

NO BLANK CHECK FOR BILLIONAIRES



People outside the New York Stock Exchange protesting the tax bill that handed trillions of dollars to the rich, chanting "Kill the bill, don't kill us!" PHOTO/ERIK MCGREGOR



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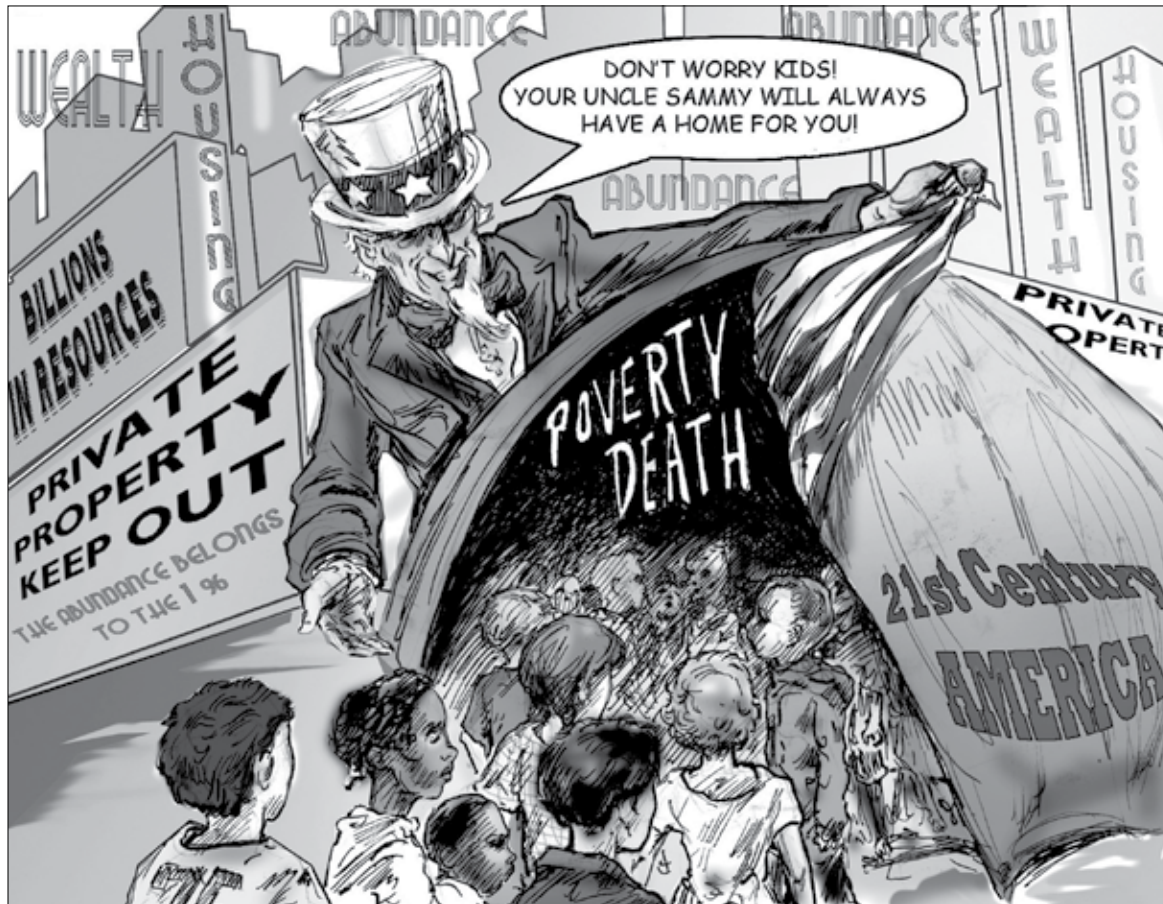
Housing for all, or death in the killing cold

EDITORIAL

As vicious winter storms blasted across the Eastern and Central US, with murderous temperatures comparable to those on Mars, unsheltered people froze to death in the streets. Recently run out from under a viaduct in Chicago, their tents confiscated, homeless people lay on corners under blankets which couldn't keep out the killing cold. In California, as the rains sent mudslides down hills burned by monster forest fires, cities still found the resources to break up tent communities, steal blankets and possessions and scatter people to the streets of exposure, suffering and death. The city of Anaheim in southern California recently declared their intention to raid and destroy a large homeless community in a dusty riverbed. In Elgin, IL, a man who sheltered homeless people in his basement on below-freezing nights was ordered by the local government to stop! All over the country, especially in the West, homelessness is soaring. Many of the newly-homeless are women, families and children.

Instead of housing the people who are suffering and dying, those who should represent us treat us as criminals, guilty of the crimes of poverty—of not being able to pay skyrocketing rents, even though many homeless people hold down jobs. Nurses, school teachers and others with formerly stable 'middle class' jobs are finding themselves living in vehicles, unable to afford a place to live. Millions of schoolchildren are in homeless families. College students couch surf or live in their cars or on the streets. What could be a better example of this epic social fail!?

People are morally outraged and appalled that their govern-



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

ment, which is supposed to guarantee 'life liberty and pursuit of happiness', is instead attacking the victims of this failing economic system, and those who reach out to help their fellow human beings. It's as though those in power think their job is simply to enrich themselves and their fellow ruling-class billionaires.

In fact, this is the grim logic of capitalism. As workers are replaced by robots, millions are being pushed out of work forever, or subsisting on low-wage and part-time work, earning not even enough to keep a roof over their heads.

Those who hold this social wealth as private property no longer see any reason to keep unneeded workers alive. This billionaire ruling class will let us starve and die in the streets, stripping homeless and poor people

of every right, even the right to survive. We are in the throes of a growing fascist offensive. The corporate-controlled state is terrorizing those whose labor it no longer needs to exploit. This is a dying system, and needs to be replaced.

According to one count, there are six houses standing empty for every homeless person in this country. The government should take foreclosed-on homes back from the banks that fraudulent-

ly stole them, and give them to those without shelter. Public housing should be repaired, expanded and made available for all who need it.

We are all at risk of becoming homeless. This is unsustainable and immoral. We must demand that human needs be put first, that the government make housing for all a social priority and an absolute right. We have all we need to create a new society that houses and treasures everyone.

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

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PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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

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

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

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

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No blank check for billionaires

COVER STORY

When Trump proposed a budget last year that would cut programs for the poor, a woman in Mississippi described to a reporter how she was barely living each month on a \$735 disability check and \$56 in food stamps. She said, “I don’t think he [Trump] knows how people like me will have to try to survive because of something he might do. He doesn’t know what I have to endure.”

Now that Congress has finished handing a multi-trillion dollar tax cut to the rich, they have their sights set on a federal budget that cuts programs that tens of millions of us depend on to barely survive, such as public aid, food stamps, Medicare, Medicaid and even Social Security. The tax cut for the rich left a \$1.5 trillion hole in the budget that Congress—including most Democrats—will fill by cutting programs for the poor rather than by cutting the bloated military budget. That we need these pro-

grams is made more clear by a United Nations Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing touring the encampments who recently stated that homelessness in the U.S is “stunning” and “cruel.”

The mouthpieces for the rich in Congress claim that the corporations will use the tax cut proceeds to create jobs, but that’s a lie. Many corporate CEOs have openly said they’ll use the money to buy back their companies’ stock. This means bigger dividends and profits for stockholders. Since December, 29 companies have announced \$70 billion in stock buybacks. The companies include such giants as Home Depot, Oracle, Honeywell, Bank of America, Anthem, Boeing, MasterCard, and United Airlines. In fact, the stock market has been pumped up over the last 10 years mainly by such stock buybacks. US companies, who were already flush with cash before the unneeded tax cut, plunged nearly \$4 trillion into buying back their stock between 2008 and mid-2017. In 2016, a whopping 66 percent of corporate earnings went to buybacks.

The tax cut jackpot will also

go to pay for corporate mergers and fat bonuses for CEOs. And far from creating jobs, it will go to help companies buy more labor-replacing technology that will actually eliminate jobs.

Labor-eliminating technology is affecting both the billionaire class and the working class. Producing more with robots and fewer people means there is less and less profit to be made investing in producing things, so the corporations go looking for new sources of profit. They invest more and more in gambling on the financial markets, and they also rob the public treasury to line their pockets. They want to eliminate public aid programs because they don’t want to support labor they no longer need.

Yet as jobs disappear and wages for millions of us are too little to live on, we, the people, need government more than ever to intervene on our behalf and guarantee us the basic necessities of life.

People are fearful and angry. Only 12 percent of American adults want to see Medicaid spending cut, and four in 10



Protesting the Federal Tax Plan in Palatine, IL. The bill gives multi-trillion dollar tax cuts to the rich and promised cuts to Medicare, Medicaid and even social security to pay for their tax give-away.

PHOTO/CHARLES E. MILLER

want it increased. Even among Republicans, only 37% support making cuts to programs for the poor. And most people opposed the tax giveaway to the billionaires.

The people are not standing still. We are marching and demonstrating and thousands are running for office to voice their demands. We are demanding that the government be our government and guarantee a future for us and our children. Trump’s

openly racist and fascist policies are sparking resistance, but it’s becoming apparent to many that the Democratic Party is one more party of the corporations. The direction of things is toward the people building their own party. This is one more step in cutting ourselves loose from the corporations and their parties so we can build a new society without poverty, fear, or the dictatorship of the billionaires.

Healthcare for all: Build the movement!

By Ethel Long-Scott

OAKLAND, CA — Want to get rid of poor people? It’s simple. Deny them health care so they’ll just get sick and die. Want all American families, including the poor, to be healthy contributors to a vibrant society? Then supply good health care to people who need it. Don’t do what federal and many state governments seem determined to do right now—use work requirements as an excuse for denying people the human right to health.

As the article by Dr. Margaret Flowers on page 11 says, the health care crisis that makes low income workers sicker than anyone else can be ended by uncoupling health care from the drive to make profits off of other people’s misery. A national single-payer health plan, New Improved Medicare for All is how to do it. And it would be cheaper and less confusing than the profit-first system we have now.

Trump’s cruel requirements that people work for their Medicaid (already in force in some states) are aimed the other way,



Disabled people protest Medicaid cuts.

PHOTO/HARVEY FINKLE

at keeping the poor sicker. They will heap more suffering and injustice on the most vulnerable people in our nation. We’ve seen this playbook before. The bi-partisan effort to end “welfare as we know it,” led by President Bill Clinton in the late 1990s, shoved hundreds of thousands of working families off the welfare rolls and into dire poverty. They called it “welfare reform” when they should have called it welfare termination.

Today the billionaires and

millionaires in Congress support Trump’s latest attack in the war on workers. Why spend money on the people when their rich corporations can use it? We reject such immoral thinking. In a robot economy we can afford good health care for all. We need to build a new movement for National Improved Medicare For All! (NIMA) The first step is to build unity among all who suffer a common poverty, so that we can fight for the economic priorities we need.

New Year Supermoon

So full
so close
to the Earth

Bigger brighter
lightening the darkness
now slowly waning

Longer days
give some hope
though belief alone
isn’t enough

Wolves,
howling in hunger
outside our door
breed fear

How did this happen?

Who do we blame?

Who will help us now?

When dawn alights
on the cancer
of our indifference
our suffering energy
turns to awareness
of wrongs done to us
the rights taken from us
informed now —
take action

read thoughtfully
write deliberately
study diligently
think critically
gather collectively
listen attentively
discuss cogently
engage publicly

do it now

— Lisbit Bailey

Fight or freeze

By Leslie Willis

CHICAGO, IL — Cold snap doesn't even come close to describing the weather this holiday season as 90% of the nation suffered weeks of freezing weather. Chicago was no exception. Sub-zero temperatures (with the wind chill factor) stretched on for weeks right on into the New Year. A man froze to death on New Year's Eve while waiting for a train in downtown Chicago. Meanwhile, families all over Chicago struggled to keep warm in unheated or under-heated homes, using ovens, space heaters—anything, no matter how unsafe, to keep from freezing to death. Thousands of homeless people became especially desperate searching for shelter.

At the Caroline Hedger Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) senior building in Rogers Park, residents lost heat for the second year in a row. Although CHA claimed there was nothing wrong with the heat, video clips showed space heaters being wheeled into the building. Then water pipes burst in the building causing massive flooding. Many seniors reported that they were not even given one of these space heaters

and didn't know anyone who had received one.

Even though senior residents were interviewed in freezing cold apartments wearing winter clothes, CHA continued to deny that heat was a problem. "I've been sleeping in three sweaters, two pajama pants because it's cold and I've been very sick and it seems to be getting worse," said Stephanie Hayes, 72, a resident in the building.

The fact that anyone should be struggling to keep warm, that lives should be threatened and even lost due to poor housing or no housing is a needless shame! Twenty percent of the housing owned and operated by the CHA is unoccupied, while the waiting list has been closed at 280,000 families.

From the Huffington Post: "Mayor Rahm Emanuel's housing agency has been pulling hundreds of millions of dollars from a fund earmarked for its affordable housing program and using the money instead to boost its pension, purchase government debt and build up a staggering cash reserve."

One CHA senior told the *People's Tribune*, in reference to a new policy by the mayor, that



Residents of Evergreen Towers held a press conference to call attention to the most recent example of the deplorable conditions in Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) senior buildings. Resident Mildred Wright was forced to make her way to the management office on the first floor because the emergency pull cord in her room did not work. She died in the elevator. The tenant association had asked management to fix this problem for over a year. PHOTO/JANE ADAMS SENIOR CAUCUS

hurricane victims be given first priority over those on the waiting list. "CHA loves to deny, and divide and bully, it is what they do best!"

We can't let this stand. Having a home that is adequately

heated is a human right that we must insist upon and must not be divided on. After all, there really is enough space, enough empty buildings, houses and apartments for all. There is enough to go around and to help all who need

it, but it all depends on who controls the resources and the property. Will it be we the people or the corporate billionaires? It's a life-and-death choice we must make in our favor.

Homeless reader responds to 'The real plight of the homeless told by the homeless'

Editor's note: Don Blumenthal comments on the Mike Zint story, 'The real plight of the homeless told by the homeless' in the April, 2017 edition of the *People's Tribune*. Don says it is the, "closest I've found to my own experience homeless, and what I've written. Who cares what happens here and why we ended up here? Forgotten or abandoned ... it's all the same ... devastating to the mind, body, and the spirit."

By Don Blumenthal

It's back to the Dirt for Don. Things change fast when compassion fades and contempt sets in. We hope, at least I hope, that my presence is appreciated wherever I am, and that my assistance with household repairs, or improving a procedure, enhances rather than restricting someone's day to day living. Apparently, it's never enuf.

So, I'm looking for a space just to be again. A spot somewhere within walking distance to a toilet, hopefully a Starbucks and access to Wi-Fi (keeping up on events is important). I've become aware that many people are not what they pretend to

be in the first encounter. It's a sad deal all the way around. Why is it such a seemingly impossibility: finding a person of compassion AND of principle? One whose helping another is without a hidden agenda, or ulterior motive? A motive to somehow gain from the misfortune of another by ostensibly offering to help them?

It's not that hard to see a person genuinely in need of a helping hand. Or, at least, it didn't use to be that difficult ... More difficult is knowing which helping hand might be the one genuinely wants to help you. Desperation makes the first choice the right choice, whether or not it is. Is it without expecting, or even demanding something in return. Only time will tell. It so often reveals their true character, testing your own sanity when it comes to pass that THEY always wanted something from you in the first place. At that point, your seeking refuge, your ability to know what to do next, turns inward ... your will to continue ... takes a dip. Why is deception the new part of helping someone? The cops and especially security guards have used this frequently. Why is this?



(Above) Mike Zint and others of 'First they came for the homeless' meets with UN Special Rapporteur on housing and homelessness on the steps of Berkeley Old City Hall, the site of the Poor Tour tent community.



(Left) "Momma" Crystal of the Dare to Change tent community, part of "First they came for the homeless" at Berkeley Old City Hall, speaks to a fellow resident. She, with her son and two teenage daughters, helps provide recovery tents for people from the streets with substance abuse issues, as a sister part of the Poor Tour. The U.N. rapporteur expressed admiration for this community. PHOTOS/SARAH MENEFFEE

Homeless living and dying on Atlanta's cold streets



Two of photographer John E. Ramspott's photos of homeless people sleeping on the cold Atlanta streets. John says, "In the shadow of the NCAA championship, I met this man in front of a sign that said 'Live, work, dream, 2018.' Of all the people I spoke with, he was the only one clearly suffering from a mental illness. The homeless woman was in Five Points, an area in Atlanta with stores, bars, restaurants. She ended our conversation by saying, 'I love you'. She had a sweetness that pulled on my heartstrings." Editor's note: The Atlanta newspaper AJC reported on two recent deaths in downtown Atlanta from hypothermia. The bodies were found wrapped in blankets. The man was frozen stiff, the woman was not breathing when found. We the people of this country cannot allow this inhumanity! The U.S. government could easily guarantee housing for everyone—and we have to see to it that it happens now.

The uncanny hatred towards the homeless endangers the homeless community

By Igmarr Rodas

SANTA ANA, CA — Recently a Facebook post referred to a homeless lady who was minding her own business as a "piece of shit homeless parasite."

As this has sparked a heated discussion, the question is how far is the hatred towards the homeless community reaching? Is it moving from verbal aggression to physical aggression? By the above statement, it appears that the writer is not far from physical aggression by inciting more hatred and violence towards the homeless. These harsh words provoke others to hate the homeless community.

The fact is that there's more homelessness than ever in Orange County. Gentrification, low wages, inflation, are all factors. Everyone is prone to becoming homeless at some point if this trend continues.

As this article was being written, there has been a lot of insight on the issue. The fact is there are a lot of people out there that support this type of abuse towards

the homeless community. Those who defend the poor and less-fortunate people like the homeless are targets of those who support and have the same, if not more, deeply rooted hatred towards the homeless than the person who posted this.

As for the discussion on Facebook that continues regarding this article, I have become a target for those defending the writer's statements towards the homeless. Some individuals are going as far as stating, "an 'illegal' advocate for the homeless, what a concept, I say deportation for you, jail for them."

It is a disgrace that persons look at the homeless as parasites, and those defending those who attack the homeless are adding to the problem.

The bottom line is: We all need to come together and work as a collective to solve this social issue of homelessness.

Any questions or concerns, just feel free to contact me at cdrsca@gmail.com.



A person sleeps outside council chambers in Santa Ana, CA. The Los Angeles/Orange County region is experiencing a huge increase in homelessness. PHOTO/IGMAR RODAS

Poverty in U.S. is 'stunning and cruel' says U.N. Rapporteur on Adequate Housing

From the Editors

In clear view of some of the most expensive property in the world, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, Leilani Farha, remarked while walking San Francisco streets: "I have traveled all over the world seeing slums and people living in poverty, but what I have heard and seen here in the U.S. is stunning to me. There is so much hatred towards poor people here." She was referring to the anti-homeless laws against activities like sitting and sleeping or sharing food when there is no housing or shelter. "It's just so... cruel," she said.

Farha said the slums in Mexico are the slums, but there was community living in poverty, working together to support each other. Here, the U.S. government does sweeps to break up communities and tells them to "move along." (This information was reported in Daily Kos.) "Homelessness is an "egregious violation of human rights ... requiring urgent and immediate human rights responses. ... Homelessness is caused by states' failure to respond," said Leilani Farha at a U.N. meeting in Europe recently.

Only the American people can solve this. As automation eliminates more and more human labor from the workplace, the crisis can only grow. We have to act. As stated in the *People's Tribune* editorial on page 2, "The government should take foreclosed-on homes back from the banks that fraudulently stole them, and give them to those without shelter." This is a step toward a whole new society where everyone's life has meaning.

Donate to the People's Tribune!

We are reader supported. We get no corporate funding. We have an all-volunteer staff. Won't you subscribe, order bundles or donate today? The future is up to all of us.

— The Editors

Coalfield county actively organizing for clean water

Editor's note: Martin County, Kentucky residents can't count on getting water daily from their taps. And when the water does flow, people don't dare drink it. Known as the only place in America where almost no one drinks from their tap, their bills come with warnings that their water could increase the risk of cancer. Many say family members have died from cancer.

Poor management over the decades contributes to the ongoing crisis in this coalfield county (where 40% are living in poverty). State agencies have barely intervened, and public officials have not spoken out. People are losing trust in government and are actively organizing for change.

The quotes below are printed with permission from members of the Martin County Water Warriors Facebook community.

"My son ran a fever over 100. I turned on the water to bathe my children and try to get his temperature down. I began filling the tub, put my 18-month-old twins in. After a few minutes, I noticed the water had a blue tint to it. I jerked my babies out so fast, not knowing what on earth was in our water to make it blue. It's so sad we have to worry about what kind of shape our water is in to bathe our children. I don't know what kind of chemical this could be, but I wonder, how can this be safe?"

— Tasha Osborne

"Water is cut off every night. This is failure on the water district and county leaders. When you turn on cold water and it comes out white with steam coming off it something is wrong. Most of my family has died of cancer. We need someone with-

out local connections to come and help us. Our county judge hasn't even made a statement."
— Mac McCoy

"It's like they just don't give a shit that over half the county has been without water for close to a month! Let's call them on their blatant lies and misuse of the public's trust! Everyone send in or call their objection to the rate hike [of almost 50%]. If it's going to take ten years to fix this water crisis ok we will give you your ten years but you WILL NOT GET A RATE HIKE FOR THOSE TEN YEARS! How's that work for y'all at Martin County Water Department?"
— Pamela Blevins

"It started with the water being shut off on "our side of the hill." This was not fair to us. To our children. To our grand-



Tap water from a Martin County residence in Warfield in 2016. Gary Ball, editor of the *Mountain Citizen*, a newspaper that exposes the water crisis in Martin County, Kentucky, writes, "Former water board chairman Bill Harvey blamed the *Mountain Citizen* for 'alarming' stories about water quality and service and said 90 percent of customers were pleased with service. Would you agree?"

PHOTO/MARTIN COUNTY WATER WARRIORS

parent and parents. This was not fair to our school. It was unable to be cleaned, in the middle of flu season. We stood up. Inez [Kentucky] is also feeling the pain with us. They have the same water we do. They have posted pictures of water over there. We have gotten to news stations. People are starting to verbally ask questions. They

say they drink their water. We know that's a lie. Our water has been undrinkable for many years. Right now we need to drop the "other side of the hill" saying and come together as one. We need to insure our future generation and our generation has clean water to drink. We need safe water."

— Amanda Fields

Mountaintop removal: Destroying communities and the environment

Editor's note: Junior Walk, who used to work in the coal industry and now works with Coal River Mountain Watch in Naoma, West Virginia, was interviewed by the People's Tribune in September 2017. He told us his story as he showed us mountaintop removal sites and towns decimated by poverty and the toxic coal industry. Edited for length and clarity.

By Junior Walk

For generations my people have lived right in this area. Most were coal miners.

I had poison water when I was a little kid. The water used to come out of my tap blood red everyday, smelling nasty and that was from underground coal slurry injection. And my dad—he worked at the plant down there—was always like, "No, that's not what that's from. That's just iron from our well." And after he got laid off, and he had a little bit of time to think about it he was like, "You were right. That wasn't just iron water."

It's like, if you pay somebody a decent enough payday, then they're gonna believe what you want them to believe because they've gotta pay that truck payment. They've gotta pay for that swimming pool they just put in. They've gotta pay for that brand new four-wheeler they just



An active mountaintop removal site near the Coal River in West Virginia. Waste from coal mining poisons the water and soil of surrounding communities. The Appalachian Mountains (the oldest mountain range in the world) and the lives of the people who live among them are being destroyed for corporate profits. Junior Walk is in the struggle to end mountaintop removal. PHOTOS/BRETT JELINEK, OLAFIMAGES.COM

financed. And the company is very good at making you go out and finance stuff.

Fifth grade, down there at Marsh Fork Elementary School, we had the coal industry people come in and give a little workshop and hand out coloring books and all that; stuffed animals and stuff. Also, there was one Christmas where Massey Energy, that ran the prep plant over there, handed out Christmas presents to all the

kids in my school. Got a little set of Hot Wheels cars. That was definitely worth having a toxic waste lake right above my school.

When I was 17, getting ready to graduate high school, I applied to a bunch of different colleges. I was really excited to leave out of West Virginia and never return. I didn't think there was anything here for me. So I got accepted to a few colleges, then quickly came to the realization that you kinda

need money to go to college in this country. So I was pretty well up a creek. I was the first person in my family to graduate high school, but had no idea how to apply for financial aid, scholarships, or grants. So I was stuck here. And like many people who end up in that same situation, I went to work in the coal industry; the only industry around here that pays enough to live off of.

On a twelve-hour shift on a

mine site of that size [pointing to a nearby mountaintop removal site], there would be between seven to twelve people employed. You compare that to an underground mine that produced a similar tonnage of coal, that would be well over 100 people on a twelve hour shift. So it's a stark difference.

The population here, and coal employment here, have been on a stark decline since the mid-1980s, which is when you have the advent of this large scale surface mining, which is pretty much the ultimate form of mechanization for coal mining. So it doesn't matter how many jobs are supposed to be coming down here, it won't be anything comparative to what coal mining once was here.

The people making the money on coal live somewhere else, out of state somewhere and never had to work a real day in their lives—wear a three-piece suit to work every day and keep their hands clean. Those are the people who are really doing this. Those are the bad guys.

It's a corporate oligarchy here in southern West Virginia. And that seems to be the direction the rest of our country is moving. This is a microcosm of what that's gonna look like for the rest of us, for the rest of y'all, the rest of the country.



Atlantic City campaign event last year to insure the state can't sell the public's water utility, and the people just won! PHOTO/LENA SMITH

We win! Atlantic City's water stays public

Victory for grassroots organizing against water privatization

By Lena Smith

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ — After months of organizing, state officials released a letter that announced: “The State of New Jersey will not sell or lease the Atlantic City Municipal Utilities Authority to a private company.” In the letter state authorities made it clear that organizing made the difference.

For years, I worked with civic associations, local groups, the Atlantic City branch of the NAACP, NJ Appleseed, ACLU of NJ, and public unions to protect the water system from privatization. Thanks to our outreach and organizing, residents of Atlantic City know the threats of water privatization—higher rates, diminished service, and the loss of local control and jobs—and the dangers of the state's power grab.

In November 2014, an advisory commission for Gov. Chris Christie first suggested water privatization in Atlantic City, but the city council repeatedly decided against dissolving its Municipal Utilities Authority (MUA), which would have begun the privatization process.

But then, in January of 2016, Sen. Steve Sweeney, the most powerful Democrat in the state, introduced a bill to take over the city and give sweeping

powers to an emergency manager who could sell city assets like the water.

We saw how state takeover laws in places like Detroit and Flint stripped away local democracy and threatened public access to clean, affordable water service. It would be no different in Atlantic City.

We developed an organizing strategy backed up by a solid legal framework: Gather petition signatures on a citizen's initiative, and introduce an ordinance demanding the right to full public participation in any water sale. State law gives the right to vote to all New Jersey voters. The takeover law stripped city residents of that right, so we would have to enact a city law giving residents a right we believe they already have.

Together with leaders from the Atlantic City NAACP and AC Civic Associations United, we organized a large on-the-ground campaign. We went around the city making presentations and recruiting volunteers. And we came up with a name for our campaign—AC Citizens Against the State Takeover—and a slogan: Our Water, Our Voice.

Folks went out and talked with residents about their right to decide the future of their water, and gathering petition signatures as they went. We

held city-wide canvass days almost every Saturday from March until June.

Petitions flowed in and by June we submitted over 2,400 signatures to the city. At the July 11 meeting, the City Council unanimously passed the ordinance 8-0.

After Christie's overseer opted not to veto that vote, the ordinance to ensure public participation in the sale of the water system became law. Last month's announcement put the final nail in the coffin on the state's water privatization scheme.

Keeping the water system public is a huge victory for the 100-plus residents and activists who went door to door fighting for their human right to clean water. They made this victory happen. The water utility should remain in public hands to protect the system from corporate water profiteers.

This is a big win, but there's more to be done. To restore democratic and civil rights for the city's residents, the state takeover of Atlantic City must end. Through education and organizing we built a people-powered movement to protect public water and local sovereignty.

The people have spoken, and their message was clear: “Our water, our voice.” We won!

The life or death fight for water and Earth

The immoral corporate drive to own and/or control the public's water, and the poisoning, shutoffs and rising cost of water, is drawing communities across the country into a life or death struggle for access to clean and affordable water and a safe Earth.

On these pages are articles from Flint, where people still fight the poisoning; and from Appalachia where mountaintop removal is threatening the Earth and human lives, and where people are dying of cancer from toxic water that our government and public officials don't seem to care about.

Amidst all of the human suffering, we are overjoyed to have received the story about the victory against privatization of the water in Atlantic City, NJ. Their message to all of us is, “Our water, our voice!” Send us your story!

— *The People's Tribune*

Flint rappers call out water crisis



Ira James Dorsey and the legendary Dayton Family, a Flint hip hop rap group, exposes the lies about the ongoing Flint water crisis.

FLINT, MI — Ira James Dorsey, aka “Bootleg,” of the legendary Dayton Family, a hip hop rap group from Flint, has created a scathing video exposing recent findings from a section of the scientific community, along with Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and EPA. Below are excerpts from the powerful video.

Flint residents still don't trust their water supply. Research suggests local water is safe as long as a filter is used. Many residents like Ira Dorsey are not buying it. “That's a flat-out blatant lie! Until I see those experts come to Flint, live here for 30 days, 60 days, and drink the water every day that's how you prove to the people it's safe.”

Researchers at Virginia Tech University, including one who helped uncover the Flint Water Crisis found lead levels in Flint water to meet Federal standards. But residents are still being urged to use bottled water or filtered tap water. Dorsey says, “If it's so safe then why do they recommend us to use filters? If it's safe then only why can't I just turn on my tap on and drink it anyway I want to drink it?”

Distrust in the city is ram-

pant and some still rely on bottled water for basic tasks.

Resident Vivian Kelly: “I still use the bottled water to brush my teeth. I use it to make my coffee. I use it to cook with, whatever foods I have to boil. I always use bottled water because I really don't trust cooking with that tap water”

Lead levels in Flint water were announced safe in January, 2017. Shortly after, Michigan officials ended a program that discounted residents' water bills.

Dorsey says: “Why are we paying water bills if we got to use bottled water? How can you charge us for something we can't use? At the end of the day, that filter Game is just an indirect way to say that the water is dirty. It's still unclean. It's still unsafe.”

Officials plan to replace some 20,000 LEAD tainted water lines by 2020. 3,700 have been replaced so far. Omar Burton, a student at University of Michigan-Flint, says, “The water was actually declared safe a couple of months back and then we realized that it wasn't so, we were lied to. I just don't want to keep being lied to about a basic necessity of life.”

Watch: [fb.com/ajplusenglish/videos/1048680651940108](https://www.facebook.com/ajplusenglish/videos/1048680651940108)

Immigrant rights leader targeted for deportation

Editor's note: the following are excerpts from a press release by immigrant rights organizations (see contact information below) and an interview with Democracy, Now! about the targeting for deportation of Maru Mora-Villalpando, an immigrant rights leader in Seattle, WA who has lived in the US for over 25 years.

Maru Mora-Villalpando, called a “modern-day freedom fighter,” leads the Seattle organization, Northwest Detention Center Resistance (NWDCR). The group formed when immigrants held at the Northwest Detention Center began hunger strikes in 2014 protesting their inhumane treatment. Mora-Villalpando continued to support and amplify the organizing against US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the GEO Group (the private contractor that operates the ICE facility from within the detention center.) Buoyed by the support of Mora-Villalpando and the NWDCR, detainees continue their struggle to be heard and demand justice, with nine hunger strikes at the facility last year.

Mora-Villalpando's efforts transformed the detention center from an ignored facility to a key site of local resistance, with weekly rallies and vigils outside its gates.

Now, in an unprecedented act of retaliation, ICE has targeted Mora-Villalpando, serving her suddenly with deportation papers. When asked why this is happening now, Maru said, “ICE only knows about me because of my political work ... I have spoken out to defend immigrants in detention and shared my story as an undocumented mother.” She adds, “We have a deportation machine that has grown incredibly big. And when Obama was leaving, he had the opportunity to stop it, but instead gave the keys to this fascist regime that has utilized it in so many different ways.” Maru says ICE was created with a specific intention, not only for deportations, but to destroy people and their families. She says they are just one more element of the police state oppression apparatus, adding, “They're Trump's police now...”

“But we still fight. We still resist. And we have been winning. So we believe ICE is sending us a

message to stop our political activity, to stop our activism. When I saw that letter, I laughed to myself, because I felt, ‘They want me to stop. And I won't stop.’”

This is not the first time ICE targets immigrants who speak out. This past December the Seattle Times reported that one of their interviewees, Baltazar Aburto Gutierrez, was detained by ICE agents who cited his recent appearance in that newspaper. Other activists nationally have also been targeted, including Ravi Ragbir and Jean Montrevil, two leaders in New York's immigrant rights advocacy community.

“They will go after many others, not only undocumented, but documented, and possibly even U.S. citizens. Remember, the Department of Justice is saying they're going to review, along with Homeland Security, 150,000 records of U.S. citizens, naturalized,” Maru says.

“We will not allow ICE to deport Maru and deter our organizing,” explained Tania Unzueta, Mijente Policy Director, and one of the first undocumented organizers to start the “coming out of



Press conference in defense of Maru Mora-Villalpando [right], an immigrant rights leader targeted for deportation. She champions hunger-striking immigrants protesting inhumane conditions in privately owned for-profit prisons.

PHOTO/NORTHWEST DETENTION CENTER RESISTANCE

the shadows” strategy of undocumented youth.

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maru@latinoadvocacy.org; Tania Unzueta, Mijente, 773-387-3186, tania@mijente.net, or Angélica Cházaro, NWDC Resistance, 646-496-5724, achazaro@gmail.com



Immigrant rights protest in Los Angeles. PHOTO/MOLLY ADAMS

From the Editors

The repressive apparatus of the government, which includes U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), is quietly singling out and attacking our leaders wherever they emerge. Leaders of the immigrant community and their support networks are currently in the bull's eye. This is happening despite that a majority of U.S. citizens favor amnesty and a path to citizenship. It is happening despite that each of these leaders has deep roots and family ties in the

U.S. It is being done to isolate the immigrant movement and divide the U.S. working class.

Marú Mora Villalpando, originally from Mexico, leads the Seattle based Northwest Detention Center Resistance, and has championed hunger striking immigrants protesting inhumane conditions in these privately owned prisons. She was served with an ICE deportation order.

Jean Montrevil, of Haiti, co-founder of New Sanctuary in New York was detained two weeks before a scheduled check in.

Stand by our leaders

Ravi Ragbir originally of Trinidad and executive director of New Sanctuary was detained for deportation.

And in an assault on church sanctuary, ICE (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement) detained Eliseo Jurado, who's wife Ingrid Latorre of Peru had taken sanctuary in a Colorado church.

In California, which passed SB 54, the California Values Act, battle lines are drawn. Federal Attorney General Jeff Sessions and acting ICE Director Thomas Homan announced plans for ICE raids in Northern California with a goal of 1,500 arrests. In response, California attorney general Xavier Becerra declared that he will prosecute employers who cooperate with ICE with fines of up to \$10,000.

What we are witnessing is open government sponsored terrorism. It harkens back to a time before the U. S. Civil War when slave catchers from Southern slave states could pursue and arrest runaway slaves in Northern Free States. Back then, Black and white abolitionists were terrorized, much as the leaders of the immigrant rights movement

are being terrorized and criminalized today.

Today, technology is eliminating the jobs of millions of people. Formerly employed people are pushed onto the streets, and others are forced to leave their homelands in search of a better future. Everyone is forced down towards the same level of poverty, no matter their color or nationality. The only thing the rulers of this country can do is keep us divided, confused and afraid. With lies that immigrants are criminals, they set the stage for imposing fascism on all of us so we cannot pose a threat to their continued domination. Hitler did this with the German people by vilifying immigrants and Jews.

What we can do:

We must start by defending our leaders. They point the way forward for all of us.

We must prevent the separation of families. Begin with keeping our leaders united with their families in the U.S., and extend protection to the Dreamers and their families through legalization and a path toward citizenship.

Respect the moral traditions that our country was founded upon by upholding sanctuary. We can rely on the sense of fair play and decency of the American people as demonstrated in the sanctuary movement. With time we will all see that we have more in common than our differences. An attack on one is an attack on all!

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

Women's marches: A fight for real change

From the Editors

Lauded as one of the largest marches in U.S. history, the January 20, 2018 Women's Marches saw a million women, men, and youth rallying for a society that cares for us all. These marches, led by women and sparked by Trump and his policies, reflected the broader crisis in our country: the growing polarity of wealth and poverty and the oppressive rule of the billionaires.

It will be interesting to see if the proposed purpose of #March-ToThePolls has an impact on the upcoming midterm elections. Thousands are running for office in an effort to get the peo-

ple's needs addressed, because of the failure of both Republicans and Democrats to deliver on the growing demands of the people.

As we look to the midterm elections, we remember that popular movements develop at the base of a society, by people whose circumstances compel them to protest, force them to action, to undertake the yoke of revolution, and towards the leadership roles that will create a more inclusive and equitable future.

This year in particular, many feminists are voicing the urgency of tying together the multitude of issues confronting people: concerns surrounding violence; the



(Left) Some of the one million people that attended this year's Women's marches.



(Right) Cindy Garcia addresses the women's march in Lansing, MI, surrounded by her two children. Her husband and father of the children was just deported after being brought here nearly 30 years ago.

PHOTOS/CATHERINE OTTARSON

assault on democracy; high incarceration rates; access to education, healthcare, food, water and housing; immigration issues; unemployment, and increased poverty, particularly for women. According to Oxfam, women fare

far worse than men in a world where the top 1% of individuals now hold 82% of all wealth.

The most oppressed, the increasingly disenfranchised, the dispossessed, are standing up against the system that has shut

them out, even in its most "liberal" attempts at inclusion. This new class, this new "we" in its understanding of a unity based in a shared and growing oppression, is marching forward towards real change.

Farmworker women stand with Hollywood actors against sexual assault

Editor's note: Below is a letter of solidarity from members of Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, the National Farmworker Women's Alliance, to the women and men in Hollywood who have come forward with their experiences of sexual harassment and assault.

Dear Sisters,

We write on behalf of the approximately 700,000 women who work in the agricultural fields and packing sheds across the United States. For the past several weeks we have watched and listened with sadness as we have learned of the actors, models and other individuals who have come forward to speak out about the gender based violence they've experienced at the hands of bosses, coworkers and other powerful people in the entertainment industry.

We wish that we could say we're shocked to learn that this is such a pervasive problem in your industry. Sadly, we're not surprised because it's a reality we know far too well. Countless farmworker women across our country suffer in silence because of the widespread sexual harassment and assault that they face at work.

We do not work under bright stage lights or on the big screen. We work in the shadows of society in isolated fields and packinghouses that are out of sight and out of mind for most people in this country. Your job feeds souls, fills hearts and spreads joy. Our job nourishes the nation with the fruits, vegetables and other crops that we plant, pick

and pack.

Even though we work in very different environments, we share a common experience of being preyed upon by individuals who have the power to hire, fire, blacklist and otherwise threaten our economic, physical and emotional security. Like you, there are few positions available to us and reporting any kind of harm or injustice committed against us doesn't seem a viable option.

Complaining about anything—even sexual harassment—seems unthinkable because too much is at risk, including the ability to feed our families and preserve our reputations.

We understand the hurt, confusion, isolation and betrayal that you might feel. We also carry shame and fear resulting from this violence. It sits on our backs like oppressive weights. But, deep in our hearts we know that it is not our fault. The only people at fault are the individuals who choose to abuse their power to harass, threaten and harm us, like they have harmed you.

In these moments of despair, and as you cope with scrutiny and criticism because you have bravely chosen to speak out against the harrowing acts that were committed against you, please know that you're not alone. We believe and stand with you.

In solidarity, Alianza Nacional de Campesinas

Alianza Nacional de Campesinas is an organization of current and former farmworker women, along with women who hail from farmworker families.

Billionaires versus the rights of unions – What's at stake in the Janus vs AFSCME case

By Dr. Jesús Estrada

CHICAGO, IL — "What is Disgusting? Union Busting!" That is the slogan I heard so many years ago during the 2004 strike in the City Colleges of Chicago. At the time, we were up against a corrupt mayor and a growing anti-union sentiment. The right to collective bargaining is crucial if public sector workers are to survive. Unfortunately, anti-unionism has since devastated Wisconsin, Michigan, and Indiana. But now a greater threat comes from Illinois.

If the Supreme Court rules in its favor, the Mark Janus vs. AFSCME case promises to give public sector unions nationwide a decisive blow. Framed as a right to free-speech and claiming that unions don't represent or speak for him, Mark Janus wants the right for all workers not to pay fair-share dues. In Illinois and across the country, that would devastate public sector unions.

Janus is supported by the National Right to Work Foundation and the Liberty Justice Center and billionaires like Illinois governor Bruce Rauner. These entities fight for corporate interests,

not the working class, not for *your interests*. Ironically, Janus argues that AFSCME has backed politicians who have ruined the state's budget, when the root cause has been corrupt politicians who have not paid state bills, most recently Rauner who has been holding the state budget hostage.

The workers who refuse to join the union and are fair-share are also represented by the union. They are guaranteed benefits and protection under the collective bargaining agreement, but unions do far more than negotiate contracts. They also advocate for fair working conditions like academic freedom. Unions fight for healthcare benefits that are so necessary in an increasingly difficult economy. The City Colleges Teachers Union has historically awarded scholarships to students, both documented and undocumented because of our union dues.

The Supreme Court is scheduled to decide the Janus Case by the summer, 2018. In the current political regime, unions will not win this case. However, unions can get organized. Some public-sector unions are already working very hard to re-card all of their

members.

Recently, Karen Lewis, president of the Chicago Teachers Union, spoke about the threat this case posed for public sector unions. She agreed that attacks on fair-share dues would devastate unions. She also said something quite profound that may offer a light at the end of the tunnel. She said when labor organized, historically, it made a big mistake in not lifting everyone else with it. Perhaps, it is time that unions consider how to fight not just for their members' rights and benefits, but for the rights and benefits of others in the community. I hope we can get there without having our unions decimated.

I have worked in right-to-work states like Arizona, and the conditions there were dismal. Health benefits were a privilege, and there was little to no recourse if there was a dispute with management. I was at the mercy of unfair bosses. This is the future we can expect if the Supreme Court rules in favor of Janus.

One thing is for sure, we are all better off with a union that is stably funded, and, as Karen Lewis said, fights for all workers.

All I wanted for Christmas was peace on earth

By Diana Berek

CHICAGO, IL — It is February now, long past Christmas. I did not get what I wanted for Christmas. None of us did. All I wanted for Christmas was peace on earth: an end to the social, economic, and political violence that is causing so much pain, hunger, homelessness, lost jobs, lost opportunities, lost hopes, lost dreams, lost futures, lost 2nd chances, lost self worth, lost inner peace.

The Dalai Lama says we can't find real peace externally until we find inner peace. He didn't say, though, that we won't have community peace until we all—ALL—can find that inner peace. How do we all find inner peace when so many of us are hurting? Struggling to survive? When a corporate elite bunch of thieves and scoundrels are killing us with pollution, poisons, and oppression?

On December 6, a 17-year-old boy (the step brother of one of my grandkids' friend) was shot 12 times. He's still in critical condition, but stabilizing. He can blink his eyes and give a thumbs up. He was shot in front of an Uptown CTA station.

The police and the alderman said (as they usually say when the victim is a teen) that it was possibly gang related. Whenever they say that I get mad, because it always sounds like they are blaming the victim. Or they say it was a senseless act of violence,



Michael is still recovering in the hospital and just started walking.

PHOTO/KAITLYN DIAZ

which is not an explanation, but is a way to deflect the public's emotional reaction. They seem to be saying, "There's nothing we can do about this, it's just a senseless act of violence and we will never be able to end it because we will never be able to make sense of it"

But I see it differently. I think we must make sense of this violence. I think violence on the streets starts out as violence in the suites. There is so much institutional violence being waged on people, especially on young people who are struggling to understand how they will live in a world that has

thrown them out as useless, jobless, futureless.

Each of these street shootings represents one more time that, as a society, we could not unite to prevent lost dreams; that, as a society, we again failed to give the next generation a chance to find a way to their future. Each time that one of us lost the final thread of a delicate inner peace, all of us lost the chance for outer peace and once again, as a society, we robbed one young man, one extended family, one community in one city, in one country on this planet and kept us—all of us—from finding peace on earth.

Toward the Chicago Poor People's Conference 2018

Basing ourselves in the long history for justice and on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, we announce our plan to build citywide organizations in Chicago around the following five-point basic agenda. These five points are not meant to fully represent all our areas of concern, but they serve as a unifying beginning to what will be a growing agenda and list of demands by the people of Chicago. We welcome participation in this summer's Chicago Poor People's Conference by any and everyone who agrees with the five-point agenda.



This young man has been on the Chicago streets for five years, sleeping at a homeless shelter.

PHOTO/CHARLES EDWARD MILLER

- 1: We want and demand full employment in healthy jobs at real living wages that benefit our communities and the city of Chicago.
- 2: We want and demand immediate safe and healthy housing with modern amenities for every man woman and child in Chicago. Wherever housing is built, adequate housing for all individuals and families.
- 3: We want and demand fully funded, equal, quality education provided free to every resident. This shall include college as well as K-12.
- 4: We want and demand free universal state-of-the-art healthcare for every man woman and child in Chicago. This shall include (but not limited to) eye, dental and mental healthcare services.
- 5: We want and demand an elected police review board with disciplinary power to hire and fire personnel. Police districts will reflect the communities they serve. Police officers under indictment will not receive pay until the guilt or innocence in their cases is determined. No personnel found guilty of crimes against the people will receive salary, pension, or other continued compensation.

For information, email chicagopoor@gmail.com

SPEAKERS FOR A NEW AMERICA BOOK SPEAKERS NOW!



Women's March, Chicago

PHOTO/CHARLES EDWARD MILLER

"Her visit was truly amazing, our community was truly inspired by her," said a professor about a Flint water warrior who spoke at a college campus.

Speakers for a New America promotes leaders in the forefront of the fight for a new society. Speakers' topics include the fight for clean affordable water, women's rights, saving the Earth, in defense of immigrants, for housing for all, and healthcare for all.

Our speakers bring us together around our common needs and point to the new society that is possible today. Speakers are also available for observances such as Black History Month, Latino Heritage Month, Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week, and more.

Call us today at 800-691-6888 or email info@speakersforanewamerica.com. Visit us on the web at speakersforanewamerica.com

In their own words – Prisoner addresses national water crisis

Greetings. I'm writing to say thank you for the years you have kept the "people" focused on the news. You guys continue to cover the water crisis in Flint, while highlighting the corporate takeover of water throughout the country. As you say, "WATER IS LIFE." Yet there are so many men locked behind the walls here who are denied access to this life giving source. As toxic water flows from the faucet, bottled water from Nestle is sold at the commissary.

This is how we win national improved Medicare for all

By Margaret Flowers, M.D.

Editor's note: These are excerpts from a January, 2017 article by Dr. Margaret Flowers. Read full text at popularresistance.org.

Why should we support Improved Medicare for All?

Health advocates often support incremental reforms rather than calling for a change as large as National Improved Medicare for All (NIMA). In reality, creating a national single payer health plan is the smallest incremental step that can be taken to begin to solve the health care crisis. It is the only way to remove the greatest obstacle to health care in the US, the private insurance companies, and achieve the savings required to cover everyone. It is the only way that health care can start to be treated as a public good rather than a commodity for investors to make profits.

NIMA would create a national health care system that covers every person living in the US. It would be financed through a progressive tax. There would not be any insurance premiums, deductibles or co-pays, so there would not be any financial barriers to care. There would be a single standard of high quality comprehensive coverage for everyone.

When people hear about NIMA, often the first thing they say is that we can't afford it. The reality is that we are already spending enough to cover everyone. National Improved Medicare

for all would be less expensive than the current health system.

The ACA was sold to the public as a step towards a single payer system, but in fact it took the US healthcare system toward greater privatization. Instead of building up our public insurances, Medicare and Medicaid, they are being increasingly privatized. Instead of getting rid of private health insurance companies, the government became a broker for them as people are forced to buy insurance policies. And the insurance companies are given hundreds of billions of dollars each year in subsidies.

The result under the ACA is that tens of millions of people are without insurance. Tens of millions are also under-insured, they have health insurance but they still can't afford the care they need.

The Democrats are currently working to defend the ACA. Instead of trying to preserve or tweak a broken and failed system, it is time to build on what works, Medicare.

How do we win?

The current political environment has brought National Improved Medicare for All back into the public dialogue. Senator Sanders made it a major part of his campaign platform, which sparked attacks from the Clinton campaign despite polls showing strong support for single payer. It is not possible to build on the ACA to make it a universal and affordable health sys-

tem. For decades, people have accepted tinkering with the system because they have been told that small changes are the only options on the table. It is up to us to seize this moment.

The keys to winning single payer are to build a broad movement in support of it and to become more assertive in the tactics used. The NIMA movement faces the same obstacles as other social movements, the dominating influence of rich and powerful corporations that control the political system. When single issue movements work together strategically, they have the people power to overcome the power of money.

Health care is a uniting issue because it impacts all of us. And health is connected to everything; even if everyone had access to care, health outcomes would not significantly improve unless we address the social determinants of health such as wealth inequality, lack of education, homelessness, unemployment and low wages, food insecurity, systemic racism, mass incarceration, environmental toxins, and the climate crisis.

Building an effective movement for National Improved Medicare for All means understanding the realities of the challenges we face. The current political system will not put NIMA 'on the table' unless a popular movement forces it there. And when it is 'on the table', the people will have to fight to advance it.



Rally for healthcare for all in Chicago. Creating a national single-payer health plan (Medicare for All) is the next step toward beginning to solve the health care crisis. PHOTO/CHARLES EDWARD MILLER

Margaret Flowers, MD is a pediatrician who co-directs Popular Resistance. She was a candidate for US Senate in Maryland, Green Party.

Iowa Chamber of Commerce decisions could render seniors homeless

By Kathy Burns

CENTERVILLE, IA — Shamrock Heights is a Department of Housing and Development (HUD) housing project in Centerville, Iowa for seniors and people with disabilities. For almost two years, the building, which is owned by the Centerville Chamber of Commerce, has been plagued with bedbugs.

When bugs first appeared, a local pest company, Bugout, held a tenant informational meeting and assured tenants the problem would be resolved. It wasn't, and eventually the bugs hitchhiked to apartments on all four floors of the building.

Life changed. Books and games were removed from the

recreation room. Potlucks and bloodpressure clinics stopped. Fearful of carrying bugs to their own home, people stopped visiting one another.

When more apartments became infested, tenants who had bugs were told to trash everything not sealed in plastic. A red dumpster was delivered and the affected residents soon had it filled with their televisions, microwaves, computers, furniture, clothing, and keepsakes.

To make matters worse, vacated apartments were cleaned, sprayed, and rented out to unsuspecting tenants who soon found they had bedbugs.

More than a year passed before Bugout brought in an additional pesticide. Apartments were so heavily drenched in it,

puddles of chemicals were left under beds and on kitchen floors. There was no way to circulate fresh air because bathrooms have neither windows nor vents (a violation of the federal housing code).

Tenants who felt forced to move, found deposits couldn't be returned until 30 days after move-out. One tenant, who moved unaware into an infested apartment, lost his deposit because he left before his one-year lease was up. With no money for a new place, he moved into his pick up.

This is unacceptable. To avoid having more residents become homeless, the Chamber's decision on deposits must be reversed until the bedbug problem is completely

resolved.

Also, because the problem should never have progressed to the point where tenants had to throw away belongings, the Chamber should assist its tenants in replacing them.

The building needs to be brought up to federal code and retrofitted with a ventilation system to circulate fresh air through the apartments.

Also, since the current pest control company appears unable to make progress without the overuse of chemicals, which may be harmful to tenants suffering from respiratory ailments and allergies, the Chamber should seek a different company.

The Chamber's lack in this situation brings up the question

of how aware and responsive the Executive Committee is to the housing needs of the seniors and people with disabilities who rent from them.

Calls to other Iowa Housing Authorities dealing with bedbugs indicate a ratio of one out of 300 apartments. The Chamber should determine what has to be done to bring the ratio of bedbug apartments in their building to an acceptable number. Every effort must be made by the Chamber to accommodate the housing needs of each of their tenants so they can live without the stress and worry of possibly losing their home!

Whirlpool: A poverty pimp

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

BENTON HARBOR, MI — A cold snap during the beginning of the year took a toll on the homeless and the poverty-stricken in the city of Benton Harbor, Michigan. We have homeless and poverty-stricken people out in this frigid cold weather. Do you understand that the people are the backbone of the city and we cannot leave anyone behind? We must protect the homeless and deal with the impact of homelessness on their health. Material poverty affects everyone. If you're poverty-stricken, you're poor, and if you're homeless, you're poor, so it ends up the same. On average, the poor live shorter lives than the rich.

Whirlpool, the giant corporation that runs Benton Harbor, preys on the poor and the homeless. Whirlpool set its sights on



Rev. Pinkney (right) protesting in 2010 against the redevelopment of Benton Harbor, MI, which is creating more homeless and poverty.

PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK, OLAFIMAGES.COM

turning the city of Benton Harbor into a lakeside resort only for the wealthy—and made it clear that the homeless and poverty-stricken must go. Whirlpool Cor-

poration does not want homeless people in Benton Harbor because it is turning the city into a profitable resort area for the rich. Whirlpool is a poverty pimp.

Whirlpool ordered the elected officials of Benton Harbor and Benton Harbor law enforcement to pass and enforce all the city ordinances concerning the homeless. The job of the police is to arrest, intimidate, and harass all homeless individuals. The homeless are not even allowed to sit in the library to get warm.

Do you know that Whirlpool, the largest corporation in the area, made over \$20 billion in total revenue in the year 2016, and in 2010, forced \$3.87 million in tax breaks from the city of Benton Harbor, one of the poorest cities in the country?

Whirlpool secured the renewal of lucrative energy tax credits for making high-efficiency appliances that were worth a combined \$120 million for the years 2012 and 2013. Such breaks have helped the Whirlpool Corporation to keep its total tax expenses

below zero in recent years.

We have homeless people in Benton Harbor trying to stay warm, without food and clothing—and the people have remained silent. We must stand up to Whirlpool. It is about tax policies, about benefiting the political class, the well-connected and the well-heeled. That is who the rich are thinking about in this country.

Benton Harbor has less than 10,000 people living in the city and hundreds and hundreds of homeless people (with many living with their mama and kids.) We have young people, old people, children, mothers, and fathers who are homeless—and we are giving \$3.87 million in tax breaks to Whirlpool, the poverty pimp. Shame on you!

Black History Month 2018

By Joseph Peery

CHICAGO, IL — When I was a kid we had Black History week. We discussed heroes in African American history and in the American Civil War. At that time, Black history wasn't seen as central to American history, but knowledge of Black history was seen as essential to our survival. By 1970, the holiday evolved into Black History Month. It became a time when we discussed how far Black people have come in the past year and charted a course of struggle for the coming period.

Often the holiday focuses on the contributions of those Blacks who have "made it." My neighborhood provides a glimpse of how far the mass of Black poor have come. Cabrini Green, and other working class communities like ours, is being destroyed. Fifty years ago the community was vital to production. Cabrini sat smack dab in the middle of four different industrial areas. When Cabrini was built, real estate companies opposed it because "public housing" was seen as "bad for business." However, industrial manufacturers supported it because, no matter how low the slave wages public housing residents were paid, the workers kept a roof over their heads and could return to work each day. The relationship made industry millions in higher profits.

By the late 1960s, the area just south of Cabrini became known as "Ghost Town" because of the blocks of empty buildings that once housed businesses and jobs. Now



It will take unity across color lines to create a new world. Young people are pointing the way.

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they no longer needed our labor. The area was soon redeveloped around high tech and real estate. And guess what? You can't have public housing and stay here when your labor is not needed. They started to run people out. We had no right to live in a home. Today a disproportionate number of blacks are homeless. This poverty is connected to the murder by Chicago police, which we saw in the murder of the young Laquan McDonald, shot 16 times.

Today, a lot of young people are leading the way. Groups like Black Lives Matter made the Chicago police stop the blatant murder of black working class people. People of all colors joined the fight. There is a real consciousness of poverty and destitution among young people today. Families are without health-care and food, kids are murdered, schools are second-class. There's no human rights and there's no jobs. So

people freeze to death in the streets homeless or get shot by the police. It's not just Blacks either. The elimination of industrial jobs and poverty makes it about class too. Class means we are connected with everybody else that is being kicked down. African Americans are not a sizable enough portion of the population to carry out this fight by themselves. We are going to have to fight together.

The message of African American History Month, 2018 is that if the American people are to survive, we have to change the society. But it will take the unity of the people across lines of color. The deepening poverty of millions points the way to a new society where there is no such thing as racism or class exploitation. Human beings have a right to live in a society where we are all treated equally and where everyone has what they need to lead a happy, full life.

Homeless James Thomas

Ah, look at all the homeless people!
Ah, look at all the homeless people!

Homeless James Thomas
picks up a tarp and the mat where his
home tent had been
Lives on dirt air.
Limps on the sidewalk
Wearing the dust he collects that's
continually there
Nobody cares.

All the homeless people,
Where do they all come from?
All the homeless people.
Where do they all belong?

Homeless James Thomas
wipes off the salt sweat that drips from
his fever-pitched brow
Coughing up phlegm.
Look at him dying,
begging the nimbies for fast food or
change they might spare.
Nothing is there!

All the homeless people,
Where do they all come from?
All the homeless people.
Where do they all belong?

Ah, look at all the homeless people!
Ah, look at all the homeless people!

— Kathy Powers