would stay in my tent as long as possible.

What is needed? Affordable housing. But since housing is a commodity, affordable housing will be seen to have a negative impact on what the property owners can charge. So that's not a reality. Navigation centers? Without affordable housing, there is no exit strategy for navigation centers. Except to shuffle them

away. Adding shelters could help, if done with the needs of the homeless in mind. No hours, storage, handicap ready, etc. Privacy is possible by erecting tents inside. We have done that before. Cameras for security.

Tents on city land work, as we have shown. Tents are quick, cheap, and will provide shelter, stability, security, privacy, and a personal space. Rules minimize problems.

The homeless always need dry socks. Dry bedding is needed at times like this. Hot coffee. A cup of coffee can change a homeless person's day during winter. Warm food. They also need the public to treat them the same as they would their neighbor, or co-worker.

The homeless hear "get a job" several times every day. They get nasty looks. They have people walk out of their way to avoid being too close. They have people purposefully look away. That is a good day. On a bad day, they get stuff thrown at them. They get chased away. They get attacked.



Residents of the 'First they came for the homeless' Poor Tour tent community at Berkeley CA, City Hall gather at their food and literature tables. PHOTO/SARAH MENEFFEE

They get pissed on or set on fire when asleep.

The only difference is how cold you are while enduring it. The holidays bring out more compassion, but that ends on January 2nd.

There are winter shelters open. There are warming cen-

ters. These have hours of operation though. Yes, they do provide relief, but they are not the solution. Stability is the solution. No hours. Allow the homeless a say in what is needed. That is how you truly help them.



'The Son of Man has no place to lay his head'

Eighty plus people gathered in Chicago's cold for the 5th annual Las Posadas event sponsored by Logan Square Ecumenical Association. Mark Saulys spoke for the *People's Tribune* as a representative of Chicago's homeless community. Mark pointed to Christ's own homelessness and to the fact that a market-based housing system thrives and profits only with human misery as a component.

PHOTO/ANDY WILLIS

L.A. Skid Row activist defies mayor: A revolutionary moment

By Chris Venn

LOS ANGELES, CA — Successive mayors in Los Angeles have refused to provide basic human rights for the residents of Skid Row. From Tom Bradley to Antonio Villaraigosa to the current mayor Eric Garcetti, mayors have hidden behind masks of being liberal Democrats. The city government has criminalized and dehumanized the residents of Skid Row and the exploding, citywide homeless population.

In a ceremony on December 4, the mayor presented General Dogon, a Skid Row community leader and a member of the Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN), with an award for helping to create a hygiene unit with seven bathroom stalls and six showers ... this in a city of 58,000 houseless people! Dogon received the award and then ripped it up in front of the mayor.

A revolution is described as a moment when the ruling class can no longer rule in the same way and the oppressed class can no longer live in the old way. This was a revolutionary moment.



A skid row activist rips up an award given to him by the mayor, stating that homeless people in Los Angeles need health equity, toilets, and an end to criminalization. PHOTO/DSEA_LOS ANGELES

Here are General Dogon's own words to Mayor Garcetti as he tore in half his commendation:

"This award is just like the mayor and his cronies: it's worthless. This right here, these toilets you're bringing is 10 years late and 300 short. For the last 16 years, you've been in leadership of City Council. You have directly criminalized Skid Row and I cannot accept this. This ain't

nothing compared to what we've been going through and what we need. We totally laid out in the "Dirty Divide" [a 2013 report calling for public health equity on Skid Row] what the community needs, and until the recommendations in the Dirty Divide, that are said inside, then what we're doing today don't mean nothing. It's a start but like I said we need 300 more toilets."

We Could Really Use a Miracle

The lovers huddled close under their shared blanket, under the shade of an awning on Michigan avenue in winter. The big dog they had with them even wore a coat. He wagged his tail and licked the young woman's blue cheek as she smiled, laughed, and moved in closer to her lover. Their sign read "We could really use a miracle today." The dog wagged his tail and hopped up on her body.

— Eric Allen Yankee



PHOTO/SARAH MENEFFEE

Homeless with AIDS: The poor have to lock arms

By Gerry Scoppettuolo

BOSTON, MA — Willy (not his real name) was evicted from his apartment, robbed twice after sleeping on the streets of Boston homeless, and missed enough dosages of his HIV medications to endanger his survival medically. He has now become another statistic to be added to the 300+ homeless people living with HIV in Boston. Many, like Willy, are African-American.

But nothing could prepare him for this. After ten hours in the Emergency Room at Brigham and Women's Hospital, with severe neuropathy in his feet, he was discharged to the street even though he could not walk without the aid of someone. At his last blood work, he had 800,000 copies of HIV and 14 t-cells in his blood—a nearly destroyed immune system.

Willy was found lifeless in a food court and a good Samaritan used his phone to call his cousin who called me. We are a group of three close friends who had been helping Willy survive. As quick as I could, I got to the food court and helped Willy get to the street and a cab to get to a clinic where he could be seen. From there we went to the nearby Boston Medical Center Emergency Room. After four hours, a medical assistant confided in us that Willy would not be able to even stay the night in the waiting room until morning when he had a bed waiting for him at the Barbara McGinnes respite program. He had to get there by 7 a.m. Being admitted there was out of the question. Willy had no insurable illness. I brought Willy home with me and in the morning my husband drove us to Barbara McGinnes where Willy was, mercifully, admitted.

Willy left that program after a few days and got a bed at Pine Street Inn, Boston's oldest emergency shelter. He had been banned permanently a few weeks before from the 450-bed Boston Public Health Commission-run Southamton shelter for bringing in a peach (no food is allowed to be brought in there). He argued with one of the staff and tossed a towel at him (which missed). He had just completed the required seven day stay in the emergency bed section of the shelter before allowed into the HIV Safe Harbor program where he would get a contract (guaranteed) bed and not have to line up every day at 3 p.m. to stay in line for a bed.

This is what can happen to the most oppressed among us, even in progressive Boston, the only state in the U.S. that requires public authorities to provide emergency shelters for the homeless. This is what can happen in Massachusetts where HIV incidence has fallen to a "mere" 650 a year and where access to HIV medications is universal. This is what can happen when the average one-bedroom apartment rents for \$2300/year.

This is what does happen when the economic system we live under must, as a condition of its success, generate unemployment and homelessness to survive. But this system's days are numbered so long as the poor, the exploited and the oppressed lock arms in solidarity and fight for true liberation!



The city of Denver, CO has been destroying homeless camps, displacing people who have nowhere to go, but a movement to provide housing for homeless people is growing. PHOTO/MARK P. LEWIS

Resist the police state – 'The world is waiting for you'

Editor's note: These are excerpts from a longer piece.

By PJ DAmico

DENVER, CO — I want to take a moment to talk about the police, to at least challenge some conventions

I have been detained by the police eight times in the last two years. I have been followed by the police with my six-year-old daughters three blocks for no reason except that, "We know who

you are." I had to move out of Denver because the police follow me. I was recently arrested and am currently on probation for caring for the "poor"—police had captured 70 body cam videos of me as "state's evidence" in my trial. I was helping homeless people.

I've been detained by police for being near a Black man. In Atlanta 20 years ago, I was in a Ford Explorer, again with a Black man, and 10 "Red dog" police pulled us over and we had eight

guns pointed on us.

Maybe my second worst experience of police was walking up on a baseball field and seeing one of my 12-year-old Little League players in a choke hold by the police just along the dugout before a baseball practice. Last week I saw with my own eyes a police officer kick a seventeen-year-old girl recovering from cancer at 6 A.M., sleeping outside. It was freezing cold. Last night I was detained and briefly interrogated by the police in

rural Colorado for driving with two homeless friends. I was the only one who had ID and that is the only reason we are not in jail. The privilege of legal identity!

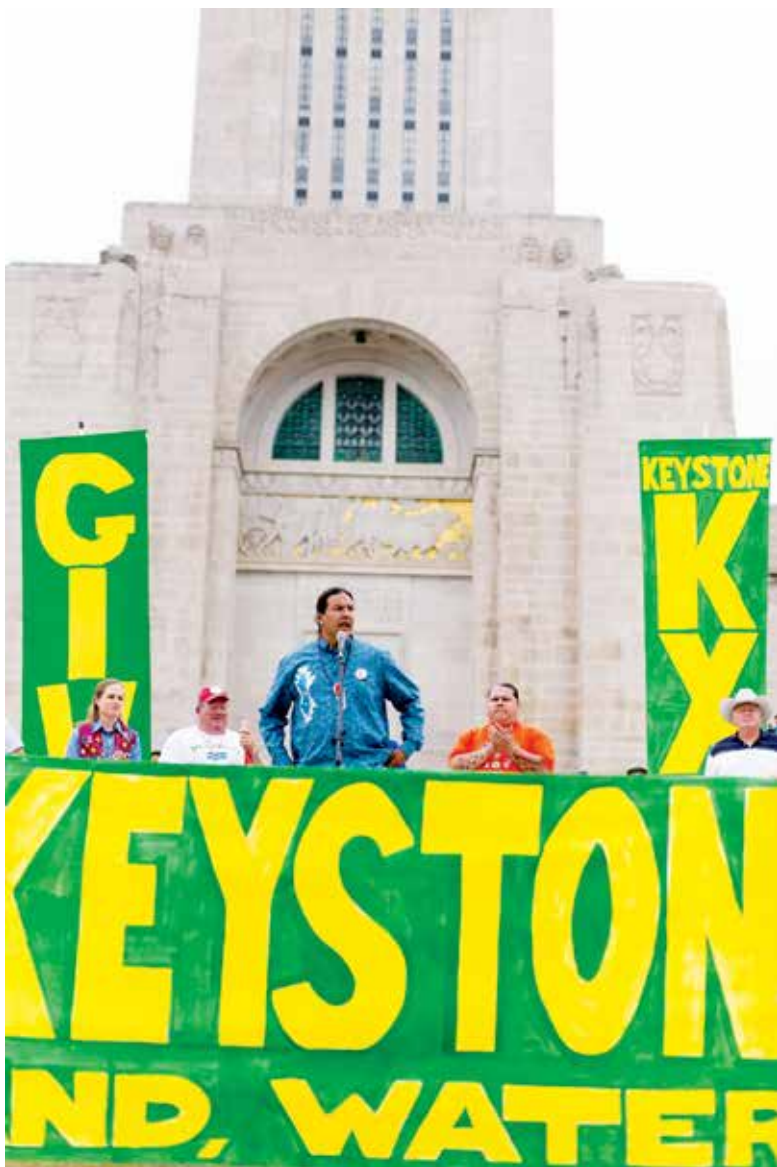
I am not a Black man. I have no idea the state of constant fear it must be like to be a target, but trust that I have reason to scream FTP!

Still I do not hate police—the police work for a system they are sworn to protect. It is the system that is evil. The police take

orders from the mayor of Denver. These are your cops! If you don't like the system—vote, resist, come out with me and get arrested. Denver is a police state. The state is theoretically led by "we the people." It is not.

I am a citizen of a city that does not yet exist! That we still have to create!! We have been sleeping. Wake up! Rise up! The world is waiting for you. What are you waiting for?

‘Stand up for what you believe in’ says Nebraska pipeline fighter



Pipeline Fighters marched through the streets of Lincoln, Nebraska in August to send a message to the state’s Public Service Commission that TransCanada’s Keystone XL pipeline is NOT in the public interest. Center: Manape LaMere. Left: Art Tanderup.

PHOTO/ALEX MATZKE, BOLD NEBRASKA

Editor’s Note: Art Tanderup, a farmer fighting construction of TransCanada’s Keystone XL pipeline in Nebraska, talks with Sandy Reid of the People’s Tribune about the Nebraska Public Service Commission (PSC) ruling that allows the pipeline to proceed, but on an alternative route. Tanderup discusses the pipeline’s danger to the Ogallala Aquifer, the largest fresh water aquifer in existence, and to farmlands and Native lands. As we go to print, TransCanada Corporation has asked the PSC to reconsider and in response, landowners filed a motion for oral arguments and their own motion to reconsider.

“It’s an outrage for our government to allow a foreign corporation the right to come in and take farmers and ranchers and Natives land to make more money. That is wrong,” said Art Tanderup.

“We hoped for an all out rejection of the pipeline. However, TransCanada didn’t get their preferred route. So that’s a victory. And, the alternative route creates all kinds of issues for the company.” According to reports, it adds an additional pumping

station and five miles to the company’s preferred route, making it more expensive. “There’s also all kinds of potential legal challenges. The landowners in between where the company’s preferred route changed to the alternative route don’t even know whether they are on that pipeline route.”

“But it’s not a win for water,” Tanderup said. “Approximately 40% of the company’s alternative route still includes the Eastern sand hills where we live and where the aquifer is the highest in some places. On this portion of the route they will be burying the pipe in the top layer of the aquifer.” The alternate route is near TransCanada’s existing Keystone XL 1 Pipeline, which just leaked 210,000+ gallons in South Dakota. “Had we had that spill, those chemicals would be in this aquifer. They can bring in men and equipment, but there is absolutely no way to clean it up. Once those chemicals are in that water they disperse and it only takes a drop of Benzene to kill somebody, to kill the livestock, pollute crops and pastures. In many places, that aquifer has springs that come out into our rivers. A spill could have a devastating effect on the

entire state. That aquifer, in my opinion, is the greatest resource that flows from this state. But we couldn’t talk about safety issues at the PSC hearing because TransCanada influenced people that made the law.”

“The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska and all the tribes in Nebraska have vowed to fight. They don’t want this thing in any way, shape or form. It crosses sacred land, the Ponca Trail of Tears (which is on my farm,) and it crosses that Trail at least twice with alternate routes. On the same day this decision was heard, the tribes were up in South Dakota signing a treaty opposing any tar sands pipeline. We stand hand in hand with our Native relatives.”

“We’re going to do everything we can to go through the court system. If that doesn’t work, [my wife] Helen and I have decided that we’re going to be there when the bulldozers come. They’ll have to come through us, or bury us right there. This is all wrong, absolutely totally wrong. There’s nothing good if we are left with a world with nothing good. If you don’t stand up for something you believe in, your life is worthless. We can’t be apathetic anymore.”

A West Virginia town on the verge of extinction

By Annetta Coffman

MINDEN, WV — Disappointment. Hurt. Anger. All emotions felt by my small community in Minden, West Virginia when we met with the EPA on October 27-28. A community of 251 people where one third of the population has cancer or has succumbed to it in the past four years.

Our town began our fight against PCB contamination in the 1980s when a mining equipment site in the area dumped and stored the contaminants on its property, spreading into the creek bank and onto our properties.

We voiced our concerns after our small community was annexed, without a community vote, within the city limits in order to put in a \$23 million sewage system. We became concerned about the property on the old Shaffer Equipment Mine, where the sewer system was going to be housed through. The old sewage plant failed due to what is believed to be a previous plant manager’s stealing over \$70,000 in equipment and money. The board that oversaw these issues apparently did not “catch”

any of this activity until the sewage plant failed and not one person was held accountable.

After four years of ignoring our outcries, the EPA returned in June 2017 to conduct additional testing for PCBs. Samples were taken along Arbutle Creek, the old Shaffer Equipment site, as well as selected homeowner’s properties. Two personal properties tested above toxic level, at 1.2 parts per million and 1.3 ppm. Both properties are in a flood plain, with several homes between them.

The Arbutle Creek results were 50 ppm and 6.2 ppm, 50 times over the safe level of 1 ppm.

Not one city, county or state official has reached out to Minden, although several of us have called, e-mailed and even reached out to their social media pages. However, a special council was appointed to the town of Fayetteville, West Virginia where a transformer containing PCB contaminants well below the clean-up level was found buried.

Due to statewide apathy towards us, federal health agencies have been prevented from

performing an accurate health assessment and research that would prove a direct link between PCBs and the cancer deaths of hundreds in Minden.

The EPA returned in late October 2017 to reveal the results of their tests. The EPA offered a 10-minute presentation, then we were instructed to walk around to tables and gather information. Their malignant attitude towards us left us feeling disrespected and unimportant. We were told the EPA would return in two months to conduct additional testing. However, winters can be treacherous in West Virginia, where testing will be halted until spring. We feel that our socioeconomic status keeps us from receiving the relief we beg for. Minden houses one commercial business, a rafting company, which we also feel is one of the biggest factors in pushing the sewage system, as the city of Oak Hill will gain thousands of dollars in quarterly taxes from them.

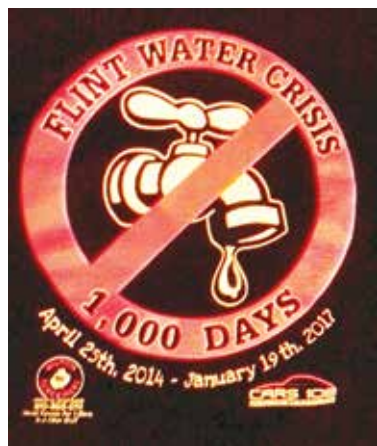
For more information on our town and our fight, you can find us on Facebook at Minden PCB Oil.



Each balloon represents a person from Minden, West Virginia currently fighting cancer or who has died from cancer within four years. The town began fighting PCB contamination from a mining site in the area in the 1980s.

PHOTO/HEADWATERS DEFENSE COMMITTEE

Activists cry foul as State sues the city it poisoned



Editor's note: Below are excerpts from a letter by representatives of Flint activist groups to the judge ruling over a lawsuit against the city of Flint by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

Dear Judge Lawson,

Residents of Flint continue to suffer the effects of having ingested toxic water, laced with lead and harmful bacteria, for nearly four years. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has audaciously brought [a] lawsuit that is now in your courtroom to force the City of Flint and Flint residents to make [a] decision [to switch the city's water source] on their timeline. We do NOT stand with any long-term water source that is brought to us under duress in a time of crisis.

The long-suffering residents of Flint are grappling with the following:

1. We are outraged that the MDEQ would dare to bring a lawsuit against the very city they poisoned ... the MDEQ was named as being almost wholly the "culprit" agency behind the Flint water crisis ... this makes the lawsuit ... null and void.

2. Due to Michigan's Public Act 436 of 2012, known as the Emergency Manager (EM) Law, signed into law by Gov. Rick Snyder, the people's right to democratic process was wholly suspended ... three successive EMs were involved, two of whom have since had felony charges brought against them for their role in the water crisis. Public Act 436 made it so that any vote the people made could be overturned ... Thus, the EM Law created an autocracy. It was the EM who made the decision to go to the Flint River, while another EM oversaw the switch ... Neither that EM, nor his successor EM recommended going back to Lake Huron, even as problems and public distress mounted. The Flint City Council voted to return to Detroit water as the city's water source in March, 2015, but this decision was reversed. Although General Motors was allowed to return in October, 2014, our city's residents were disallowed from doing so. Furthermore, it was the

MDEQ who counseled the powers that be at the time that using the anti-corrosive treatment to treat the Flint River water was unnecessary ... with nothing in place to keep the corrosive river water from leeching lead from the water pipes of our aging infrastructure, lead and Legionella bacteria entered our city's water supply and poisoned adults and children alike, causing a massive public health crisis. That was a direct result of this dictatorship... That the people's democracy was suspended and decisions made without our voices or votes heard ... that makes this lawsuit a sham and should be null and void.

3. The residents of Flint have yet to be compensated from the \$25 million lawsuit brought by former Councilman Scott Kincaid against the City of Flint for the illegal water rates ... during the time we were on Flint River water...

4. Residents have been shut out of communication surrounding the contract with GLWA...

We appreciate your consideration. We whole-heartedly believe that access to clean water is a human right and any agreement that does not recognize this fundamental need is unacceptable.

Read full letter on Facebook: FlintH2OJustice

Fight for water and earth faces corporate power

From the Editors

On these pages are stories from the many water and environmental struggles taking place across our country, all of which are butting up against the reign of corporate power. Today, Flint is still without clean water. But when General Motors, with its giant production plant in Flint discovered that their auto parts were rusting from toxic water, their water source was immediately switched. The people of Flint had to keep using the poisoned water. This year Detroit shut off running water to 1 in 10 homes that were unable to pay the skyrocketing price. The corporate drive to own the water is behind both the Flint and Detroit story. Puerto Ricans still face unsafe water and limited electricity, but government is busy clearing the way for profit-hungry corporations to gain from people's misery. Appalachians are dying from cancer from the coal industry; native peoples and farmers are fighting energy industry and pipelines that threaten land and water, but government supports the fossil fuel industry.

What is the resolution to our life or death crisis? How do we stop the corporate destruction of humanity and our Earth? How do we get power over these giant corporations instead of them having power over us? To answer this, we have to begin asking crucial questions. That is, do corporations have a right to profit from and own the public's water, energy, food, healthcare and all else we need for our survival? And, does government have a right to serve the corporations rather than our needs? These are revolutionary questions. And, the future of humanity rests on the answer.

Puerto Ricans still without power and water

Months after Hurricane María hit Puerto Rico, tens of thousands of people on the island have no electricity or water—many use river or stream water. Meanwhile, the U.S. government hands out millions in contracts to corporations who care only about profits and not a people in desperate need of help. We must bring this humanitarian crisis to every community and demand that the U.S. government provides for our people, not banks, hedge funds, and corporations.

Energy companies vs. our common bond of life and planet



By Bill Bunting

BIG SPRINGS, WV — I wondered how I would begin this article. And I can only begin by saying that We the People are under attack by our very own government and by the energy

companies that own it. It's insane, but the good news is if we unite to defend our land and our health we will win.

As many of you already know, the energy companies have had full reign over our lives since the industrial revolution began. The laws are not for We the People but are for corporate greed. This has made us all sick, taken our land, and made them a very powerful force to a point where they own armies and other governments across the globe.

Now they have the Chinese energy company that bought out Australia and several states such as Alabama, Pennsylvania, California, and Nevada, coming to West Virginia to rape the land and sicken these people like the

American corporations do. They won't use locals for the work, in fact they actually bought/leased the infrastructure already in place. The shale oil and CSG (coal scam gas) they get won't be for Americans, it is for China. So, in other words, our government sold our land to a foreign country leaving us to pay for the mess.

And to add insult to injury the Atlantic coast pipeline will begin construction on April 1. It will be like the other 2.4 million miles of leaking pipelines already in place.

So, my question, brothers and sisters, is: When do we stand up and stop the rape of our land? When do we take back our resources, our very health, and our children's future? There is only

one planet and with no planet there will be no life. Are you prepared to die for corporate greed? Is it OK to be poisoned and killed by foreign powers—or by any corporation? Will we leave our children and grandchildren a planet they can even live on?

If you see the evil in these corporate Earth killers, please stand up. Let's begin talking about how we can stop this and then take action. We can do this as a united front with the common bond of LIFE and PLANET because all of us have this planet in common and need Her to sustain our lives.

I will be forming groups soon. You can do this in your state as well because guess what? You think they are going to stop with West

Virginia? NO! Soon, very soon, the energy corporations will be in your backyard. They already may be there and you don't know it.

It's time to put our differences aside for a minute and take care of our common bond, our planet, and our families wellbeing. It's time to save our own lives because we have been sold by our government to the highest bidder. Think about this.

I love you, Tribe ... please help those of us who love Earth ... home ... and life.

Namaste

Bill Bunting produces videos that seek to build unity around the life or death issues of concern to us all. Contact Bill on Facebook.



Privatization yields rats and school closings in Chicago

By Lew Rosenbaum

CHICAGO, IL — Parent and teacher complaints about rats forced Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to “deep clean” Molli-son Elementary School. Health inspectors failed the school on two more inspections, before the school finally passed. Molli-son isn’t the only one. Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) spokes-people pointed out that it is wide-spread and can be attributed to the privatization of janitorial

Chicago teachers, parents, and kids are leading the fight to get corporate profit out of education and save public education.

PHOTO/SARAH JANE RHEE

services three years ago and the slashing of custodial staff.

The longstanding disin-vestment by the city in its pub-lic schools provides the context for another problem. Now the city plans to shutter all four pub-lic high schools in Englewood, a process one student, speaking at a press conference, called “sys-tematic and intentional.” She went on: “We have seen this before. We are done being played.”

Whether it is rats or school closures, the destruction of pub-lic education is indeed system-atic. A mayor offers Amazon billions to locate its headquar-ters in Chicago but can’t find the money for school resources?

There is no incentive to educate Chicago children for jobs that do not exist (even the anticipat-ed Amazon jobs). Instead, public schools become cash conduits to private corporations like the giant janitorial corporation Aramark or graft-infused educational corpo-rations like SUPES, scheduled to open a charter school.

Parents and students and teachers are fighting to make CPS end its contracts with the likes of Aramark, and end the expansion of charter schools. This is all part of the fight to take power away from the corpora-tions, and, from the national lev-el, guarantee that all schools have the resources they need.

In burnt-over wine country, now comes the hard part

By Dave Ransom

SANTA ROSA, CA—The fires in North-ern California’s wine country were terri-ble, but the aftermath may get pretty ugly, too, as vulture capitalists wheel above the devastation.

And it’s not the first time. After the fire, retired county planner Ray Krauss recalled that he and others prepared a comprehensive “fire history” in the 1970s. They proposed limiting development where fires had burned catastrophically in the past.

There had been just such a fire in 1964 that cascaded down the mountains on the same path as last October’s. The area was sparsely settled then. The burned-out trail-er parks and subdivisions of this year’s fire came later—as did the 44 people who died.

The area was developed against the planners’ advice because money talks. “The real-estate industry did everything they could to stop such proposals and vilified and attacked us planners and our work. And won,” Krauss wrote recently.

It gets worse. On the night of the recent fire, Pacific Gas & Electric had at least 10 incidents of arcing power lines and explod-ing transformers in the mountains, caused by high wind and falling trees—one of which may have started the blaze.

For nearly a decade after causing anoth-er major fire in San Diego, PG&E has been blocking a state-mandated study of where its power lines present the highest risk for wildfires.

Will We the People get to make the deci-sions about what and where to build this time around? Not without organizing and standing up against the deep pockets in months to come.

Already, some of the region’s wealthiest and most influential speculators are revving up to control the aftermath.

One of them, developer/lobbyist Dari-us Anderson—a major money raiser for the Democratic Party—has set up a by- invita-tion-only non-profit, “Rebuild North Bay,” and hired an ex-FEMA director to run it.

Anderson’s strong suit is that politicians in Sacramento and Washington will answer the phone when he calls. His weak suit is operating with the best interests of We the People in mind.

Before the fire, he was fighting a zoning ordinance that required him to build work-er housing along with his new, Wine Coun-try hotel.

Locals fear that he will push the power elite’s game plan of converting the county into a far suburb and weekend retreat for the expansion of Silicon Valley and its wealthy employees.

Also backing Rebuild North Bay is local powerbroker Doug Bosco, a lawyer/lobby-ist—another major fundraiser for the Dem-ocrats and close Anderson associate. Bosco spent a good part of his career represent-ing the big lumber interests that deforested much of the North Coast.

One of Bosco’s business partners, Wil-liam Gallaher, is already trying to buy up properties in the devastated Coffey Park neighborhood, where insurance companies are offering onetime homeowners much less than it will cost to rebuild.

With friends like these you can to find your wallet empty, the locks to your house changed, and your car repossessed. Avoid-ing the fire next time will take organization, courage, and perseverance among We the People.

Oakland officials, corporations wage war on affordable housing

By Steven Miller

OAKLAND, CA — Oakland has the hottest real estate market in the coun-try and one of the worst housing cri-ses. In July, fire destroyed the Alta Waverly construction site where 196 market-rate condos were being built. This was the fourth fire at a condo site in the Oakland area in the last year. One developer, Rick Holliday, stated that the fires indicate “a war on housing.”

Holliday wasn’t talking about the Grand Jury report that Oakland City Council handles lucrative deals for developers in secret. He wasn’t talk-ing about developers dispossessing entire communities, often illegally. He didn’t mention that a one-bed-room apartment in Oakland now costs \$4,000 a month, or that the City Council refuses to adopt a poli-cy to limit rents. Somehow he failed to mention that in the first quarter of 2017 the city gave out 1,000 building permits, but not a single one to build affordable housing.

Homelessness in Alameda Coun-ty increased 40% in the last year.

Fires have also burned at least two of the homeless camps that are appearing everywhere. We have seen fire destroy the Ghost Ship, killing 32 people, and another burn down affordable housing for over 100 peo-ple at 2515 San Pablo, killing four. In this case, the Oakland Relocation Law offers up to \$6,500 for reloca-

tion, but somehow much of this mon-ey never found its way into the hands of the victims.

This is the real war on housing. The lobby of developers, real estate moguls and landlords is the richest in Oakland. On the city’s planning com-mission, six out of seven members (all appointed by the mayor, Libby Schaaf) have such close ties to devel-opers that they commonly have to recuse themselves when voting. The real war on housing is declared when Schaaf proclaims that the best way to get cheaper rent is to build unlimited, high-priced market-rate housing, pro-ducting so many apartments that “they will drive down housing costs.”

In Oakland, it is gentrification when well-off people move into your house or apartment. But when the entire community is replaced, the schools are privatized and the police criminalize or murder the youth, it is really dispossession. This is not an accident, or an act of God. It is a planned, organized and implemented campaign led by corporations.

In Oakland, the local government is directly responsible for the corpo-rate dispossession that is sweeping the city. But the corporations oper-ate behind closed doors. The only way forward is to hold every gov-ernment official accountable to the demands of the people for affordable housing.

Tax cuts for the rich will make us sick

By Rita Valenti

ATLANTA, GA — The Tax and Budget proposals do exactly what Congress has intended for years: devastate Medicaid, dismantle the ACA, ominously cut Medicare and erode, if not totally destroy, any federal responsibility for the public's health. Congressional plans do all this and more including ending funding to protect our food and water supply while giving the richest 1 percent 80 percent of the tax cut benefits and giving corporations a permanent tax reduction of from 35 to 21 percent over the decade.

The class content of these proposals is transparent. Spanning the years from 2018 to 2027, Medicaid funding would be cut by over a trillion dollars. Funding would be increasingly shunted to the states, resulting in restricted eligibility, cuts in benefits and/or punitive waivers like work requirements, drug testing and increased co-pays in order to balance state budgets. In effect, Medicaid would be block-granted by budget, tax and regulatory decrees.

Seventy-four million people receive health benefits from Medicaid. It is the insurance for 39 percent of all children, 50 percent of all births, 60 percent of nursing home coverage, 25 percent of mental health insurance and 20 percent of all addiction treatment. It provides critical independent living resources for the disability community. The com-



Outrage at the state capitol in Atlanta, GA against the tax bill passed by the U.S. Senate.

PHOTOS/JOHN RAMSPOTT

bined public insurances of Medicaid, Medicare, the Veterans Administration, and the uninsured make up about 44 percent of all Americans and is nearly equal to the number of workers with on-the-job insurance. The latter are increasingly unable to access healthcare because of the application of employment-based high deductible insurance plans. These plans offer no reimbursement until the employee has paid the deductible ranging from \$1,500 to \$6,000. Healthcare is the bare-faced expression of the polarization between wealth and poverty even before the enactment of the 2018 budget and tax proposal!

Medicare's budget would suffer \$473 billion in cuts by 2025, setting the stage for its complete privatization through "premium support" schemes. But there's more. The Affordable Care Act "mandate" to buy



Chicago protest over caps that affect the disabled and elderly.

health insurance is eliminated in the Senate tax plan, causing projected annual premium spikes of more than 10 percent in the ACA exchanges and an increase of over 13 million uninsured.

The budget and tax processes are complicated and obfuscated. Resistance is scattered. Distractions abound. A vision of what's possible is fundamental for making a plan of what's necessary, not only to stop this massive transfer of wealth out of the hides of working and poor people to the propertied class, but to go on the

offensive for universal and comprehensive healthcare regardless of ability to pay.

Steps in that strategy are emerging. On the West Coast and in New York, millions are mobilizing for the Campaign for a Healthy California and the New York Health Act respectively. "Medicare for All" bills are in

both the U.S. House and Senate. And thousands have hit the streets, town halls and public hearings for this fight. It is teaching us that we can't go back in history but only forward, to wresting the power of government from the corporate class to our class, so we will have the power to deliver and guarantee healthcare for all!

Is Maine the future of expanding Medicaid?

By Retirees for Single Payer Healthcare

DETROIT, MI — On November 7, Maine became the first state to expand Medicaid by a ballot referendum was successful. The next day, Governor Paul LePage, announced that he would veto any new taxes to fund it.

LePage, a term-limited Republican "right-wing" politician, has vetoed five attempts by the state legislature to expand Medicaid. His purpose this time is to destroy the referendum to expand Medicaid in the other 18 states that refused to fund expansion of Medicaid.

It is also a national call to the other 31 states that have expanded Medicaid to quit funding the program.

We cannot allow this to happen. That is why the state

elections next year are so important.

If we do not defend the expansion of Medicaid in the states, how do we expect to win Expanded and Improved Medicare For All (HR 676) on a national level?

The federal government is now approving state rules that require Medicaid recipients to have a job or perform free labor to government projects.

"Seema Verma, administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, laid out her vision for the state-federal program in two appearances last week, saying her new course gives states wide latitude over eligibility and benefits." (Trump Administration Plan to Add Medicaid Work Requirement Stirs Fears)

Meanwhile some Demo-

cratic "left-wing" politicians in the U.S. Senate, Brian Schatz of Hawaii and Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, want to allow people to buy into Medicaid or Medicare sold in the Affordable Care Act Exchanges. Their bills are simply designed to create public health insurance to compete with private insurance. Their bills' problem is that 69% of Medicaid and 30% of Medicare is controlled by private insurance companies. So, they wouldn't be competing with private health insurance but rather strengthening it.

In the final analysis, all of these political schemes destroy Medicaid and Medicare. Healthcare movement please wake up! Fight for the expansion of Medicaid in 2018. It is part of the struggle of HR-676—Expanded and Improved Medicaid for All.

PT reader responds to article about 'How I got screwed out of my Medicaid'

Editor's note: Below are excerpts from a reader's letter to the People's Tribune about an article we published entitled, "How I got screwed out of my Medicaid." In that article, Susan Sawsan Cain, says that we "need communities that will serve their needs, not a tyrannical corporate state that would be ecstatic if poor people just die and relieve the wealthy of this 'huge burden.'"

Same thing happened to my Mom and Dad recently. When my Dad was taken off of Medicaid and put on Medicare they looked at my parents' income—they are both self-employed, but my Mom works at the restaurant that they own and they only gross around \$16,000 or less a year. They cut my Mom's benefits and they also cut my Dad's. They put them on Medicare and my Dad has liver and kidney failure and has to get treatments around four to five times a week. Medicare doesn't even cover the full cost of paracentesis. They expected my father to pay over \$200 per treatment for his liver when my parents cannot afford almost \$10,000 a year to pay for this necessary medical procedure. Now my parents are in debt medically and with \$200 per treatment when you need that treatment four to five times for a month is costing them close to \$12,000 a year which is now going to collection.

It is so heartbreaking for me to see my parents suffer like this. My parents didn't ask to get sick. They only needed Medicaid to help with how bad things are medically for them and the government has failed them based on what they deem as poverty. Thank you so much for posting this.

— Elinor Ziel

A new chapter in the Dreamers movement

With President Donald Trump rescinding DACA, a new chapter in the movement of the Dreamers has begun. DACA allows young people brought to the U.S. without documents as children the temporary right to live, study and work in America.

The Dreamers, those covered under DACA, will use their presence in every corner of the country to mobilize resources and numbers. When the Dreamers say, “we are here to stay,” they mean they’re here to stay and their voices will not be silenced.

This new chapter of the movement began when Trump rescinded DACA for about 800,000 Dreamers in September, 2017. The Dreamers, their families and many Americans met the news with shock, anger, and a sense of betrayal. Demonstrations broke out in New York, Salt Lake City, Denver, Los Angeles, Portland, and in other cities.

Dreamers have learned from the past and they’re not taking the news sitting down. They know President Obama didn’t pass



One of many protests around the country in defense of the 800,000 young Dreamers who came to the United States as children and who the government aims to deport. PHOTO/ERIK MCGREGOR

DACA without a fight. Dreamers took to organizing, knocking on doors and did a lot of walking. They crossed the U.S. border into Mexico and back; they chained

themselves to the White House fence; and they had sit-downs blocking streets and freeways.

The Dreamers forged themselves into a movement with a

collective identity. They became aware of their shared destiny and collective strength.

They had one goal: “We are here to stay.”

What can be done?

Make our voices heard. The majority of the American people is for the Dreamers staying. “Nearly 8 in 10 voters support allowing Dreamers to remain permanently in the country, including almost three-quarters of Trump voters.” (Center for American Progress, July 21, 2017).

We need to keep the pressure on our politicians. Let them know if they don’t vote to protect the Dreamers from deportation they will pay at the ballot box. Furthermore, we need them to vote for the Dream Act to provide a pathway to citizenship. The clock is ticking. On March 5, 2018 the deportation can begin at a rate of 1,000 a day.

The Dreamers are not alone. There’s a growing sentiment among the people that’s updating the meaning of “*First they came,*” a poem by Pastor Martin Niemoller: “Then they came for the Dreamers and we said, ‘No, not this time!’”

This article is from a talk by Laura Garcia, editor of the Tri-buno del Pueblo, at Harold Washington College in Chicago.

Faith-based communities fight for defense of immigrants



PHOTO/REZA NEKUMANESH

Editor’s Note: Eduardo Castro interviewed Reza Nekumanesh, Executive Director of Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno, after his visit to Mesa Verde Detention Facility in Bakersfield, CA as a Clergy Caucus of Faith in the Valley. The Islamic cultural center is a non-profit organization promoting religious and cultural programs and services; it helps immigrant communities by bringing more understanding between the different cultural groups and deals with social injustice.

Eduardo Castro: What is your opinion of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) detention centers?

Reza Nekumanesh: ICE’s agenda is to keep immigrants from doing their daily activities, whether at a store, school, job, etc., and throwing them into for-profit detention centers. I feel ICE is like a bogeyman sweeping immigrants up. The detention center I visited is owned by GEO Group, Inc., with various centers worldwide. GEO is like any other corporation who puts profit above the value of immigrants.

EC: *What is the ethnic makeup in the detention center you visited?*

RN: The makeup is about 65% from Mexico and Central America. The rest are from Africa, the Middle East, some Asians, some from Europe. I spoke to a man from Pakistan who fled his country because he feared for his life. He went initially to Brazil. He walked from Brazil to the United States. During his travel he encountered Brazil’s rain forest while walking with an injured leg with limited food and water for seven days. This shows the resilience of immigrants and what they go

through. He desperately wanted to cross the U.S. for his own safety.

EC: *What do you think is causing all this fear in the immigrant communities?*

RN: Racism has existed for a long time. It just grew more after 9/11 and the 2016 elections. Now it is open and certain sectors of the white community are not afraid to say it publicly because they have Trump’s support.

EC: *What are your feelings on the attack on immigrants?*

RN: Deportation is not something new. It was around before Trump, under previous administrations, only now it is more open and violent. To combat the treatment of immigrants, we in the communities are fighting for their defense, and we need to form alliances. We need to find ways to help immigrants unable to help themselves. Different sectors of the community, whether Latinos, Blacks, Asians, certain whites, must be willing to help.

As jobs vanish, unity is possible

By David Williams

VALLEJO, CA — Were you surprised by the number of KKK members, neo-Nazis, and white nationalists who were in Charlottesville, Virginia?

In this nation, and in many others, workers have been pitted against one another by a powerful corporate class that cares only about securing its profits. Our slave-owning past is still apparent today. By telling one section of workers that it is better than the other because of their color, and by giving them certain social privileges, the capitalists have kept workers divided and fighting each other rather than the system. Today, racism is alive, and while all the effects are not as easily seen as being shot in the back by the police, the system we are currently living in is biased.

I am a white male, and growing up in California, I thought racists were only in the South. When I was younger, I was not aware of how my skin color benefited me in everyday life. However, when the tables are turned, as they have been for me, people become aware.

There was once a clear line between white, brown and Black workers. Many whites were paid more, often had better working conditions, and were able to move

to nicer neighborhoods when they could afford it. Fast forward to today, and the line becomes more blurred. While the unemployment rate for African Americans is higher than it is for whites, there is a fundamental change occurring around the globe that will affect most workers eventually. This is automation.

Automation is replacing human labor with robotic labor at an increasingly rapid rate. This is leaving everyday workers of all nationalities without jobs, leading to a developing equality of poverty. Today, many whites, Blacks, and immigrants from across the world are beginning to find themselves in a similar economic situation.

The widespread growth of poverty has confused many workers. The corporate class utilizes the situation to get workers to blame each other.

Trump, Steve Bannon and other billionaires are working on dividing and conquering us. Racism is easily exploited, and a divided nation is much easier for fascists to take over than a unified nation. In the words of Bobby Seale, co-founder of the Black Panthers: “You don’t fight racism with racism, the best way to fight racism is with solidarity.” In solidarity and in unity, we shall overcome. And today, that unity is developing.

Net Neutrality: The fight for a free Internet begins

Editor's note: As we went to press, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) lifted the rules that helped insure equal access to the Internet. The fight for public ownership of the Internet continues.

By Chris Earl

CHICAGO, IL — We've seen gigantic leaps and bounds in the past 60 years. From making massive strides in equality across the globe, to industrialization and increased productivity, we are all currently living in the most technologically advanced point in human existence. This is largely due to the Internet, the mainstay of our virtual lives, the driving force that connects us in ways we would have never imagined.

Unfortunately, like all great democratic and free sources we have come to rely on, this too is in jeopardy of changing for the worse. Net Neutrality is a set of principles that prevents Internet service providers from slowing down and blocking content or Web sites you use on a daily basis if they so happen to not align with said service provider's political, moral, or business values. In 2015, the Federal Communications Commission was forced to adopt a set of guidelines otherwise known as the Net Neutrality rules to keep the Internet a

free and open forum for everyone to access and use without tampering. Because of the 20 million activists who pressured the FCC, this framework was put on the books and was not to be revoked. That is, until Trump.

Trump's current chairman for the FCC is a man by the name of Ajit Pai, an attorney who has served more than five years in this role. Pai's proposal was to have been put to a vote on December 14. Approval of it could mean the eventual end of an open Internet as we know it. It's hard to envision a United States where we don't have freedom over the Web, and the ramifications of what might occur are detrimental to our society as a republic. Without Net Neutrality, cable conglomerates can divide the Internet into lightning-fast and horribly slow lanes; potentially block or slow down competitor content and charge larger companies fees to have their sites work faster.

These big Internet service providers have already had a history of vehemently protesting the Net Neutrality laws, and why wouldn't they? According to the Leichtman Research Group, "Comcast, Charter, AT&T, and Verizon—account for about 76 percent of the 94.5 million Internet subscribers in the United

States." They have total control over the market share and what better way is there to cement their monopoly than to restrict what information we digest?

We have a duty to uphold freedom as a responsible and informed public. Part of doing our due diligence is making sure our voices are heard in instances where that is being opposed. A major component to combating the encroachment of our rights is to let your elected member of Congress know. A letter, a phone call, attending a town hall meeting and lodging your concerns can make a difference. We cannot let Net Neutrality be struck down. I firmly believe that it will lead to the silencing of marginalized groups who have been the victims of systemic and economic disparity, and will further the divides we already see widening.

Protesters across the country, like this one in Philadelphia, demand that the government keep Net Neutrality rules that block further restriction of information and that limit the ability of corporations to charge higher fees for service. We the people have to demand that the Internet, which was originally developed with public funds, be owned by the public.

PHOTO/HARVEY FINKLE



Hunger in America: Let's fix our broken food system

By Margaret Morgan-Hubbard

WASHINGTON, DC — One of the brutal facts of today's world is that many people, particularly children, are going to bed hungry many days of the month even if families have SNAP, WIC or some other government assistance. Hunger in America exists not because of a lack of food, but because of a lack of willingness to change a food system which leaves lower-income working people as well as the middle classes underfed and undernourished.

Why? It is because we the people allow it, tolerate it, think it's inevitable. We are so busy trying to survive that we turn away from ugly truths about the country we have built. There is an irreconcilable conflict between the democracy we say we want and the economic system we established to support that democracy. Our democracy says all people regardless of human condition are entitled to basic rights and needs and that the job of govern-

ment is to ensure those rights are protected and our needs are met. But our economic system lets some people amass tremendous wealth and power, while others have nothing. Equity and fairness go out the window.

While our food system is not the only injustice in today's America, many people have been working to shed light on it and address its systemic failures. We have become urban and rural farmers, nutritionists, chefs, food truckers, food justice advocates, food bank and pantry workers in an attempt to improve the system and provide genuinely healthy food for real people. If people had access to healthy, nutritious food, they might not get diabetes, cancer and heart attacks that kill working Americans at alarming rates while enriching the pharmaceutical industry. If our food system did not use so many chemical pesticides and fertilizers, we might avoid contaminating our bodies and be able to prevent disastrous health outcomes.

Our food system is literally

upside down. Producing food is an American mega-business while its farmers and food workers are at the bottom of the economic pyramid, earning less than a living wage. Those who do the most for us are paid and valued the least—unless they are launched into celebrity-hood, like a handful of mainly white, largely male chefs or restaurateurs. The rest of us barely eke out a living, growing, preparing, marketing, serving, and cleaning up after food.

Why is this? Who suffers? Who benefits? How do we fix our broken food system? That is the subject of our conference.

We look at the entire system to make sense of it and we invite you to join us. Nothing gets addressed, fixed, and made fair and just unless we the people shed light on it and take consolidated action. Let's fix our broken bodies and our broken food system together.

Margaret Morgan-Hubbard is founder of ECO-City Farms in Bladensburg, MD. Michele and



Homeless people gather for a free meal in Atlanta. Those providing the meals do so despite the city declaring it illegal without permits. They ask: "Why are they setting up barriers to taking care of people's human needs?"

PHOTO/JOHN RAMSPOTT

Rick Tingling-Clemmons (who slightly edited this article), are officers in the Gray Panthers of Metropolitan Washington and the principal organizers of the

Food Justice and Our Right to Food conference planned for March 23-25 at 301 49th Street NE, Washington, D.C.

Pinkney Case: Will the Michigan Supreme Court rule on the side of justice?

By Joseph Peery

CHICAGO, IL — The case of Rev. Edward Pinkney went before the Michigan Supreme Court on November 7, 2017. While supporters came from various parts of the country, the largest contingent came from Flint—a city that understands firsthand the importance of this case. They know this case has nothing to do with forgery of dates on mayoral recall election petitions, that it has everything to do with shutting up Rev. Pinkney. Rev. Pinkney, an uncompromising defender of the town's poor, exposed the corporate-run emergency financial management system in Benton Harbor, and the role of the unelected emergency manager in allowing for Whirlpool's theft of public lakefront property.

The whole world has seen in the lead poisoning of the water of Flint just how far emergency manager dictators are willing

to go in overthrowing democracy and replacing it with corporate rule. The question now is how far is the Supreme Court of Michigan willing to go to defend democracy? The Berrien County court that convicted Rev. Pinkney showed how far they were willing to go by playing the race card.

During jury selection they aggressively expelled all African Americans, leaving the trial to be decided by an all white jury. No one on that jury was from Benton Harbor or had lived under emergency financial management. It is next to impossible for a Black man from the poorest town in the county to get a fair trial from an all white jury from the richest towns in the county. This isn't merely common sense. It is also the opinion of the United States Supreme Court. This issue is central to the case and calls into question the definition of a trial by one's peers and the meaning of due process.

During the trial, the prosecution admitted there was no physical evidence linking Rev. Pinkney to the crime they were charging him with. And yet the prosecution repeatedly introduced examples of Rev. Pinkney exercising his First Amendment right to free speech, political activities and community activism as evidence he committed the crime. It is even questionable if the law, MCL168.937, that Rev. Pinkney was convicted of violating, even covers forgery of recall election petitions, or whether it is a felony or a misdemeanor in that the Berrien County Court deemed it a felony. These are some of the issues that the Michigan Supreme Court judges spent a lot of time questioning Berrien County court prosecutor Aaron Mead about, some of which he seemed to have difficulty answering.

Will the Michigan Supreme Court rule on the side of justice



The Rev. Edward Pinkney and his supporters gather outside the Michigan Supreme Court chambers where judges heard the unjust case against him for which he served 30 months in prison.

PHOTO/JOSEPH PEERY

or bend the rules in favor of corporations? It may take months for the court to rule on this case. But in the meantime, it can and must be widely taken up in the other court that really matters. That is the court of public opinion. It is in that courtroom, free of corporate money, that we

can win. In that court, the judge, prosecutor and jury includes the exploited and oppressed of this land, regardless of color. In that courtroom, evidence shall include how the corporate ownership of the economy has robbed us of our freedoms.

La Promesa de Libertad / Liberty's Promise

By Juan-Carlos Pérez
Interdisciplinary Visual Artist

CHICAGO, IL — For the past 15 years, I've been working with disenfranchised communities that lacked the resources to bring the arts into their school environment. When I come in to work with schools, no project is ever the same. For example, with "La Promesa de Libertad/ Liberty's Promise," the majority of the student population happened to be immigrants. It was very intense, emotionally, in the schools because of what was happening in the political arena (pre/post 2016 presidential election). We were getting outbursts of crying and a lot of questions from children. "Why do they hate us?" "What did we do wrong?"

When you come to a place where it is promoted that you're accepted here and then all of a sudden, you're being targeted, it's a lot to take in. It is a lot for me (to take in) as an adult, but I can only imagine what it must be for a child. They're in the first and second grade.

I came to this country as an immigrant. I remember being in their situation at that age. So I figured this would be a great opportunity to give them the platform

and give them a voice. They created these beautiful paintings of their interpretation of immigration. We put them out in the hallway to display and they began to invite their parents to come and see their paintings.

So, next thing you know, we had all of our students' parents coming in and taking photographs with a response (they had written). Then the rest of the student body and their families began to stay after school, take photographs along with their own written responses. And then our students created workshops to teach it to other classrooms in their school. Next thing you know, we had hundreds of families from the school and from the community coming in to see the paintings, write responses/take photographs and that created this rich dialogue to connect their experience and their expression.

Through the support of Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE) and Chicago Public School's Civil program, our students were able to exhibit their work at Jane Addams Hull House and launch a social media campaign, "La Promesa de Libertad / Liberty's Promise," where their work and photographs could be



One of the paintings created by children in a Chicago Public School of their interpretations of immigration.

uploaded.

Our students felt that it was important to reach out to other communities so that folks there wouldn't feel isolated as they had before they began this project. We reached schools from Little Village to the Back of the Yards and Belmont-Cragin neighborhoods.

I really want children to grow up knowing that they can ask questions. These are essential to figure out who you are. That is a power that no one can take away from you.

(Taken from the abbreviated dialogue of YouTube video created for Juan-Carlos Pérez when he received an award from the 3Arts

Foundation of Chicago. You can view the video at: <https://youtu.be/ZqVo7su8bGk>).

You can also read in-depth versions of this project at: <https://www.bulbapp.com/u/2016-2017-scale-mary-beth-werner-juan-carlos-perez>