



WHY IS HOUSING NOT A RIGHT?

In the U.S., 3.5 million people are without homes, yet 18.9 million homes stand vacant

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POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES 40 DAYS OF ACTION

See page 4

[Above] A homeless man in Detroit. Once a prosperous industrial city, Detroit now has the highest rate of poverty among the nation's 20 largest cities. People across the country are organizing around housing and homeless issues, which share a common cause: housing as a right. [Left] The Poor People's Campaign in Lansing, MI.

PHOTOS/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

Medicaid work requirements are a death sentence

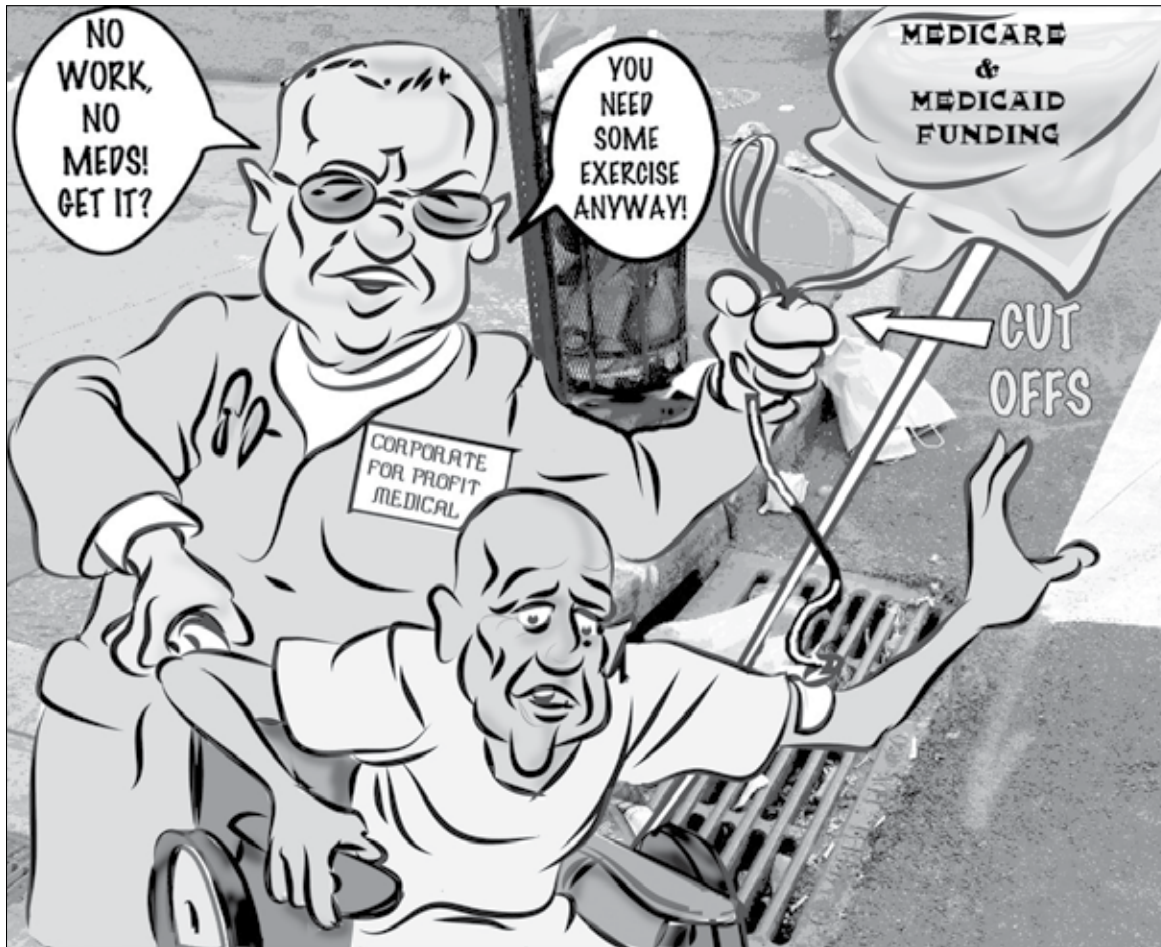
EDITORIAL

In a story posted on talkpov-erty.org, Kristen Arant described how she contemplated suicide because she had no health insurance to help her cope with her opioid addiction. Finally getting Medicaid, she said, literally saved her life. Now she is worried that the federal government's new rules allowing states to impose work requirements to get Medicaid will strip her of her coverage.

Healthcare is a top issue in the country. Rarely mentioned though, is the dangerous thread that continues to unravel our profoundly deteriorating healthcare system: the unrelenting assault on Medicaid. For the first time since Medicaid's passage in 1965, waivers—which allow states to do things they couldn't otherwise do, such as make people work for their Medicaid—are being used to restrict, rather than extend Medicaid coverage. The goal is to force people off of Medicaid. Worth noting: 60% of adults on Medicaid already work.

This approach to cutting back Medicaid dredges up false divisions in the working class between the “deserving” and the “undeserving” poor, in a country where 75 million people rely on Medicaid for their health insurance. These “Section 1115” waivers are aimed mainly at around 25 million working class adults whose states expanded Medicaid as part of the ACA legislation.

As of the end of April, three states have been given federal permission to impose work requirements and other Medicaid restrictions, and seven others have applications pending for such requirements. In Kentucky, where the restrictions have been approved, it's estimated that about 95,000 enrollees will be forced off the program.



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

Besides work requirements, the Section 1115 waivers can permit such things as drug screening, imposing premiums and eligibility time limits, and dropping people from Medicaid for non-payment of premiums and other “violations.” The restrictions smack of control and criminalization of the poorest in our country. And the money saved will be used to pay for the \$1.5 trillion tax cut Congress recently awarded to the richest Americans.

The uninsured population in states that did not expand Medicaid has risen 22%. The four southern states of Texas, Georgia, Florida and North Carolina are home to 89% of those falling in the “Medicaid Gap,” but that's not stopping North Carolina and Texas from applying for punishing waivers. Mississippi, another non-expansion state, is propos-

ing a work requirement that targets parents and caregivers who make less than \$3,250 a year!

Michigan's proposed work requirement is tied to the unemployment rate in each county. It's likely to lead to rural, whiter counties, where unemployment is higher, getting a break from the work requirements, while urban areas with a higher share of Black residents and lower unemployment rates would still be subjected to them. This is a divisive tactic similar to the one used to impose federal cuts in welfare in the past, or to impose the dictatorial emergency manager system on some Michigan cities—the Black workers are painted as lazy and incompetent, and therefore needing to be “disciplined” with cutbacks. This sets the stage for the cuts to be applied to everyone.

The assault on Medicaid—which is a death sentence for some—is being challenged by a growing awareness that Single Payer, Improved and Expanded Medicare for All is necessary to end the charade of health insecurity in a country of abundance. The electoral arena is one part of this battlefield. A unified, bottom-up strategy that defends the needs of those most at risk—the uninsured, the undocumented and those on Medicaid—is necessary to go on the offensive for government-guaranteed, equal and comprehensive healthcare for all. If a corporate government acts to deny necessary healthcare, then a bold, visionary social movement must act to confront government, conscious that only a public not private system of care can assure that Everybody Is In and Nobody is Out!

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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Why is housing not a right?

COVER STORY

HUD Director Ben Carson, a Trump appointee, recently proposed that rents in subsidized HUD housing be tripled, leaving the poorest households with a mere \$50 of their benefits after rent! HUD has been scaling back on public housing for decades, including the notorious “One Strike” provision that led to many evictions and homelessness, and the Hope VI program that destroyed public housing projects across the country and replaced them with “mixed-income” developments that left many families without housing. Recently, the UN Rapporteur on Housing called the housing situation in the U.S. “devastating,” with housing treated as financial commodities, and the treatment of the homeless “stunning and cruel.”

Evictions and foreclosures are sweeping the nation everywhere. As cities and even smaller towns gentrify, millions more are driven out of their communities and neighborhoods, or into homelessness. This, coupled with massive and permanent job loss as production automates and replaces human labor with robots, leads to mass dispossession and poverty, even among formerly well-paid and stable workers.

Some who yesterday had jobs and a home find themselves suddenly living in their vehicles: one tow away from living on the streets.

While the average monthly rent nationally has risen to over \$1,200 a month, with much higher numbers in most cities, the national minimum wage has stayed at \$7.25 an hour. These figures just don’t add up to anything that sustains “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”—even sheer survival. This is a formula for homelessness, and the process is speeding up with no end in sight.

In cities such as San Francisco, homeless people sleep on cardboard at the feet of a building boom of shining glass towers of multimillion dollar condos, while families are being run out of town. Under capitalism, housing is seen as a source of profit for financial interests, not as a social priority of the government and an absolute survival need for people. The attack on housing by the billionaires and their government that began with the steady abandonment of public housing is reaching ever-broader sections of the American people. With automation eliminating jobs, the billionaires will not provide housing for workers they do not need. The capitalists cannot guarantee a right to housing because to do so would threaten the very economic system they rely on for their profits.



Housing struggle. San Jose, CA. The high-tech economy creates a dramatic polarization of wealth resulting in workers facing unaffordable rents, low wages, or no jobs. Yet, the capacity exists today to house every one. PHOTO/SANDY PERRY

People everywhere are organizing around housing and homeless issues, which share a common cause: housing as a right—whether in eviction defense or demanding homes for the homeless; protecting the right to safe, affordable public housing; divestment from banks that are foreclosure mills; organized squatting;

and the establishment of independent tent communities as bases of homeless and housing rights activism. Automated processes that resemble 3D printing can create a house overnight, and there are enough houses standing empty to house everyone many times over. We need to demand that this new technology, and all

the resources we need, be publicly owned, not owned as investments by the billionaire class, with the rest of us in the street. Our demand for the right to housing is in reality a demand that government guarantee housing, and all else we need to survive and thrive, and that these things be distributed “according to need.”



Mike Zint of “First They Came for the Homeless” at the Poor Tour tent community in Berkeley, CA, celebrating a temporary court-ordered restraining order to a threatened raid on the site. PHOTO/SARAH MENEFFEE

We could house everyone!

From the Editors

Cairo, Illinois, this impoverished historic river town located at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers has been at the center of the national public housing crisis since it was revealed that the authorities in charge of two housing complexes misused funds and allowed the buildings to deteriorate.

With national attention, in stepped HUD Secretary Dr. Ben Carson. The decision was made to tear the housing complexes down. Instead of guaranteeing the people decent affordable housing in the community in which they lived, Carson offered platitudes and regrets that the government could not do more than give vouchers and leave the families on their own to find housing elsewhere. HUD was no longer in the business of providing public housing!

Denying public housing to families in need has been going

on for decades, under both Democratic and Republican administrations. It was President Bill Clinton who made it easier for federally funded housing to exclude anyone with a “criminal” history with his “One Strike You’re Out Initiative.” And it was under Clinton that funding for public housing was reduced by \$17 billion, while corrections spending rose by \$19 billion.

Out of a population of 2400 in Cairo, the public housing complexes were home to 400 people, families, who want to live their lives in the community, raising their children with hopes and dreams for a better future, just as all working families have done for generations. While the families affected here are predominantly Black, this scenario is playing out in communities all across America, affecting people of all colors and ethnicities.

This is a moral crisis. What kind of society does not provide for its people? What kind of soci-

ety turns against the very heart and soul of its base, the working families that have been its lifeblood?

In this society, houses, like food, clothing, and even life sustaining water, are “commodities” available only to those who can afford the price. The very workers who built the housing with their blood, sweat and tears, face evictions and homelessness.

We live in a time of abundance. There is plenty of all the things we humans need to live decent meaningful lives. We could have a whole new society where everyone’s needs are taken care of. According to Amnesty International, there are 18 million empty housing units in America. We, the people, need to take our future into our hands. Let’s begin by putting the people without homes into the empty houses. That’s a solution we can morally stand behind!

Poor People's Campaign launches 40 days of action

From the People's Tribune

On May 13, the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, launched 40 days of nonviolent direct action across the country to confront systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, the war economy and the nation's distorted moral narrative. Actions involving thousands of people were held in Washington, D.C., and in 35 state capitals. More than 1,000 were arrested for acts of civil disobedience.

Weekly events organized around themes will include mass meetings on Sundays, Moral Monday direct actions, and educational and cultural events. The first week's events focused on children, women and people with disabilities in poverty. Protests in subsequent weeks will focus on: the persecution of immigrants, systemic racism, xenophobia and the mistreatment of indigenous communities; the war economy and militarism; ecological devastation, and the right to health and a healthy planet; education, living wage jobs, income and housing; and our nation's distorted moral narrative. These actions will con-



Rev. Barber, co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign, prays at a memorial built for a homeless man who died unnecessarily at the age of 37 at River City in Grays Harbor, Washington where 1 of every 16 residents are homeless. PHOTO/POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

tinue in the nation's capital and around the country through late June, culminating in a mass rally in Washington, D.C. June 23. Participants will then continue building the campaign in the states, which is expected to be a multi-year effort.

"We're living in an impoverished democracy," the Rev. William Barber II, a co-chair of the campaign, told the crowd in

Washington May 14. "People across the country are standing up against the lie of scarcity. We know that in the richest country in the world, there is no reason for children to go hungry, for the sick to be denied health care and for citizens to have their votes suppressed. Both parties have to be challenged—one for what it does and one for what it doesn't do."



The Poor People's Campaign launched 40 days of nonviolent direct action across the country. This photo is from the protest in Lansing, MI. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTILEY.COM

'They'll harass you for sleeping on cardboard' says pregnant mother

Editor's note: This interview is transcribed from a video by Denver Homeless Out Loud member PJ Damico with homeless family Josh and Ashley.

DENVER, CO —

Josh: My name is Josh and this is my wife Ashley, "Little Bit." We've been together off and on for the last 12 years. I've been out on the street for eight years now. We've stuck together through a lot.

Ashley: This is my wheelchair I use because of my hips and my back. We're expecting twins. I've been out for five years. I went back home and then back out. There aren't plenty of places for couples to stay in a shelter together at all. Even being pregnant, we're not legally married, they won't put us in a shelter together.

Our two other kids are in Missouri. Our first one, we don't know where she is, she got taken away from us when we first got onto the streets. She was about 5

when she got taken. We couldn't find a shelter where women and children or even couples with kids could be together. They said it was endangering the child. I'm hoping in the near future I can get her back.

Josh: We're awake now at 4 a.m. cause we're waiting for the sweeps. They will bring cops, trash trucks to pick up whatever is left. We are going to take our wheelchair, tarps, all our belongings we can carry.

Ashley: All the rest we will have to leave and they'll take it away no matter what. They said if you can't carry it on your back we'll take it and put it in storage, and we have no form of ID to get it. So it's like they're not going to give it back anyways.

We hear a lot of people are going up to the Capitol, in front of the mayor's house, right there in the park.

Josh: I would like other people who sleep out here to come with us, so we can get this straightened out, and get the



Man protests Denver's effort to drive homeless people from the city with a camping ban. His sign says, "Arrest this baby," referring to the baby Jesus in the nativity scene. Jesus was homeless at his birth.

PHOTO/DENVER HOMELESS OUT LOUD

urban camping ban taken care of.

Ashley: They expect us to sleep on the concrete, nothing underneath us. You can't have

anything. I'm pregnant and they expect me to be on the ground, the concrete. Out here they'll harass you for having even card-

board underneath you, they consider that urban camping. It's hard enough for me, with twins in here.



Pastor Cue, who has been on Skid Row for 12 years, says we need to create a society where we protect people.

PHOTO/JOE FENSTERMAKER

By Pastor Cue

LOS ANGELES, CA — I am as influenced by the Rastafarians as I am by the Christians. I follow Christ. But I don't resonate with Western Christian Culture. It's not my culture. I can appreciate the culture, but my culture

is mainly from the Caribbean. I established the Church Without Walls to approach everything as a Church Without Walls to avoid barriers that separate people for no good reason.

I've been on Skid Row for 12 years. Part of that is chance and part is not looking at people as if

Church without walls

they were unfit to live. I'm no different. We're all the same. I'm just one paycheck, or half away from living on the streets myself, as are a lot of folks who've went through this financial crisis we're in.

Usually when Christians approach this work they say, "We're going to get you out of Skid Row, we're going to get you out of this situation." We're like no, we want to be in this thing and be a part of the community. I want to elevate people within the community not help them out of the community. We want to approach the homeless as it's not as if you've done something wrong. Homelessness is a racial justice issue. We look at it for what it is, learn from the people, hear from the people, and so we do church in that context.

These communities (like Skid Row) didn't just come from anywhere, but from the policies that shaped our society. In 2008 people lost their homes and instead

of giving the money to the people to save their homes we gave the money to the banks, we saved the capitalistic system. Now we have people coming out of the woodwork and acting like homelessness just happened yesterday. It was systematically brought to this point. Now I work with CLU, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice. We work with Unite Here and some of the unions. One of the things that we're working on is that the private equity firms purchased all the homes of the people who lost their homes and turned them into rental property.

So, when you think about these private equity firms and how people don't make enough money, yet we want to raise prices on everything, but we don't want to pay people a living wage. Homelessness rose, what, 20% last year? In one year. So, people are losing their homes and you're fighting with them about a \$15

minimum wage. They can't survive on it anyway.

So, if we don't create a society where we protect people it's going to get worse. Homelessness, like all our problems, is dealt with by law enforcement. There's 100 million dollars allocated to homelessness and 85% of it goes to law enforcement. You got to watch that, how they spend their money

Note from the author: "The Blackstone Group is one of the world's largest private equity firms, with \$333 billion in assets. They specialize in leveraged buy-outs and since the financial crisis has spent nearly \$7.5 billion to purchase the 40,000 single-family homes to manage as rentals across the United States." Hedge Funds: The Ultimate Absentee Landlords. (From *The American Prospect*.)

'You need to listen to the people!'



Lindsey Krantz, and Stacey Hill, both residents of the 'First they came for the homeless' Poor Tent community in Berkeley, CA, recently testified at City Hall against new proposed homeless-bashing laws.

PHOTO/SARAH MENEFFEE

Editor's Note: These testimonies are from a hearing at Berkeley City Hall in late April. The mayor and a City Council member have proposed a whole new set of restrictions on homeless movement, involving where they can appeal for help, sit on the sidewalk, how much sidewalk they and their possessions or dogs can cover, along with an attack on independent tent communities and people's right to shelter themselves in tents. Since the city is failing to house people as the obvious remedy for homelessness, they are trying to further beat up on the victims of this social fail, as part of the raging gentrification and removal of poor people all over the San Francisco Bay Area. These are two of the voices, from those who would be

most affected, against this madness and lack of vision. They also suggest a better way, as evidenced in the cooperative communities they have built and live in.

By Sarah Menefee, *People's Tribune* and *First They Came For The Homeless*

I'm Lindsey Krantz of Berkeley, homeless. I am a member of 'First they came for the homeless' and a class lawsuit member of Sullivan et al. v. City of Berkeley and BART.

I demand that the City Council take no action tonight. These proposed policies come from a recalcitrant, foot-dragging defendant, the City Council, you make me sick! As in, you exacerbate my mental illness. The only way to come into compliance with the law is to kill myself, or otherwise die. How's that for justice? How's that for a final solution? Where am I supposed to breathe, sleep and defecate?

History's verdict will strike down your proposed final solutions as presented tonight. Don't make it worse for yourselves in federal court. In the meantime—STOP THE RAIDS!

— Lindsey Krantz

You are doing the same thing as you've been doing all along. You need to listen to homeless people themselves. Just like the one guy said, you live in a fantasy. You have ideas about people but you've never spoken to them. You've never been in their shoes, you have no concept of what it is to be where they are. You need to listen to the people who have the actual problems, and resolve it.

You are spending money on nothing, getting nothing. This group of homeless people ['First They Came For The Homeless' tent communities] has cost the city nothing [except the huge cost of the police raids]. Put your money in that kind of thinking. It could be done for next to nothing, and is a solution.

— Stacey Hill

Untitled 1

hungry
homeless
need you
on a sign

at his
sleeping
feet

Untitled 2

certain hungry ones
have the gift of
turning crumbs
into meals
and sharing them

*
my bet is
on them

— poems by Sarah Menefee

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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



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

Substitute teachers hunger strike for healthcare

Editor's note: Below, Alex Brower, Substitute Teacher President, Milwaukee Teachers Education Association (MTEA) speaks with the People's Tribune on day 12 of his hunger strike. Teachers and others are showing their support by doing one-day hunger strikes.

Right now substitute teachers are the only groups that don't receive healthcare from the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) but who work full time. So what this hunger strike is doing is bringing attention to the fact that we have hundreds of fulltime teachers who are not insured and who need to be.

This fight really started with our effort to stop privatization. The District tried to privatize the substitute teacher pool to a temp agency called Goodwill Talent-Bridge. We defeated the privatization attempt; all those temps were hired by the District. One reason they turned to the temp agency is that there is a shortage of substitute teachers in MPS. So



Alex Brower (2nd from right) is on a hunger strike to call attention to the hundreds of fulltime substitute teachers in Milwaukee who do not have health insurance and need it. PHOTO/JOE BRUSKY, MTEA

the substitute teachers are trying to improve the quality of education so we can bring teachers back.

Milwaukee has been a testing ground for over 20 years

for failed right-wing policies. We were the first city to implement the voucher program in the 1990s. The supposed competition has not made education better, in fact it has made education

worse because these fly-by-night groups can set up a charter school or a voucher school, and get funding for every student who walks through the door. We have a little bit more than half of school-age

children attending public school in Milwaukee. The other half are either in voucher schools or publicly chartered but privately run charter schools.

When the school district budget came out April 27 and there was no healthcare for subs, we decided to ratchet up our tactics. With the support of my union brothers and sisters, I decided to go on a hunger strike on May 3. I'm continuing this hunger strike until this budget is amended to include healthcare for every sub who works fulltime in this District. The next official date for review of the budget is May 24. I want to see an actual vote on the school board that will alter the budget that's being proposed.

I hope I'm inspiring people to take action and make a change in their own communities and know that they have the power to do this.

Please visit peopletribune.org for the full text of this interview.

Janus – The best defense is a good offense

By Kimberly King and Peter Brown

OAKLAND, CA — This month, the Supreme Court will likely decide the Janus v. AFSCME case that seeks to stop public unions collecting fees from all the employees they're required to represent. Janus attacks public workers, teachers, and the resources we all need.

Janus is one part of the corporate-led attack to privatize or eliminate all public services and resources, including public education. Public unions have played a major role in defending these resources, but it is time for teachers, and all who must work to survive, to take the offensive. In public education, this means our unions must unite with our students, their families, and the broader community to hold government accountable to guarantee the necessities of life for everyone, without exception.

We call out the corporate takeover of government that dispossesses us of our rights and resources. Massive corporate tax cuts and loopholes leave government short of funds, slashing public services. Corporations united with our government engineer this crisis, then use it as an excuse to turn public funds into private profit. Government serves as the Dispossessor-in-Chief.

Why? Corporations won't pay to educate workers they no longer need. Mass public education has always been based on corporate need for literate workers in large numbers. The digital revolution has changed our economy, making more and more workers superfluous; the decline in education funding and quality follows.

Profit-based funding means education on the cheap; crowded classrooms, inadequate educational resources, and teacher poverty.

The attack is bipartisan; it represents the needs

of the entire corporate class of billionaires. It includes corporate liberals like Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, the Clintons, Barack Obama, Arne Duncan, and Rahm Emanuel, not just Trump, the Kochs, and DeVos.

Taking the offensive means understanding there are no common interests between corporations and the people. It means demanding profit has no place in public education! In West Virginia, Arizona and beyond, teachers are fighting for adequate classroom resources and teacher compensation. Because the laws are designed to prevent workers from fighting and winning, teachers are forced to break those laws to press their case, hooking up with parents, classified staff, and other state workers as they strike illegally.

Suddenly there is a social force driving governors to provide money they said didn't exist. This broad force is able to unite because they all face further cuts to fundamental necessities of life. More and more, we face a common, growing poverty. Education, health care, pensions, housing, jobs are all basic needs to survive. The just demand for these is the basis of their unity and their power, and also of ours.

We must hold government accountable to guarantee the welfare of human beings and the earth, not of corporations. As we've seen from the poisoning of Flint to the devastation of Appalachian mountains, corporations evade responsibility for the problems they cause. And government lets them do this.

The Janus decision, along with vouchers and charter schools, creates two education systems; one for the Haves, one for the Have-Nots. We will not accept this; we will not be silent about this. We will unite and go on the offensive for what we need and deserve.

'We can't afford to be fighting each other!'

By Tamar Manasseh



Tamar Manasseh, of Mothers Against Senseless Killing, with Chicago children. She is a leader in the fight to bring resources to the schools and schoolchildren whose futures are jeopardized by big money interests who are closing and privatizing schools.

CHICAGO, IL — OK. We're trying to build on the block this summer. They're shutting the schools down in the fall, so all those 8th graders and the entire Robeson High School student body will be SCHOOL-LESS!!! THAT IS IMPORTANT.

You may feel like the schools in the neighborhood were shitty, and they were, but that was by design. You may have thought you weren't educated in those schools, BUT YOUR KIDS WON'T EVEN HAVE THOSE SHITTY SCHOOLS TO GO TO!!!

Their lives won't be nearly as good as yours, so if you think yours is bad, imagine their's worse!

WE AREN'T LEAVING THE BLOCK AGAIN IN THE FALL! WE CAN'T!!!

We gotta stay out because technically, SUMMER IS NOT GOING TO END!

WE ARE ALL UNDER ATTACK RIGHT NOW! WE CAN'T AFFORD TO BE FIGHTING EACH OTHER!

I know that everybody is mad about something right now. Everybody is beefing with somebody right now. But what kills me is, the real threat, the real bad guy, the real life opps, AIN'T NOBODY BEEFING WITH THEM!!!!

They're coming to lock you up, close your kid's schools down and make them jail bait, take your houses, put you out of your city, but you mad at somebody they're fucking over just as badly as they're doing you?!?!? DAMN! HOW HARD IS THAT TO UNDERSTAND?

You wanna get your aggression out? Cool. I'll tell you where to put it. Just stop putting it on each other!

'Big pharma allows addiction to grow,' says candidate

Editor's note: The People's Tribune interviewed Matthew Kerner, who is running for the West Virginia House of Delegates in the 45th District.

People's Tribune: Matthew, tell us about your campaign.

Matthew Kerner: The two issues I see facing West Virginia are poverty and substance abuse, and oftentimes they are related.

My motivation for running for office came through my work. I run an organization called Opportunity House, Inc. It is a recovery community organization. We provide housing for people in recovery from substance abuse, and provide recovery supports for anybody in our community without charge.

Through that work, I saw an enormous number of bad political decisions. We waste a lot of money doing things that have been demonstrated to be relatively ineffective like sending people to 28-day treatment programs and then sending them right back to the same environment they came from, knowing there's a very low success rate. We are treating a chronic disease with an acute care model by not addressing the underlying issues so it will reoccur.

Something in our society makes us not want to do something good for those we don't think deserve it, those people become marginalized and disenfranchised, and dehumanized.

PT: What are the causes of addiction?

MK: Here in WV and across Appalachia, mental health, depression, and similar issues are driven by hopelessness and helplessness. When I moved here in the 80s, people joked that it didn't matter if there was a boom or bust in the rest of country, things were already bad here. Over time we develop an attitude that you are predestined to live life in poverty and nothing good will ever come your way. Opioids just happen to be the drug de jure—could be anything that creates a sense of euphoria, that will also kill emotional pain.

Big Pharma has allowed this problem to grow. That's another big motivation for me to run for office. I'm looking at a whole corrupt system. The problem is there's no monitoring of how many pills are coming into the state. It's by design.

We have so many legislators funded by big Pharma and encouraged to look the other way. Recently, eight million pills were shipped to a little town in WV with a population of 450 people; another, 21 million pills went to another small town with a population of about 2,000. That's about 100,000 pills per person over a couple year period. If those pills had been entered into the existing data base, we would have known immediately that they were here instead of waiting years. By then, people die, become addicted, families destroyed, grandpar-

ents forced to become parents again.

About 80% of our prison population is there for drug related charges. They arrest someone that bought enough drugs to share drugs with friends and they end up with a drug trafficking charge, but they're really not a drug trafficker. Those guys go to prison and corporate executives who know exactly what they are doing by shipping the pills here just pay a fine. Cardinal Health settled a lawsuit for \$20 million [for not controlling the supply of opiates that fed drug addiction]; it's a \$130 billion company so \$20 million is just a cost of doing business. Until that changes, nothing much else will.

Don Blankenship is another example of how it's not a Democrat or Republican thing but really about a corporate funded politician versus someone who gets elected to office to serve the people. When the explosion happened and 29 coal miners died, we had no state law to adequately prosecute him. Politicians funded by the extraction industries had made sure that in the event this happened, there wouldn't be any avenue to prosecute.

PT: What do you think about the major parties?

MK: I'm not crazy about either party. I know people I went to high school with who would have made better presidential candidates than Trump and Clinton.



Matthew Kerner, running for West Virginia House of Delegates in the 45th District.

The county I live in has always been red. The only time the county voted for a Democratic president since 1912 was in 1964 when they voted for LBJ. After the 2016 election, I changed my voter registration because I was

disgusted with what the DNC did during the primary to defeat Bernie Sanders.

I have always thought the two parties are different sides of the same coin.

Students march to stop public education funding cuts in Puerto Rico

By Alex Cohen

ST. LOUIS, MO — Today actually broke my heart. I marched with students from the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) to a place where the federal fiscal control board signed off on plans to cut funding for public education, and close campuses and schools across the island.

Once the march reached the convention hall two rows of police formed behind a metal blockade barring the students from having a seat at the table and a say in what was about to happen to their future.

The imagery brought to fruition what it means to live under America's last colony. American citizens in Puerto Rico don't get to vote for their president, and do not have a voting member to represent them in Congress. In America's last colony, an unelected seven-member panel called the Federal

Fiscal Control Board has the final say over what decisions are made in reference to "managing" the unpayable predatory debt.

A Puerto Rican woman explained how the plans by the fiscal control board and current governor will make Puerto Rico uninhabitable for many Puerto Ricans, displacing them and making the island a paradise for the wealthy to flood in from the States. "The purpose of both, the government of Puerto Rico and the U.S., is to kick us out of our country," she said. She shared that her retirement from UPR as a professor is \$410 a month, and that today's deal will cut down her retirement even more. "Tell your friends and family that a great resistance is growing, the independence movement is not dead," she said.

Alex Cohen is from Earth Defense Coalition and lives in Missouri.

Shouldn't America be for all of us?

From the Editors

A debate about what kind of America we want is coming up in many mid-term electoral campaigns. And many first-time candidates are rejecting the "I'm for me and to Hell with everyone else" ideology fostered by the tiny class of billionaires, and adopting a new, inclusive morality.

In Lancaster, Pennsylvania, known as "Trump country," candidate Jess King told an enthusiastic audience gathered at a campaign rally, "I know when 47 percent of our children in this beautiful city live below the poverty line, my kids are not well. We are all in this together folks. ... We have an opportunity to support health care, education, and jobs and provide a good future for our families. ... Lancaster County resettled 20 times more refugees than anywhere else in the country. We are all here because we know that our immigrant brothers and sisters make us better, and we can and should build a longer table and not a higher wall."

People want a new society that takes care of all the people, and today the opportunity exists to push this fight forward across America.

Small Georgia town protests neo-Nazi rally

By John Ramspott

Neo-Nazis, led by the National Socialist Movement (NSM) out of Michigan, held a white supremacist rally in the small Georgia town of Newnan on April 21.

The number of Nazis was around 30 or so. The counter-protestors had over a 100 people. But by far the largest group were police officers, numbering in the hundreds. Estimates range from 400 to 700 police officers of various types. Barricades were everywhere in the area of the rally, with a tall fence put around Greenville City Park, where the rally was held. It truly looked like a police state. There were all sorts of heavily armored vehicles and police in riot gear. The number of police was enormous—it felt like a true police state.

Even reporters with press passes (like me) were limited as to where they could go. Only people approved by the Nazis were allowed into the park itself. The rest of us were relegated to the same area as the counter-protesters, who were heavily searched before being in the area where they were permitted.

Blocking off roads with



Local townspeople and various groups objected to the Nazi presence in a small Georgia town. Signs said “We will not be silent;” “Black Lives Matter;” “Take your Hate Elsewhere;” and “Community is strong.”

PHOTOS/JOHN RAMSPOTT

really big trucks and having a police presence was a good idea. Some barriers were a good idea too. But the severe restriction of movement and not allowing us to get good photographs of the Nazis was over the top.

Also, all those armored vehicles driving around was just plain wacky. There is a difference between police pres-

ence and police state, and this went way towards a police state.

Counter-protestors consisted of local townspeople objecting to the Nazi presence, Antifa and #BlackLivesMatter. Also, the motorcycle riders were part of a Jewish motorcycle club. While they may look like “bad dudes,” here they



were against the Nazis.

The police arrested people for no real reason. A young Latino man “walking while Hispanic” was arrested. He was walking in the street in front of me (past a parked vehicle and crowd of people on the sidewalk) when an officer yelled at us to get back on the sidewalk. José immediately started walking towards

the sidewalk, but the officer yelled to another officer to arrest him anyway. Once I passed the car, I got on to the sidewalk, but nobody tried to arrest me (an old white man with a camera and press pass). At the time, there was no traffic on the road but a lot of parked and armored police vehicles.

‘I stand with hope,’ says teacher

Today a high school was the scene of yet another horrific and despicable parade of violence.

Also today 900 high schoolers gathered in Walt Disney Concert Hall to become a powerful force of beauty through song.

Today Flint remains without water, Puerto Rico without power, unarmed black men are still being shot by police, and bullets pour through students’ bodies like lead rivers. Guys. What have we done?

Today I stared out into the darkened concert hall and saw 900 lights piercing the blackness. “See how they shine,” they sang. “Like a bridge over troubled water,” they roared, “I will lay me down.”

In spite of the overwhelming ugliness, I still believe in beauty. Maybe there’s a bullet out there with my name on it. Till then, I stand with hope.

— From a Facebook post by Jessie Flasschoen, a high school choir director. Used with permission.

Riding a Phantom Train

By Bill Glahn

The well of material that Charlie Pickett and the Eggs were pulling from was evident from their first two singles, B-side covers of “White Light, White Heat” and “Slow Death.” Long lives for the members were in doubt. They were a band full of junkies who scored their dope in Overtown.

Overtown and Liberty City are the Black neighborhoods in Miami that erupted into riot after the 1980 acquittal of four police officers involved in the beating death of a Black salesman and former marine, after he ran a red light. According to the prosecutor at the trial, the police cracked his skull “like an egg.” The riots had an effect on the band beyond limiting their ability to score dope.

Live at the Button is an album of ferocious live rock ‘n’ roll. It’s an album that hit like a ton of bricks upon release. It’s steeped in the type of songs that draw from the same well as their previous

singles. But there’s more. Much more. Five songs into the record, the band slows down the tempo for the first and last time. It’s a cover of Manfred Mann’s, “Mister You’re a Better Man Than I.”

“Could you condemn a man
If your faith he doesn’t hold?
Say the color of his skin
Is the color of his soul?
Or could you say if men
For king and country all
must die?
Well, mister you’re a better
man than I”

Manfred Mann was one of the first rock/pop musicians to openly hold an anti-apartheid political view. He left his native South Africa in 1961 in protest and emigrated to England.

The final statement on *Live at the Button*, however, is an original called “Phantom Train.” It’s a dream sequence in which Pickett is riding on a train with dead poets and authors. Sitting in the back with Edgar Allan Poe and

Aleister Crowley is Annabel Lee, a character from a Poe poem by the same name.

But there’s another passenger on the train, Arthur McDuffie. He is not a poet or author, nor a character from any of their writings. McDuffie was the Black man who was murdered in the incident that led to the Miami riots of 1980. McDuffie is the only person on the train who Pickett engages in conversation. McDuffie tells him that it’s “suicide” for a Black man to show even the slightest lack of respect to police. It’s what has become known as “the talk” that many Black men and women give to their children.

Live at the Button isn’t just a great rock ‘n’ roll record. It’s a reminder that Black Lives Matter is a long overdue movement.

(The prosecutor in the trial of the four policemen charged in McDuffie’s murder was Janet Reno. The case was torpedoed from the start, when Reno failed to challenge an all-male, all-white jury.)

Undocumented military veteran granted citizenship

By Eduardo Castro,
Viet Nam War veteran

FRESNO, CA — On April 13, Comrade Hector Barajas, a decorated U.S. Army paratrooper, was allowed to return to the United States. He participated in a ceremony that allowed him to become a naturalized U.S. citizen.

After his honorable discharge in 2001, he was later charged with shooting a gun at a car. As a green card holder, you cannot be found guilty of any crime. If found guilty, one can be denied U.S. citizenship. He spent two years in prison and, once released, he was deported to Tijuana, Mexico with no family ties there. It was while in Tijuana that he decided to work on the unjust treatment of undocumented veterans there.

The bunker, as they call it, provides assistance in areas of food, shelter, clothing and work as a resource center as they adjust to life in the country where they reside. They advocate for political legislation which would pro-



Deported Veterans Support House in Tijuana, for deported U.S. veterans. People are celebrating that a decorated U.S. Army paratrooper was just allowed to return home to the U.S. as a naturalized citizen. There are about 200-350 veterans in limbo in the Tijuana area.
PHOTO/EDUARDO CASTRO

hibit the deportation of U.S. personnel, both former and current, and repatriation to a country they are willing to die for. Presently,

there are about 200 to 350 known veterans in the area of Tijuana still in limbo. They call this place the Deported Veterans Support House.

At the press conference, Hector thanked those who helped in his return to the United States to become a naturalized citizen. This included Congressman Mark Takano from San Diego, the ACLU from San Diego and others who advocated for him to become a naturalized citizen.

Congressman Mark Takano, who helped in his release to become a naturalized citizen, spoke about the cruel treatment of ICE causing separation of family members—in Hector's case, his daughter and parents. This separation of family members also can apply to DACA recipients and others in this country illegally who can be deported at any time. This shows a lack of humanitarian concern by ICE for those without any type of legal protection.

A recent incident occurred where Lance Corporal Enrique Salas, an undocumented honorably discharged military veteran, died from a car accident in Tijuana. Because he had no legal status in the United States, he

could not receive medical treatment from a U.S. military medical facility and died in Tijuana on April 13. His body was allowed to be returned to his family in the United States after his death. There is an uncaring immigration policy where a simple mistake can make the difference between living with family in the country where one lives and takes an oath to protect, or a life time of banishment to a foreign country without family and appropriate medical care.

As a Viet Nam veteran, I can see the injustice that the U.S. government is capable of doing. Through the draft and joining voluntarily, young men go out and fight for this country. Some pay the price of death. In reality, it is done to make war profiteers richer at any cost, including lost human life. They see the soldier as expendable. It is only by joining and working together can we work toward stopping the war machine and creating a peaceful nation.

Attorney General Sessions 'not shedding tears' over 160 kids left without a parent in Tennessee raids

By Gloria Meneses-Sandoval

On April 5, 2018 in a joint raid involving ICE, Homeland Security, the IRS Criminal Investigation Division, and Tennessee Highway Patrol, 97 workers were arrested at the Southeastern Provision slaughterhouse in Bean Station, TN. In a blatant and immoral separation of families, these raids left 160 kids without a parent. What is to become of these children?

"[It's] not a political issue, but an issue of humanity; they deserve better than this," said KC Alvarado of H.O.L.A. Lakeway, a community organization in TN. Eleven of the 97 arrested were released as they had work visas; 54, including two women, were deported. Others were given future court dates or their statuses were unknown. A woman was detained for 12 hours who has lived in the U.S. for 18 years. Dozens remain detained at a Louisiana detention center.

So how did this all happen? Before the actual raid, a search warrant was filed that suspected the owners of the Southeastern Provision plant of tax evasion and employing "illegal aliens"—undocumented workers. Federal authorities were informed and

later discovered that \$25 million in cash had been withdrawn from various bank accounts since 2008 by the owners or employees of the company. The cash was used for payroll of many employees who were paid \$10 an hour, in cash, on a weekly basis. It is alleged that the company did not pay \$2.5 million in payroll taxes to the federal government or report all of their workers' payroll. The owners have attorneys to represent them. What about the families affected by this raid?

KC Alvarado said the community responded by raising and donating \$25,000 within the first 24 hours of the raid to assist families with bills, rent, and telephone cards to call family members detained or deported—many were from Guatemala. KC said about 90% of those arrested had been working at the plant or lived in the community for 10 or more years. Community groups and churches mobilized to find out where those arrested had been taken, without even a chance to say goodbye to their spouses and children. Some were sole earners of the household. A central location was set up to drop off food, diapers, donations, etc.

A second raid at a trailer park with a warrant for a person who

had lived there for years ended up arresting the person who answered the door. KC commented: "These incidents have humanized the issue of immigration in our community." Many teachers reported the effects of the separation from the kids' loved ones: "They are scared of being 'sent away,' or worse, left behind." The Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition stated: "The time is now for elected officials to investigate and intervene. This must be recognized for the emergency it is and that hundreds of children, most of whom are U.S. citizens, deserve to be seen as Tennesseans in crisis."

As if things were not bad enough, the Tennessee legislature passed HB 2315 on April 25, now awaits Gov. Bill Haslam's signature. This proposed law would "force local and state government agencies to help with deportations, separating parents from their children and neighbors from their communities. This bill will drive immigrant families into the shadows, divide our communities, and will not make us safer." (From a letter to the governor asking for a veto of HB 2315, signed by 177 pastors and members of Tennessee faith-based communities.) Also, a recent NBC poll found that six of 10 Tennesseans



A raid at a factory in a small Tennessee town left 160 kids without a parent. An outpouring of support for the families suffering from this immoral act of the U.S. government swept the area.

PHOTO/HOLA LAKEWAY

avored legalization over deportation for undocumented immigrants. These responses are happening in a county that in 2016 voted 77% for Donald Trump.

What can we learn from this legal, but immoral treatment? We

must stop these immoral laws that are disrupting our communities! We are the modern abolitionists! Let's connect our networks across the country to create an unstoppable movement for justice for human beings!

Rev. Edward Pinkney wins again

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

BENTON HARBOR, MI — Let the truth be told. I, Rev. Edward Pinkney was charged in Berrien County, Michigan with five felony counts of election forgery under Michigan Compiled Law (MCL) 937, and six misdemeanor counts of making a false statement in a certificate of recall of a recall petition under MCL 168.957 for having submitted petitions with falsified dates or allowing a person to sign the petition twice. This was in connection with an effort to recall the puppet mayor James Hightower of Benton Harbor who supported the blood-sucking Whirlpool Corporation, the dominant corporation in the area.

I was bound over to the Berrien County Circuit Court with no evidence for trial. I moved to quash the charges, arguing that

MCL 168.937 was only a penalty and not a crime or a substantive chargeable offense. The court judge Sterling Schrock denied the motion. I was convicted by an all-white jury trial. The jury was motivated by something other than the truth. I was convicted in Berrien County Circuit Court of all five counts of election forgery, with absolutely no evidence, but was acquitted of all six counts of allowing a person to sign the petition twice on a recall petition. I was sentenced to 30 to 120 months in prison.

The Michigan Court of Appeals, better known as the three blind mice, Judge O'Brien, Judge Kelly and Judge Hood, upheld my conviction stating that MCL 168.937 created the substantive offense of election law forgery. But I knew better. I said there is no such charge as forgery on a recall petition under

MCL 168.937. I then applied for leave to appeal in the Michigan Supreme Court, which ordered and heard oral arguments on whether to grant the application or take other peremptory action.

In a unanimous opinion by Justice Viviano, the Michigan Supreme Court, in lieu of granting leave to appeal, held that MCL 168.937 by its plain language is only a penalty provision. It does not set forth a substantive offense. As a result, I was not properly charged with a crime. Therefore, the Supreme Court ruled this conviction must be vacated and all the charges dismissed.

A combination of factors made this unjust conviction of me possible: a prosecutor and judge, under the thumb of Whirlpool, who worked together to convict me because of my anti-corporate political activity; an all white jury, none of whom resided in Benton



Rev. Edward Pinkney, a leader in the fight against corporate power in Benton Harbor, MI, and his supporters gather outside the Michigan Supreme Court chambers, where his case was being heard in January 2018. In May, 2018, the Court overturned his conviction. Pinkney unjustly served 30 months in prison. PHOTO/JOSEPH PEERY

Harbor; and an appellate court that sided with the government.

Let us make this struggle a victory for all the people. Let us

take control of this country, away from the corporations, and build a society where the people, not the corporations, make the decisions.

Sick and outrageous: What being born female can mean

By M.D. Taylor,
Michigan Welfare Rights Organization

As I watched in horror the situation as it unfolded on national television, I was sick to my stomach at this disgraceful event. Chikesia Clemons was being dragged to the floor of a Waffle House restaurant in Saraland, Alabama near Mobile in late April. The T.V. commentator suggested the conflict was about eating utensils, but it was clear to me and to other women who looked that there was more to this story. My eyes saw a sexual and a physical assault by Saraland Police officers. As she was dragged to the floor tossed and turned like a dust-mop, the officers were trying to handcuff her. She was trying to cover her chest, which had been exposed when one of the officers snatched her up from the booth where she was sitting. Her clothes were ripped away and there she was, on the floor, with these three men moving her in this direction and then the other. The “touches” and “brushes” on and near her bare chest as she tried to cover herself were recognizable. She was not afforded one ounce of dignity no matter what kind of language she and her friend who was also seated may have used.

The Waffle House and any other public place has taken the country to a new place of disrespect. Police can be summoned to disputes over eating utensils and have the right apparently to “fondle” patrons at will. This young woman is 25 years old and has been subjected to a brand of local Southern terrorism designed to send a familiar message to those who work for social justice. They are telling us all that there is a price to pay for speaking up on behalf of others. I don't know if anyone else at that restaurant tried to stop this assault by at least making a com-



Chikesia Clemons was assaulted by police after asking about plastic cutlery at the Waffle House in Saraland, Alabama.

PHOTO/CANITA ADAMS, FACEBOOK

ment, but we are all grateful to the two other women who had the courage to tape this horrible event with their cell phones.

These police officers are not reflective of what good policing looks like. Decent, law-loving police personnel would not have resorted to brute tactics that included exposing her bare chest after first wrestling her to the floor, then threatening to break her arm if she kept refusing to be handcuffed behind her back. I watched it. Women everywhere watched it. What a shameful, immoral, and frightening display of disrespect that should have that police department too ashamed to let this sad event go by without an appropriate response and some modicum of accountability.

Me Too, Where Are You???

Some lessons in the battle against corporate dictatorship

From the Editors

A major battle against corporate dictatorship and for democracy has been won in Benton Harbor! Rev. Edward Pinkney, a leader in this fight, has been exonerated at last! Now, after spending 2-1/2 years in jail for a crime he always denied committing, the Michigan Supreme Court unanimously ruled he should never have been prosecuted. This victory could not have happened without people all over the country rallying in defense of Rev. Pinkney, the people of Benton Harbor and the fight for democracy.

But the war is not over. Benton Harbor is still poverty-stricken and under the thumb of the giant corporations, as is much of America. We must stand on this victory to carry the fight forward for a democratic America. Democracy is the rule of the people as this victory shows. But until the people, not corporations, rule society, we can't have true democracy. And, we can't rule if we are living in the streets or working two or three jobs just to survive. Benton Harbor showed that the corporations, their government and police forces control everything—whether we eat, live or die, whether we are housed or whether we get justice in the courts. The only way we're going to achieve true democracy is if we build a huge movement to take power away from the corporations.

The defense of our leaders is critical to building such a movement. People fought for Rev. Pinkney's freedom because of the injustices; because of his warnings of the dangers of Michigan's emergency manager dictatorship; and because he exhibited the characteristics of a new kind of leader—one who cannot be bought off or sidetracked from a consistent fight for the needs of the people. When leaders like Rev. Pinkney come under attack, we must always defend them—or else we can't win.

The *People's Tribune* has been in this fight from the beginning. We opened our pages to Rev. Pinkney and the people in Benton Harbor because their struggle crystalized the fight against the growing corporate dictatorship all over America. We urge you to take this paper out and help awaken America before it is too late.

Learn more about the Benton Harbor struggle by ordering copies of the *People's Tribune* pamphlet *Benton Harbor, MI: Fighting the Corporate Dictatorship in America's Rust Belt*. To order, e-mail info@peopletribune.org or call 800-691-6888. A \$5 donation is suggested for each pamphlet.

To schedule Rev. Pinkney as a speaker, contact *Speakers for a New America* at 800-691-6888 or e-mail info@speakersforanewamerica.com.