



Above: Demonstrators in solidarity with migrants and refugees at the border in December. Right: Refugees at a shelter in Tijuana.

PHOTOS/MARGARITO DIAZ

OUTRAGE OVER ATTACKS ON MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

CORPORATIONS CROSS BORDERS – WHY CAN'T PEOPLE?



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LAY-OFFS**

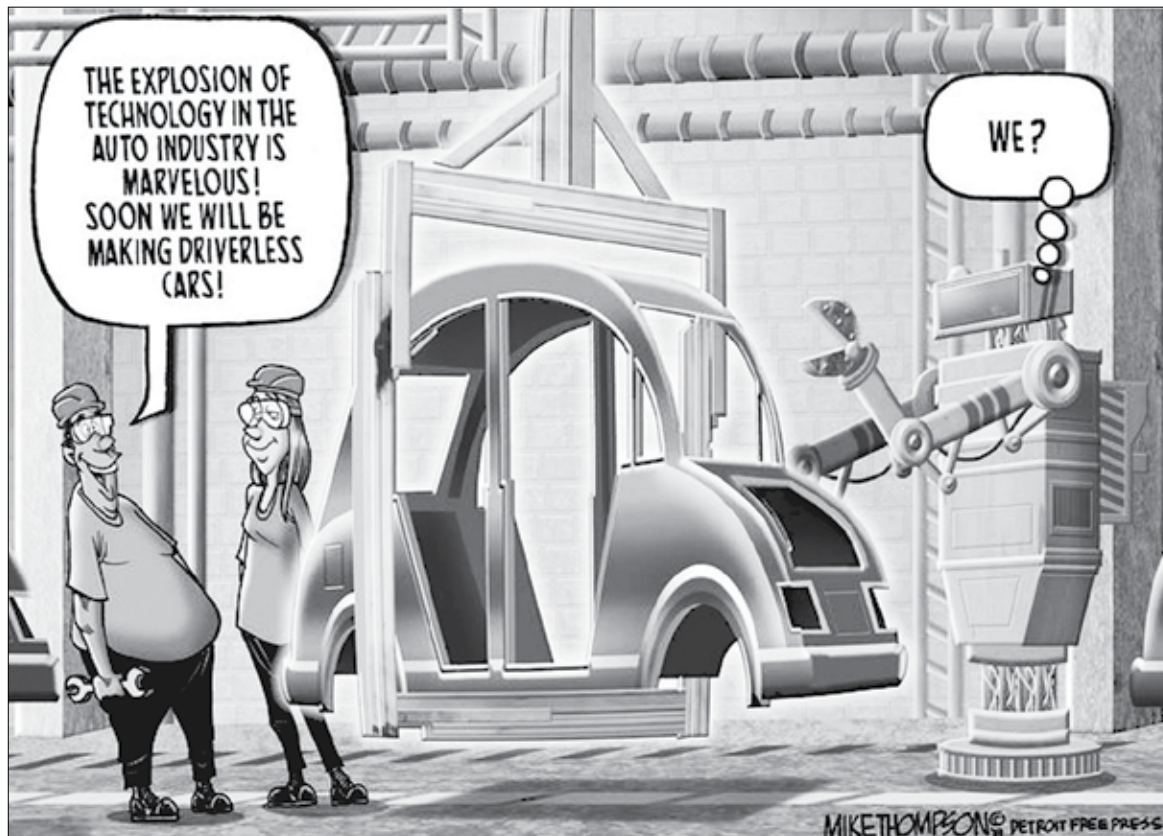
GM robs public treasury while workers suffer

EDITORIAL

Guest Editorial from a Detroit contributor

DETROIT, MI — In the face of record profits, General Motors (GM) announced on November 26, during the start of the Christmas Holiday, plans to end production at five plants in the U.S. and Canada, cutting almost 15,000 jobs. GM blamed the cuts on declining sales of small cars, the need to stay ahead of the curve, and an anticipated economic crisis. Ford recently said it was also cutting its salaried workforce for roughly the same reasons. GM CEO Barra said she wanted to act now to sustain profits when the economic crisis comes, and so GM can keep investing in new technology.

With the advent of the Trump-initiated tariffs, and the 2019 auto negotiations fast approaching, GM will use this announcement as a battering ram against the unions, government tariffs, and state and local governments that are affected by this action. These layoffs and plant closings will be used to further drive down GM's cost of production and will devastate communities across the country. But this is nothing new. One of the plants to be closed, the "Pole Town" assembly plant in Detroit, home of UAW Local 22, came into existence as a result



of whole neighborhoods and people being uprooted and destroyed. At one point in that 1981 struggle, SWAT teams were called out against a church to carry out the decision. Implicit in that decision was the understanding that this plant would not close. GM's 2018 third-quarter profit rose 37%. And yet, here we are.

As advanced technology transforms the global economy with labor-less means of production, markets everywhere of all types are glutted, giving rise to

a global crisis of overproduction and permanent unemployment. In auto, the number of people working today is hundreds of thousands less than in 2000. More job cuts, plant closings, deprivations, and dispossessions are on the way. By cutting jobs and closing plants, GM will save \$10 billion by 2021, supposedly to invest in electric and autonomous vehicles. GM already receives subsidies and tax breaks, in addition to a \$7500 income tax credit for the purchase of its electric cars. The taxpayer bailout of GM during 2008-09 helped GM boost its production in China. The permanent corporate tax cuts championed by Trump that Congress enacted last year saved GM \$157 million in federal taxes just in the first nine months of 2018. GM also got a one-time tax break, that will likely amount to hundreds of millions, on profits it had held off-

shore. In 2018, GM spent at least \$100 million of its tax-cut windfall buying back its own shares, a move that enriches the shareholders, not workers. In fact, without tax breaks, subsidies, grants, and credits along with out-and-out thievery and exploitation, all of which is perfectly legit, these private corporations couldn't exist.

Public property in the form of government help is used to enrich the billionaires and prop up the corporations and a failing capitalist system. They get away with it because they have the political power to do it. Government is in their hands. The only way out of this is a new society of, by, and for the people, and where the production of everything we the people need to survive and thrive is run and owned by society, and not corporations like GM.

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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

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

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

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

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

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Publisher: People's Tribune
ISSN# 1081-4787

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— The Editors

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Outrage over attacks on migrants and refugees

Corporations cross borders – why can't people?

COVER STORY

As this issue of the *People's Tribune* goes to press, a caravan of 7,000 Central American men, women and children is in Tijuana, Mexico, seeking asylum in the U.S. They are hungry and exhausted. Some are sick. They are being kept in miserable conditions, surrounded by Mexican soldiers and police south of the border, and confronted by U.S. soldiers and police north of the line. But of necessity they are hopeful and determined to reach the U.S.

While the Trump administration has labeled these people criminals, hundreds of Americans are going to the border to show solidarity with the migrants and to donate things, food, services and money. Sister demonstrations are taking place across the country.

Under the slogan "Love knows no borders," U.S. faith-based groups led a demonstration at the border near San Diego in December, calling for demilitarizing the border, protecting the right to migrate and seek asylum, and an end to detaining and deporting migrants and refugees. One demonstrator, Rev. Traci Blackmon of the United Church of Christ said, "The ostracization of people, of any people, is sinful. ... The same breath of God that breathed into me, breathed into those that are trying to cross this border, breathed into our ancestors. And it is atrocious that we as a people, who pronounce ourselves to be the nation of plenty, would treat people inhumanely."

U.S. corporations for years have exploited Latin American labor and resources, imposing poverty south of the border in order to funnel wealth into this country. To keep the money flow-



Migrants from Latin America risk death to flee violence and economic devastation in their home countries.

PHOTO/DONATED

ing, the U.S. government has a long, ugly history of helping to impose and maintain dictatorships, the drug trade, and gang violence in Latin America.

According to Doctors Without Borders, "Every year, an estimated 500,000 people flee extreme violence and poverty in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras and head north through Mexico to find safety. The high levels of violence in the region ... are comparable to that in war zones."

Meanwhile, the billionaires and corporations who rape Central America are raping us in this country. Automation and globalization have wiped out millions of jobs in the U.S., and the corporate government's response has been fat tax breaks for the rich and cuts in public programs the workers need to survive. We see millions in poverty, homeless, and without health care; thousands dying daily from drug overdoses; millions in prison; people living in fear of trigger-happy cops; and

the gun and drug-related violence that plagues our cities.

The billionaires need to impose a fascist dictatorship in this country and throughout the Americas to protect their hold on power from those who suffer. The billionaires' worst fear is that the common people of the Americas will join hands across borders and demand a world that serves the people's needs. The real reason for Trump's border wall, the barbed wire and soldiers, is to keep the people from uniting.

GM, which plans to lay off 15,000 workers in the U.S. and Canada, said last summer it would build a new line of trucks in Mexico. Why are the corporations free to migrate for profit, but when workers migrate for survival they are met with tear gas and troops? Will the world's abundance be shared by all the people, or benefit only the wealthy? Will the world be run for the people, or for the corporations and billionaires? This is the question that confronts us at the border.

The caravan: Questions and answers

From the Editors

In light of all the recent misinformation that has been flooding the corporate airwaves concerning the caravan that has arrived at our southern border, let's have a look at some facts and connect a few dots.

"Why don't immigrants come here legally?"

Long before the caravan was anywhere near the U.S., this question was erroneously being posed as if asylum could be sought for in their country of origin or somewhere along the way. The fact is, according to U.S. immigration law, asylum in the U.S. must be sought for in person either inside the United States or at a port of entry. By asking to apply at the San Ysidro Port of entry, the caravan has begun the process legally. Ahead, they face status interviews, court proceedings many without legal counsel, their personal belongings confiscated—including evidence that would support their case which could be lost or misplaced, detention in jail like conditions, wives separated from husbands, children separated from parents, with little access to food, water, medical attention or sanitary facilities. This is a human rights nightmare that should not happen in any country that calls itself free.

"Are immigrants taking our jobs?"

The recently announced GM plant closings over the Thanksgiving holiday in Detroit/Hamtramck, Lordstown, OH and other locations clearly demonstrates that our jobs are being lost to globalization and automation. To add insult to injury, this is happening after numerous bailouts, subsidies and recent tax breaks were given to GM in order to keep the plants open. No other industry has replaced as many workers with automation as the auto industry. To blame this on immigrant workers who are merely trying to survive, is to shift blame from where it truly belongs, i.e., on capitalism and its corporate lust for maximum profits. Just like many of the refugees and asylum-seekers in the caravan, we don't seem to matter either.

"Did the government really need to send troops to the border?"

The current administration in Washington, D.C., has characterized the women, children and families that make up the caravan seeking asylum at the border as an "invasion" of "bad hombres" and "criminals" in order to justify sending in troops. This political stunt meant to influence the midterm elections, has failed miserably and is costing the American taxpayers an estimated hundreds of millions of dollars. Wouldn't that money be better spent on housing the homeless, educating our children and providing healthcare for all Americans?

Speakers for a New America presents:

Speakers who recently returned from the border to express their solidarity with the Caravan, the community organizations, deported vets, and others are available to speak.

Contact us at 800-691-6888
or email info@speakersforanewamerica.com

Voices from the Border

Donate for a special edition of the People's Tribune and Tribuno del Pueblo!

In this upcoming issue, we will carry the voices of the migrants and interviews of the heroines and heroes who are waging an exemplary example of solidarity with these international workers displaced by U.S. politics. Won't you donate today?

Donate via paypal at peopletribune.org, tribunodelpueblo.org or mail to PTPP, PO Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654-3524.

'When we're all together'

Editor's note: This is from a video interview of Frederick Jackson, by Pj Damico, on the occasion of a sleepover on Thanksgiving eve at the Denver city and county building in front of the mayor's office, by members of Denver Out Loud, protesting the raids on homeless encampments and criminalization of the homeless.

By Frederick Jackson



Frederick Jackson talks about his experiences being homeless in Denver, CO, and why he is protesting anti-lodging laws.

PHOTO/PJ DAMICO

DENVER, CO — I've been on the streets five years now, my wife and I together on the streets for three years. We've been swept about 300 times in those three years, Comin' in in the middle of the night, the morning, or at any time, telling people they have to get rid of their possessions—they can't sleep on them, they can't sit on them, they can't be encumbering or blocking.

Everybody has heard the phrase 'crap rolls downhill.' Well, when you've got people crapping on the top, it's not just rolling down the hill, it's going straight to the bottom. You've got women who can't be safe anymore cause they keep separating us up. My wife and I have 30-40 street kids who are street orphans, just like I was before. I work 40 hours a week for a temp service, if I can get there. If my wife can't watch my stuff cause she has an appointment we

don't get to make no money. It's just this crazy cycle that tears families apart. They've made all homeless people into criminals, but homeless people are the ones who won't go steal, won't go kill, who won't destroy things just to make ends meet today.

If I met with [Mayor] Michael Hancock today I'd say, Michael, remember four years ago when you came down to the Mission and you acted like you were homeless people's best friend? You've been making a pony show for the last three years, and now the BID [Business Improvement District] people are just happy to see us harassed.

I'm fighting for my marriage

'Welcome to the Google dictatorship!'



On December 4, after ejecting dozens of protesters and arresting eight, the San Jose City Council banned the public from its meeting, locked the doors to City Hall, and voted to sell its most valuable public land to the multi-billion dollar Google corporation. Speaker after speaker had urged them to use the land to house our people instead of building more new tech offices. PHOTO/SERVE THE PEOPLE SAN JOSE

because it's hard for me to provide for my wife. She's got cancer, it's hard to keep her well. To keep her warm's a struggle. We take care of those gutter kids, and these old people every day, because it's what our heart shows us to do. Love matters, money doesn't matter. People are sitting up glorifying money when it's the builder who should be glorified,

not the spender. We are under one rule: that is, do right by each other. When governments break that rule, what happens is you get your infrastructure crumbling and a world full of enemies.

When we're all together we're taking care of each other. We do need a little help from the outside, but hell, you would be a lot more helpful if you showed up with a

thousand jobs instead of a thousand sandwiches.

I told a cop the other day all the Amendments to the Constitution he was violating. You are breaking several of them when you come to a homeless person and tell them 'you have to remove your house' from a little plot on a public square.

Last words? Support, support, support!

Poor People's Campaign: The sense of urgency for housing

By Michelle Snider

OAKLAND, CA — "There's only one place in America anybody is guaranteed a roof over their head, and that's in prison," said Oakland community leader John Jones III, when he spoke at the new Poor People's Campaign on October 30 at the Student Center.

A myriad of entangled issues became exposed behind the problems of housing insecurity at the event, which featured a variety of speakers addressing the 50 or so students and faculty in attendance.

Many of the speakers have, like Jones, experienced living through underlying issues that cause housing insecurities, such as navigating society after being released from prison or attending school while working several jobs while still not having enough money for rent.

Keynote speaker and San Jose anti-poverty leader Sandy Perry said there are an estimated 7,000 homeless people in Oakland, but that number may not



Laney College English professor Roger Porter speaks on student housing insecurity, along with fellow panelists Student Senator Evetta Williams and retired professor Peter Brown. PHOTO/MICHELLE SNIDER

represent the entirety of the issue.

"We don't know the number of people couch-surfing. Many people are too ashamed and embarrassed to talk about it," he said. "[7,000] is just the official number, and, we believe, not the full number."

Jones was paroled six years ago, he said. Despite having a license to become an aircraft mechanic, he was homeless and unemployed for 18 months. He spent an entire year in a one-room

shack with 10 people and no running water.

"If someone said I'm going to charge you to breathe air," he said, "what would be your reaction? We already buy water. Why does rent exist? Everyone has a right to shelter." He suggested the simple solution of public-owned housing where no one pays rent.

"If your city is only giving you the minimum rights that the state allows, you have virtually no protection," said panelist

and Political Science instructor Andrea Slater. "We are the system. We are not outside."

Laney English professor Roger Porter started the Homeless Student Support group. He said his inspiration to start the support group happened when, every semester, some students say they are living out of their cars and are housing-insecure.

"As the black population in Oakland has been cut in half," he said, "the homeless population is

upwards of 70 percent."

Recently retired Laney instructor Peter Brown helps organize with the new Poor People's Campaign committee. He was part of the "More Cuts to Social Programs Panel" and said that everyone should think of themselves as teachers. All it takes to be a good teacher is to be a good student who studies their surroundings.

"When we understand the mechanisms at work in a process," he said, "then we aren't victims of that process anymore—we're participants."

This generation is a transformational one, he said, and nothing but a total change in the public system will do.

"Talk about the force that you are and can be," he said. "You're homeless? Talk to your friends about it. You're struggling? Talk to your friends about it. We are the force to make a new world."

This article was originally published in the Laney Tower November 8, 2018

'We provided stability' says homeless leader

By Mike Zint, co-founder of 'First they came for the homeless'

BERKELEY CA — Goodbye summer, hello rain and cold. This coming winter is forecast to be a bad one by The Farmer's Almanac. For most, this is not a big deal. For the homeless, it can be lethal. On the streets of Berkeley, there are dozens of seniors and seriously disabled, with nowhere to go to escape the weather.

During 17 raids over the three-month 'First they came for the homeless' Poor Tour, we tried to expose what happens to people who are on the streets. Feces, needles, and trash accumulation were always the reasons given for police action. They usually showed up around 5 am. Not one member of the protest ever saw human feces, our diabetics had sharps containers

for needle disposal, and trash was never allowed to accumulate. But the city said so, and that allows for raids, destruction of property, violation of the Constitution, and violation of the UN's declaration on human rights. Health and safety concerns are always the reason given. Not once during the protest were the homeless considered to be victims of health and safety concerns. Just the cause

It's hard to get the public to understand homelessness. As far as who the homeless are, they are just like every housed person. Except their issues don't get hidden behind walls. The world can see the drug use, the drinking, and the mental state. What's hidden is the torture of being homeless, and how escaping on drugs or into insanity is often the result. Constant exposure to the weather. Police wak-



Homeless movement leaders Nino Parker (left) and Mike Zint (right) at the Oakland, CA press conference on the release of the UN Report on Homelessness in the U.S., which condemned Bay Area cities treatment as "brutal." Mike met with the UN Rapporteur and spoke at the press conference. PHOTO/SARAH MENEFFEE

ing you up. Police stealing everything you own. People giving you bad looks, or yelling get a job, or quickly looking away, or giving you a wide berth on the sidewalk

only add to the systemic torture. Criminalizing survival makes you a prisoner to nonexistent services.

Today, we have dozens of people stable in tents. We have

had hundreds come through camp. We provided stability, storage, privacy, personal space, and community. And they fixed their own lives. They got jobs, saved money, and improved their situation. After Friends of Adeline paid for the south Berkeley porta potty for months, the city started paying. How much is that for hundreds helped? The city not being prepared for the winter shelter closing right before winter is telling. Making a big deal out of putting back the lockers they removed a few years ago is telling. No affordable housing is telling. Not sanctioning a responsibly run, community-based tent city is telling. All these things tell me that only the richest count. There will be no solution as long as profit is more important than people.

Child's death at the border compels us to act

From the Editors

Jakelin Ameí Rosmery Caal Maquin, a 7-year-old girl from Guatemala, crossed the U.S. border on Dec. 6 with her father and 161 other migrants. On Dec. 8 she died while in Border Patrol custody, apparently of severe dehydration and septic shock. The Border Patrol didn't reveal the death until almost a week later, after a journalist inquired about it.



The National Hispanic Media Coalition has joined the American Civil Liberties Union in calling for an investigation into Jakelin's death. Dr. Colleen Kraft, the head of the American Academy of Pediatrics, said the death was "preventable" and called for pediatricians to have oversight of detention centers that hold migrant children. Congressional Democrats have also called for an investigation.

While Trump must be held accountable, the deaths along the border transcend presidential administrations. Some 6,000 people died trying to cross the southern border between 2000 and 2014, and Jakelin was not the first child to die. The real fault for all these deaths lies with the system that the government represents and protects.

Jakelin and her family lived in a tiny, very poor village in Guatemala. She got her first pair of shoes for the trip to the U.S. The dangerous journey was forced on Jakelin and her father. The impact of especially American corporations on Latin America has produced the poverty, violence and despotism there that forces people to migrate seeking safety and some way to live. That same system—an economy dominated by corporations and billionaires—is increasingly unable to provide for people in this country, and we in America are more and more subject to poverty, violence and despotism ourselves.

The American people do not want to live in a country that kills children—whether children born in this country or the children of immigrants. We as a people can no longer protect a system that is only working for corporations and billionaires. Humanity has the ability to produce an abundance for everyone on earth. We, the people of the world, must see ourselves as what we are: one humanity, which can and must join hands against the corporations so we can share the world and guarantee a bright future for everyone's children.

This is real life

By Suzanne McDonald

This is real life. Scene from inside the "faith-based" Rescue Mission homeless shelter in Tennessee:

"I should have had my camera out to photograph a man kissing his wife through the chain link fence that separates men from women."

The REASON the camera wasn't out is because using cell phones and cameras are not ALLOWED inside the shelter

*

YOUR government subsidized low-income housing, owned and managed by two Michigan-based PRIVATE companies.

Yeah, they put people in roach infested motels, too—including families with children. It's called "supports" and "stability" for homeless families and children.

Yup, this is an example of the few government "services" out there to "assist" people who are homeless and on the verge. People who have not been there will tell you with confidence that you "just" need to go on down to the County offices and sign up for "housing assistance" with "supportive services"... And then wait for a year or two on the HUD waiting list for your number to come up to stay at one of these nightmarish places—complete with mold and roaches—that your government contracts with private for-profit companies to "manage."

*

FACTS about being homeless in the USA

Fact #2. Cities are increasingly making homelessness a crime

A survey of 187 cities by the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty found: 24% make it a city-wide crime to beg in public; 33% make it illegal to stand around or loiter anywhere in the city; 18% make it a crime to sleep anywhere in public; 43% make it illegal to sleep in your car; and 53% make it illegal to sit or lie down in particular public places. And the number of cities criminalizing homelessness is steadily increasing.

For more information look to the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, the National Center for Homeless Education and the National Coalition on the Homeless.

*

The ACLU of Oregon has called on Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler and Police Chief Danielle Outlaw to investigate reports of police profiling and harassment of homeless individuals in Portland.

HALF of all arrests in Portland are people who are houseless. Some people will interpret the high rate of arrests to mean that they are all dangerous criminals, but consider how homelessness itself is criminalized. The ACLU issued a report last year documenting 224 laws in Oregon that target people who are homeless. It identified laws that target people for sitting and sleeping in public places and cars, asking for food or money, and for "loitering." In other words, laws that matter only if you are homeless.

Businesses, restaurants, and residents who have houses need to STOP calling the cops on homeless people for simply being in your view. We are RESIDENTS, too.

Editor's Note: Writer and poet Suzanne McDonald has been homeless in Oregon, Tennessee and several other states.

A regular fixture:
A hefty bag
Of her belongings
And a cushion to sit on
Around the corner
From the Cuban
Sandwich shop
In Little Havana,
Middle of August
When it's hot, in the alley
Behind the bakery,
She claims her spot.
Most days strangers

Give her enough

— Suzanne McDonald

2019 Women's March: *The #WomensWave is coming!*

On these pages the People's Tribune continues its monthly coverage of the many women leaders who are fighting in the interests of us all, for a society that cares for everyone. Call (800) 691-6888 or e-mail info@peopletribune.org and we'll send you copies of the paper to get out at the Women's March. Also, please send photos and stories of your city's march!

"It's time to march again! On January 19, 2019, we're going to flood the streets of Washington, D.C., and cities across the globe. The #WomensWave is coming, and we're sweeping the world forward with us," say march organizers. Women are at the "front of the resistance to the government, fighting to stop the assaults on our rights," protesting "family separation actions at the U.S. border" and the "nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the U.S. Supreme Court," among other efforts, organizers say.

The women's marches, beginning with the first in 2017, have seen millions of participants fighting for women's rights—and more. Signs illustrating participants' urgent demands for healthcare for all, for an end to deportations and family separation at the border, for clean, affordable water and a safe environment, against gun violence and police killings, are in every march. Women are leading the fight for a society that represents us all.



Needa Bee (left), is a resident and activist of a homeless encampment of women and children that was destroyed by the city of Oakland. She decries the city's treatment of its homeless population.

"While the children were at school, while half of the residents were at their job, they came in and swarmed us. They did not allow us to pack ... they didn't allow supporters in to help us pack."

On an *Indybay* video, Bee gave a scathing critique of the city's mayor. She then turned to face police, yelling that she hoped none of them lose their home, that "Jesus' birthday is coming up," noting that Christ himself was homeless.

PHOTO/SANDHYA DIRKS, KQED NEWS



A diverse group of women (some pictured above) ended ICE detention in the City of Atlanta; the city no longer holds detainees on behalf of ICE. Contributors to the report, "Inside Atlanta's Immigrant Cages," which documented the inhumane conditions at an Atlanta detention center, told *Colorlines* that "Atlanta has been profiting off the imprisonment of immigrants ... while touting that it's a 'welcoming city' for immigrants." After the Mayor (above right) signed the executive order, a woman who participated in the victory tweeted, "One down, three more immigration detention centers in Georgia to go! Here's to shutting them all down!" [*broadly.vice.com*] PHOTO/MICE.COM



"Our goal was to work with black and brown girls in the South who were survivors of sexual violence to let them know healing was possible and that they are not alone. It grew to include grown women. Our goal is to support survivors and make sure survivors are leaders in the work to end sexual violence. It's not a women's movement. It's a movement for survivors. ... We have to unravel the view that we have to be silent ... [on] womanhood and sexuality. ... A girl develops and gets a body and it becomes her fault grown men find her attractive. All the onus is on the child. But what we don't say often is that if rules are broken, you are not responsible. ... Adults are wholly responsible for ensuring that we're safe. ... We are millions strong throughout the world. We have the power. ... We are moving toward a world where we can end sexual violence. It can be driven by survivors. We haven't seen a culture shift yet. ... [It] won't happen until we are re-socialized about how we see social violence." [*Excerpts from the Daily Show*]

— Tarana Burke (center), founder of the #MeToo movement.

PHOTO/INSTAGRAM



"We live in a country that has unfortunately built its foundation on who is inferior or superior. This bill [to raise the minimum wage and for paid sick leave] challenges the idea of who is deserving and what do they deserve. Make sure that this bill is not gutted. Make sure Michigan sets a precedent for the rest of the country."

— Patrisse Cullors, co-founder of Black Lives Matter, speaking in Michigan in October about why Black Lives Matter supports the One Fair Wage Campaign to raise the minimum wage, particularly of restaurant workers.

Editor's note: Dirty steps taken by Michigan lawmakers ensured the bill was not on the ballot. Now, citing "burdens for employers, the outgoing lawmakers are further scaling back grassroots demands.

PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK, OLAFIMAGES.COM



"Our desperation turned into determination, and we took matters into our own hands by leading a historic nine-day statewide strike. The solidarity that made this strike possible was not built along party lines ... We had a common goal: to win a material gain that we deserved in order to make our lives better as workers ... Democrats in our state legislature sided with public employees during our fight for a raise and healthcare funding, but they didn't come to our rescue. We exerted pressure and they responded quickly. Republicans stood in staunch opposition to us until the bitter end ... However, if workers had not led the charge, we may have never heard a sound from Democratic lawmakers about the need for these measures ... we can't wait on politicians to save us. We must lead the fight and take our demands straight to those in power. [*Excerpts from "55 Strong: Inside the West Virginia Teachers' Strike"*]

— Emily Comer, South Charleston High School, Kanawha County, West Virginia.

PHOTO/DEDICATED TEACHERS

The resistance refuses to concede or to rest

In office or not, 2018's candidates vow to move the fight forward in 2019 and beyond

By Chris Mahin

“This is not a speech of concession because concession means to acknowledge an action is right, true, or proper. As a woman of conscience and faith, I cannot concede that.”

Those forthright words—spoken on Nov. 16 by Stacey Abrams, candidate for governor of Georgia—typified the defiant stance taken by progressive candidates after the 2018 election. Whether placed in office or not, candidates who had expressed the concerns of working-class voters vowed to continue to build a movement for change—in 2019 and beyond.

“I acknowledge that former [Georgia] Secretary of State Brian Kemp will be certified the victor in the 2018 gubernatorial election,” Abrams said in her speech. “But to watch an elected official, who claims to represent the people in the state, baldly pin his hopes for election on the suppression of the people’s democratic right to vote has been truly appalling.”

Abrams announced a major lawsuit against the state of Georgia for voter suppression and promised to continue fighting around the issues.

Texas gubernatorial candidate Beto O’Rourke sounded a similar note when he addressed supporters at an emotional gathering in El Paso on election night.

O’Rourke spoke passionately of his immense pride in “everyone who knocked on doors, everyone who made phone calls, everyone

who allowed themselves to hope and believe, to be inspired by one another and to turn it into action and into votes, and to do something no one thought was possible—to build a campaign like this one: solely comprised of people from all walks of life, coming together, deciding what unites us is far stronger than the color of our skin, how many generations we can count ourselves an American, or whether we just got here yesterday, who we love, who we pray to, whether we pray at all, who we voted for last time—none of it matters.”

“This team of which we are all members in some way is going to stay together,” O’Rourke promised. “We will see you down the road!”

And just as candidates who were denied office refused to use the word “concede,” candidates who were elected also avoided the word “victory,” focusing instead on the future.

“I have no intention of delivering a victory speech,” Ayanna Pressley told cheering supporters in Massachusetts after winning election to the U.S. Congress. “What I am offering is a vision”—a vision of “breaking the cycle of poverty” and an economy where “one job is enough” to live on.

In New York City, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez spoke to cheering supporters on election night after being elected to Congress. She urged people to put any losses by progressive candidates in perspective. “We will never be ashamed of having a short-term

loss” in order to gain victory in the long term for what is right, she declared.

“These struggles that we are taking on are generational,” Ocasio-Cortez pointed out. “It will take our whole lives,” she warned, but these struggles are struggles “for our lives.”

Her sum-up of Election Day: “Today is a milestone, but it is really a beginning. We have to keep organizing. We cannot stop. Electoral politics is just a tool in a larger toolbox of this movement.”



From left, Ayanna Pressley, Rashida Tlaib and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. PHOTO/INSTAGRAM



Opponents of an illegal bid by Wisconsin Republican legislators to keep power rally outside the State Capitol in Madison in December. Using the lame duck period, the governor has signed legislation that aims to prevent the new governor from carrying out a campaign promise to withdraw the state from a lawsuit challenging Obamacare. Unprecedented last-ditch dirty tricks to diminish the power of incoming officials are also taking place in Michigan and North Carolina. In Michigan, they are gutting the Michigan minimum wage and sick leave measures and efforts are underway to jeopardize the fight for justice in Flint, environmental protection, water infrastructure upgrades and more. In North Carolina legislators are using the lame duck process to add new barriers to voting, as well as limiting the governor’s power to appoint a state school board. Clearly, all of these unprecedented actions aim to insure profits for businesses and corporations. These illegal maneuverings subvert the voters’ will and the little democracy left. However, people aren’t going for it... the fight is on.

PHOTOS/JOE BRUSKY, MTEA

School under attack by state-sponsored Emergency Managers

A grassroots/class tale...

Once upon a time, there was a charter school located in the village of Detroit where the townspeople were very poor but very proud. Their children were excited about going to this school so they worked hard to be the best students they could be. The town elders picked a Headmaster for the school who was very knowledgeable. She lived in that same village and knew what steps to take to help lead the students to

success.

The town elders were delighted because every year these charter school students did better than the year before. They were third in the hamlet in SAT test scores, and higher still in acceptance into colleges and in high school graduation rates.

Word of these academic successes reached the ears of the elected Governor who had passed a secret law forbidding

poor students to succeed. The Governor sent in the Sheriffs of Lansing from the State Education Department to verify these results. It was true ... poor students were violating the law by succeeding.

Excuses were invited to destroy this safe place for students. In the end, lies and fabrications were offered so that the Headmaster was banned from the building and exiled from the kingdom.

The Governor sent in new handpicked Headmasters called

EMERGENCY MANAGERS to unravel all the good that had been done. The end of this fable is yet unknown.

The students, staff, and townspeople are resisting the EMERGENCY MANAGERS that are destroying the school, it’s success and future of unknown greatness. [Editor’s Note: Emergency managers are empowered to replace local elected officials and sell off cherished public assets to corporations.]

EMERGENCY MANAGERS take away the peoples

right to vote. They are DICTATORS who do not answer to the people.

The loss of democracy starts with seating DICTATORS who rule with an iron fist, starting with the destruction of assets that belong to the people.

Stay tuned to read about how this “grassroots/class tale” ends.

— By Maureen D. Taylor,
Michigan Welfare Rights
Organization

People of poisoned town want relocation

By Annetta Coffman

MINDEN, WV — It's been almost two years since the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) stepped foot back into the small former coal town of Minden, WV, regarding a decades long issue over PCBs, or Polychlorinated Biphenyl, a group of chemicals banned in the late 1970s due to it being a carcinogen.

In June 2017, the EPA conducted testing in our community and in the fall of that year we were informed that there was indeed levels of PCB's back in the community. As concerned citizens, many residents formed a group known as The Minden Community Action Team, whereas we began urging state and local agencies to step in and help our community. One of our

main goals was to be placed on the National Priorities List for Superfund. We made calls to our Governor of WV to urge him to nominate us, however, it took our activist community team to protest in his hometown of Lewisburg, WV, in December of 2017 before he finally made a statement regarding our dying community.

He finally stated he was nominating us to the NPL in August 2018. In September 2018 the EPA released a statement that it also was nominating us for the NPL due to testing results and the affects of wetlands and animal habitats. We then entered a 60-day comment period where the community and anyone else could write in support or non support for our nomination. Our comment period ended on November 13, 2018 and now we wait for a committee to decide our commu-

nity's fate. We were told it could be Spring or Fall of 2019 before we know anything.

During this 2 year process, we have lost several family members due to various cancers and other illnesses. I myself have buried my own father. We have several residents who have entered into hospice care over the past few months, one losing her battle to cancer the day after Thanksgiving.

Not only does the community suffer with contamination, but also extensive flooding several times a year. Many homes are in almost not habitable condition due to the affects of flooding and overflowing from Arbuckle Creek, which carries the PCB's as well as raw sewage into our yards and homes. Children in Minden do not even play in their own yards but in the roads, which

are safer. This creek is also being dumped into the New River and over 27,000 customers get their drinking water from this source.

So now, we wait. We are always waiting. For almost 40 years we have waited. We watch our friends, family and neighbors die. Many of us want a relocation. Our children's futures are in the hands of agencies that we have trust issues with, yet we have to trust they will finally do the right thing. It is apparent that removing soil is not the answer. Removing the people is. Our residents deserve to grow old in a clean non toxic environment. Our children deserve to play in non contaminated yards.

You can check out our pages on Facebook, Faces of Minden as well as Minden PCB Oil and Headwaters Defense, an environmental group helping Minden.



Minden resident Branson England, age 13, speaking in Charleston WV at The Poor Peoples Campaign about his community of Minden, WV.

PHOTO/ANNETTA COFFMAN



Flint court case claims at risk

Lame duck poised to hijack AG's authority

From a People's Tribune correspondent in Flint

FLINT, MI — Giving new meaning to snatching Victory from the jaws of defeat, the Michigan Republican legislature is using the lame-duck session to undo the gains made by Michigan voters.

New legislation would gut the power of both the Governor and Attorney General. (Similar moves are being made in Wisconsin and North Carolina.) The bills would allow the legislature to intervene in any court case to protect the "rights and interest" of the State or Legislature.

This puts the court cases brought by impacted residents of the Flint Water Crisis in jeopardy! Under the outgoing Snyder administration, millions of dollars have already been spent by the state to try and delay, deny, or throw out our legitimate claims altogether. A new attorney general and governor gave hope to settling these claims and begin to put this nightmare behind us. Furthermore, two state officials now face criminal charges for their role in the Flint Water Crisis. This could be jeopardized as well.

The latest Shenanigans by

the outgoing state government is reminiscent of Michigan's 2011 lame-duck session, where the Emergency Manager law was reinstated after it was repealed through a ballot initiative.

As this article goes to press, Michiganders are mounting as much public pressure as possible to stave off yet another blow to democracy. These actions include trips to the Capital, phone Banking, and more to stop this and other onerous lame-duck legislation.

In Michigan, we are still in Election mode!!

What Will Be Left?

What will be left when the last Gasp of breath leaves the last coal Miners lips, or the last roughneck Slips into the black death?

What will be left when the last Corporation leaves with its CSG And replaces clean soil with Toxic turmoil as it crosses the sea?

What will be left when the last Drop of clean water is poisoned Or bartered by frackers and drillers From the land that they slaughter?

What will be left when the last Political lie that promises the sky Is seen yet too late as the People still cheer him and die?

What will be left when the last Water protector is jailed by a Government that failed - a religion, A country, a planet - all dead ?

So what will be left? I'll Tell you my friend ...darkness and Grief and maybe the end. Yet deep In the ground we planted the seed And through toxic soil it will grow And will feed. For never again can we kill our Own mother or live off the blood And the strife of brother. We learn from today what we Can't do tomorrow, coexist through Our love or die from our sorrow.

— Bill Bunting, 11-17- 2018
(For all who fight for Mother Earth)

Youth challenge Dem leaders on climate change

By Cathy Talbott

Behind the recent stepped-up grassroots electoral activity and the election of representatives to Congress like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, and Ayanna Pressley, who are grounded in working-class battles for necessities like a living wage and clean water and air, it is the youth who have been organizing to make climate change an urgent priority across America.

Sunrise is one such organization on a mission to stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process. (View their mission statement and plan at www.sunrisemovement.org.)

On November 13, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez joined 200 youth from Sunrise in a sit-in at Nancy Pelosi's office demanding Democratic leadership develop a real climate plan now that Democrats have control of the House. Below is their press release for the action.

"We have 12 years to transform our economy and society to stop climate change. Democrats must put forward a plan to protect our planet, our communities, and our economy. Nancy

Pelosi and the Democratic leaders in Congress have the power to create one.

"But recent developments show the Democratic Party leadership has no intention of fighting for a real climate plan in the new Congress. The leadership's position is tantamount to climate denial.

"The science is undisputed, we have the technology, and the public is overwhelmingly [78%] on the side of bold action on climate and jobs—the only thing standing in the way of a livable future is the *failure of political leadership*.

"Add your voice to ours. Tell Nancy Pelosi and the Democratic Leadership:

"1. Champion a *Green New Deal* that would create millions of good-paying jobs to transform society over the next decade to stop climate change. This means creating a committee tasked specifically to write policy on creating jobs and *moving our country off fossil fuels* over the designated 12 years the IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] has given us. Let's protect the lives of all working people—black, brown, and white—

from the ravages of disaster and pollution.

"2. *Mandate* that any Democrat in leadership must take the No Fossil Fuel Money Pledge and reject campaign contributions from fossil fuel executives and lobbyists and prioritize the health of people and planet over industry profits."

They further stated:

"We're not expecting miracles—we understand that the GOP is corrupted by dirty oil money and will stall us at every turn. We know that sweeping change isn't possible until Trump is gone—but *we need to start laying the groundwork and put forward our vision for America now*.

"We're asking Democrats to step up to the fight alongside us.



Over 1000 young people sitting in at Democratic House leadership offices demanding they back a Green New Deal before holiday recess.

PHOTO/SUNRISE MOVEMENT

And if they're unwilling, they should step aside and make way for *new leadership* that will."

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez suggests we pay for the Green

New Deal by cutting the \$717 billion military budget. This is a plan the youth believe can unite communities across historical lines of division.

Uniting to help those affected by California fires

By Ben Schlotthauer

Paradise, California is a town which is only a 10-minute drive from the bustling little town of Chico. Most people wouldn't be able to point either out on a map, yet for many this is where they have grown up and lived their entire life. I started my stay in Chico a short four years ago and have been in love with this area ever since.

With the Camp Fire that ravaged this area only a few months ago, citizens are still picking up the pieces and figuring out what to do. Now that the smoke has settled, though, events are popping up all around the North State in order to achieve some unity and help those affected.

In the days after the fire started, it was incredibly uplifting to see so many shelters popping up all around Chico. While somewhat unorganized, some individuals even started collecting donations in the Walmart parking lot. Seeing people do everything they can in order to help their fellow human beings has been inspiring, to say the least. Shelters all around the area have opened up their doors to evacuees, with donations from citizens pouring in and with no end in sight. Many places have actually quit taking in donations due to the influx. While that may discourage some people from donat-



A trailer sits for sale amongst the devastation in Paradise, CA. The fire, which began November 8, burned through the town, destroying 7,600 structures and scorching 125,000 acres. Many families remain homeless.

PHOTO/CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD

ing, the road to recovery is a long one and many of these places will need volunteers and donations in the months to come as we all figure out what to do.

We also must hold companies like PG&E accountable for their role in the Camp Fire specifically. Whether or not they are solely to blame for the fire, it's important that they are held accountable for the negligence. As was reported extensively, they supposedly were going to shut off power to the area where the fire ignited in the days leading up to it due to a heavy wind advisory.

Action has already begun in this area of things. Community members are organizing together and filing lawsuits against the

company in order to achieve some sort of restitution. While we will never get things back 100% to what they once were, all we can do is be thankful for all that we have and rebuild.

If you want to get involved in any way, a quick Google search of the "Camp Fire Donations/Volunteers" will bare some links that will be of use. If you live in Northern California, volunteers are of the main concern. If you're not in the area, money seems to be most needed due to the influx of donated goods at nearly every shelter. Whether or not you have the capacity to help, even just simple things like reaching out to victims is key in creating a sense of unity.

Baltimore bans water privatization: Protects water system from corporate control

From a Baltimore contributor

On Election Day, November 6th, 77% of the voters in Baltimore approved Question E, a charter amendment that declared their water system to be a "permanent, inalienable asset of the city." No corporation can take away its water and sewer system to make a profit.

This is a historic step in the battle for public control of water.

Skyrocketing water rates and cruel collections are the rule in a city where thousands don't have running water, have been evicted, and face foreclosure for unpaid bills. For at least 25 years, large corporations have aggressively lobbied to get control of Baltimore's water system. The companies offered up-front cash that would have been an expensive loan, paid by residents through higher water bills, job losses and worse service.

When the city started putting in new water meters to "improve billing" in 2017, Baltimoreans felt the privatization threat. Baltimore's elected officials recognized the importance of preserving public control of this critical resource. They put forward an anti-privatization charter amendment and a grassroots-powered movement inspired and educated voters. By passing Question E, Baltimore has outsmarted predatory private companies, stopped these schemes, and protected its water system from extreme privatization deals.

No Llores (Do Not Cry)

By Adolf Alzuphar

LOS ANGELES, CA — I will refrain from using her name. She is a working mother, a homeowner, and a resident Angelino, so if you are a working mother, a homeowner, and a lower income person of color, LA is a wasteland. We speak outside of an old, proud, chipped metal gate in South Los Angeles.

No such thing as a better tomorrow. That is the parable that came out of our conversation, when her realism triumphed over my optimism. South Central, Los Angeles, 37 years in, she tells me. No, here there is no such thing as a better tomorrow. Unable to divine my dreams as both Martin Luther King, Jr. and Cesar Chavez, and others, once and still, believers, I'm afraid that this time it may be the end of when "we" stood as a picket line, whether if what "we" wanted collectively could be drawn out as a prosperous community or as a single star. In more reasonable words, I'm afraid that "we" have lost.

We are a community within a nation fighting against our own state is what I hear in volunteer meetings, whether to street-watch the police, stand up for black lives, or fight to end gen-



People without shelter on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood. On any given night, 52,765 people fall asleep homeless in Los Angeles County either unsheltered on the street or in a homeless shelter. Meanwhile, profit-driven banks and corporations rake in billions. There's plenty of money to house everyone. PHOTO/MATT TINOCO, LAIST

trification. That everyone knows it makes it stick: "we" discuss it whenever we can, living what we know hurts and harms in the end. "When we fight we win." I've heard it.

Here, where I live, I assume that the water is not quite as good, or clean, as in Beverly Hills, the Hollywood hills, Sylmar ranches, and wherever life is lush and breeds belief in LA. I also assume

that my house, which I purchased, is made of lesser material and that I am always hotter or colder. My experiences at the beach are a lot more messy, and so are my experiences at any tourist site. I can

do nothing about homelessness I suppose, and I have no business studying Marx, Klein, Malcolm X, Tariq Ali, or Lenin (thank you): my life is like the next, and I must swim, though I will never support a public capitalist.

My neighbor Mariela does not vote anymore. She loves her community with folly I tell you, like the way she puts on the hat she bought when she visited San Francisco for a community event. She believes in justice (she really does), she believes in peace, and so lives with both plants and animals as happy as her children have always been. She drives around with a pensive face sometimes because it's often pretty hard to just save enough to pay the bills along with everyday expenses. No, Mariela does not vote anymore, though she can, because the government reminds her more of gangsters and their shiny gear than the things she likes: she walks with friends, helping out, and cooking together food that all will eat.

November 6 elections? Should I show you my notes on our dead children, our incarcerated sons? Night here in LA reveals both my quiet and pain.

Medicaid in the crosshairs

By Rita Valenti

The elections left little doubt that universal healthcare remains an unmet necessity. From passage of Medicaid expansion referendums in three 'red states' to candidates running and winning on Medicare for All platforms, voters cast millions of ballots mandating some form of government guaranteed healthcare for all!

Meanwhile, new rules and regulations are tumbling out of government machinery that undermine these democratic aspirations; destroy what isn't profitable; and privatize what was once inviolably public. Medicaid is in the eye of that storm.

In June, Arkansas was approved by the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) to phase in work requirements for 167,000 of its nearly a million Medicaid enrollees. Arkansas was one of only two southern states that expanded Medicaid triggering a 51% drop in the number of underinsured. Now it's the first state to insti-

tute a work requirement culling over 12,000 people from Medicaid in less than six months! Those impacted are required to work 80 hours a month or other approved criteria and report that exclusively via an online portal. Arkansas is second only to Mississippi in limited Internet access and computer literacy leaving thousands unable to report electronically much less meet the work mandate. No matter. People are purged from the rolls regardless and that is the intent. Dismantle or privatize, with the South as the testing ground for reaction.

Government funds now account for more than 50% of private insurance revenues. Whether it's private Medicare Advantage Plans; restrictive private Medicaid managed care plans; subsidization of the commercial insurance market with Affordable Care Act; or the quickening to privatize the venerable Veterans Administration (VA) System, the entrenchment of corporate healthcare endangers lives through disruptive fragmentation, costly commodification of care and the

exclusion of huge swaths of the working class, especially immigrants and the undocumented.

The days when 80% of the insured were covered by employment-based health insurance as a necessary part of the cost of labor productivity are dying. Only 50% of workers get insurance from the job and the majority of those face unaffordable deductibles and risky health 'savings' plans.

Medicaid and the VA system cover the most vulnerable and dispossessed section of the working class and are in the crosshairs of the assault. The Trump administration is counting on keeping these combined 83 million isolated from the rest of the working class.

The elections were a wake-up call that this strategy is waning.

The bombastic and highly visible attempts in Congress to repeal the flawed ACA, and with it the Medicaid expansion resulted in millions hitting the streets in protest. Federal legislative efforts collapsed, replaced by regulatory stealth and secrecy as a weapon of the billionaires and



There are many ways the federal government is trying to cut the Medicaid rolls. This Elmwood, Nebraska family wants people to know that, "If Medicaid helps your parents, they want their money back." The state aims to take away the home of their grandmother who had Medicare and Medicaid before her death from cancer. Family members decry that she worked all her life and paid taxes, and that nobody can "afford these hospital bills today." With a post-death lien on the property, the family either pays half a million dollars for a home worth \$50,000 or \$60,000, or they lose the home. PHOTO/ANGIE RICONO, KCTV5.COM

corporations.

Medicaid is a thread bear lifeline to healthcare access. It's not in defense of Medicaid's legendary weaknesses that the fight to expand and protect it is being waged. Rather, it is driven by very real working class need, coupled with growing social awareness that the government is the only entity with the power to guaran-

tee healthcare for all.

Active defense of publicly funded healthcare is vital to the class unity necessary to go on the offensive for Single Payer and a fully public, accountable, and comprehensive system of healthcare for all!

See late breaking healthcare story on page 12.



Ruth Anna Buffalo (above) made history as the first Native American Democratic woman to be elected to North Dakota's state legislature, 27th District. In a shocking upset, she unseated Republican state Rep. Randy Boehning, who sponsored a voter ID law that many feared would suppress the Native vote in North Dakota. Native Americans are nearly two percent of the population, but account for just 0.03 percent of elected officials. The federal government's history of genocide, forced assimilation, and systemic discrimination played a decisive role in keeping the community from office and that history continues across reservations today. In October, the Supreme Court upheld a North Dakota law that requires voters to provide ID that includes a residential address, which unfairly targets Native Americans because reservations often don't use street addresses; post office boxes are common. More than 50 Native women ran for Congress, state legislatures and statewide offices this year—the largest movement of its kind in American history, inspired by the collective power of Standing Rock, along with opposition to Trump and a growing tribal political network. PHOTO/LEA BLACK, @LEABLACKPHOTOGRAPHY

'We are still here!' Indigenous peoples march heading to D.C.

Excerpts from culturalsurvival.org

"A collective of Indigenous activists, organizers, Tribal leaders, social entrepreneurs, artists, educators, innovators and changemakers who are working to build the collective power of Indigenous peoples, communities and Nations."

Indigenous Peoples March will be the first international march of its kind to unite the Indigenous peoples from across the world. We stand together to bring awareness to the injustices affecting Indigenous men, women, and children, as Indigenous peoples and lands from North, Central and South America, as well as the Caribbean diaspora, are a target of genocide.

Indigenous Peoples March is a collective grassroots initiative to unite all Indigenous Peoples and voices to bring awareness and to enforce change affecting Indigenous Peoples. We are invit-



ing a "call to action" for defenders of human and environmental rights to join us in Washington D.C. in front of the Office of Interior Affairs on January 18, 2019 (which is the day before the Women's March). This will be the first step of uniting our communities, Tribes and Nations for a universal cry for justice from the grassroots level and up. This march is also the beginning of building strong coalitions to make our homes, families, and lands safe, protected, and clean. The goal of the Indigenous Peoples Movement coalition is to elimi-

nate the borders of our injustices, as it all starts with us!

Whether it is asserting inherent and treaty rights to protect and manage traditional land, waterways, and to engage traditional knowledge, the Indigenous grassroots action is organized and strong. The theme of 2019 will focus on the current situation of Indigenous territories, the root causes of migration, trans-border movement and displacement, human and sex trafficking, police and military brutality, and lastly, environmental injustices with a specific focus on Indigenous Peoples living in urban areas and across international borders. The Washington D.C. inaugural march will also explore the challenges and possible solutions to revitalize Indigenous Peoples' identities and encourage the protection of their rights in or outside their traditional territories.

Read more at: indigenouspeoplesmovement.com

Witnesses tell about cop who killed security guard **Jemel Roberson**

By Allen Harris and Joseph Peery

CHICAGO, IL — Jemel Roberson was a 26-year-old father. He was a talented musician who belonged to a gospel singing group and played organ in Chicago area churches. He was an armed security guard at Manny's Blue Room Lounge in suburban Robbins and his ambition was to become a police officer.

In November, after Jemel heroically captured a gunman who shot three people at Manny's, a policeman arrived on the scene and shot him to death. That officer was from another suburb, Midlothian. Across the country, people reacted to the news with anger and suspicion. Jemel was African American and the officer is white.

The *People's Tribune* went to Robbins and spoke to two of the gunshot victims and to other witnesses at Manny's as well as to a longtime customer and nearby neighbors.

We learned that around 4 a.m. on Sunday, November 11, there was a disturbance at Manny's. Jemel intervened and removed two men from the premises. One of the men soon came back with a gun and began shooting. A bullet grazed a female bartender's neck

and the DJ was hit in his left hand and arm. A third customer also was hit.

In the parking lot, Jemel shot the gunman in the buttocks, got him on the ground, put his knee on his back and pointed his gun at him. Robbins police soon arrived.

What happened when the Midlothian cop shot and killed Jemel? The Illinois State Police (ISP) said on November 13 that the Midlothian cop who came to Manny's was responding to the gunfire there and arrived while the action was still under way.

ISP said Jemel had a gun and was not wearing clothes "readily" identifying him as a security guard. The ISP said the cop repeatedly commanded him to drop his gun and get on the ground.

However, the ISP did not say the cop saw Jemel committing a crime.

Two gunshot victims and other witnesses told the *People's Tribune* something very different.

They said the Midlothian cop came after the situation was under control, and that the cop had an automatic rifle. Jemel wore a guard's black uniform with the word "security" in large white letters on his shirt, vest and cap, they said. They also said other police



officers and bystanders shouted that Jemel was a security guard.

Most importantly, they said Jemel had no time to comply. Some said the cop only shouted "Freeze!" and then fired. Others said the cop said nothing and fired.

Also, witnesses said the cop jumped onto the bar and pointed his rifle at several people in the club. The wounded bartender said he pointed the barrel at her face.

Who is he? Midlothian police would not identify him by name. A federal judge in Chicago refused to let the cop's name be disclosed. Midlothian police did say he belonged to the South Suburban Emergency Response Team, a SWAT group of cops from several departments.

A recent study found that police in the U.S. kill an average of three adult men a day. As capitalism sinks deeper into crisis, the ruling elite unleashes systemic police murder to keep control. No one is safe.

'Heartbreak World'

Heartbreak World
Outside in the cold
Toes tightly clench
the blanket
On the foot of a little girl
So cold they cease to feel
(Horror fiction turns real)

No food to eat
Ripped shoes
Cardboard sleep
Death defeats
Living in these streets
We've all got ends to meet

Love conquers all
Negativity puts up walls
We're forced to crawl
Yet, we'll tear down
that wall

White phosphorus
What's wrong with us?
Fire, burn your egos fast
This tension must not last
It's all about control
& power
To them we're nothing,
cannon fodder

Can we think broader?
Approach situations softer
We've all got to love
each other

In a world without love,
what's left to offer?
Even the toughest of us
still yearn for hugs
We're connecting souls
Living, human-souls

Technology can't solve
our human problems
Now take a step back and
see if you can solve them
Cause everyone's hurling
wild accusations
Giving away power in lieu
of personal responsibility

It's on the surface, it's
simple to see
The power lies in
you and me
It lives and breathes
from sea to trees

Enough time left bowing
on our knees
The answer is with
you and me
The answer is our unity
Stand Up and Mend This
Heart With Me

— John Safari
John Safari's performance of this poem appears on *Heartbreak World*, the new album from rapper Clemmie Williams

Contaminated water in Benton Harbor destroys families

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

BENTON HARBOR, MI — Let the truth be told. This was a very bad year for the residents of Benton Harbor. Whirlpool Corporation has completely taken over the city of Benton Harbor, which includes the elected officials and the city manager, who cannot make any decisions without the approval of Whirlpool. They are working with Whirlpool against the people to remove the Black residents, completely out of the city.

First, on the water crisis. We have tested 40 homes in Benton Harbor and 33 of those homes had lead levels extremely high, above 25 ppb. The normal is

15ppb. We even had two homes with over 100 ppb. One school tested 640ppb, over 40 times above the normal level.

Elevated levels of lead cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in the drinking water is primarily from materials that have been dumped in the water by factories and by industrial wastewater runoff. Also lead can enter drinking water when pipes solder, or fixtures containing lead corrode, releasing the lead into the water.

The water testing included testing for Microbial contaminants, such as salts and metal—which was found in the water. Pesticide and herbicides, which

come from a variety of sources such as agriculture and other uses, was also found in the water. The number one cause of contaminants in the water are products of factories or industrial processes.

We must teach our community all about water and how important clean water really is. Water is a human right. Clean water is a moral issue—you cannot live without clean water. Lead in your water, Microbial, Inorganic, Pesticides, Herbicides, Radioactive and Organic Chemical in your water will shorten your life.

We must stand up to Whirlpool Corporation and elected officials to demand clean water for our children, our family and our



Rev. Pinkney stands outside Whirlpool in Benton Harbor, MI. The giant corporation dominates the town. PHOTO/DONATED

community. We must confront the enemy or the enemy will continue to destroy us. No more bad water.

Murderous healthcare ruling demands action



Los Angeles. PHOTO/MOLLY ADAMS

By Ethel Long-Scott

Look out! They're trying to steal your healthcare again! Just before Christmas a Texas federal judge ruled that the entire Affordable Care Act is unconstitutional because last year Congress ended the requirement that people buy health insurance. It's a murderous ruling that threatens health coverage for more than 20 million people, roughly half of whom got health insurance through states that expanded Medicaid.

What's gonna happen to people? This is the most sweeping assault on the ACA so far. Various studies predict 44,000 more deaths a year if 20 million people lose their health insurance, 52,000 deaths if pre-existing conditions don't have to be covered, and premium increases of roughly \$1,500 annually. The ruling could return healthcare to the pre-ACA landscape of a multi-trillion-dollar industry that left people dying for lack of care, with exclusions for pre-existing conditions, unlimited out of pocket costs, caps on lifetime coverage, no safeguards for essential benefits like mental health or emergency room care and loss of employment-based health insurance. It's government serving the rich and failing the people.

The ACA was never a solution to the healthcare crisis. It was designed to stabi-

lize the profits of the private insurance market through federal subsidies. But its expansion of Medicaid to nearly 10 million people, covering youth on parents' health insurance up to age 26, requiring most employers to offer insurance, and prohibiting exclusions for pre-existing conditions offered millions a way to seek care they could not afford previously. The Texas ruling promotes chaos, confusion, conflict, fear and loathing that characterizes the collapsing ability of capitalism to maintain social peace and security. Health care corporations with their Wall Street bosses do not care who dies as long as they make profits. Already 47% of the 27 million still uninsured say they just can't afford the cost. Pundits and Democrats tell us "not to worry," or "nothing will change" for ACA enrollees in 2019, false claims that serve the interests of the corporations. But the damage to the lives of people who depend on the thin strands of Medicaid or ACA insurance exchanges is already growing with high anxiety and a life-threatening sense of insecurity.

We need a truly universal, comprehensive system of healthcare that eliminates the private health insurance morass. What about an improved Medicare; government-guaranteed single payer public health care for all. Covering all healthcare needs through public funding for the public's health would be cheaper and better than our current system of public funding for private wealth of insurers, hospital chains, drug companies and other corporate parasites profiting from our illnesses.

Healthcare is a human right that should be based on need, not profit. We need comprehensive, high quality healthcare for all. We need unity among all those who must fight for healthcare to stay alive—those on Medicaid or Long Term Care, the disabled, the retired, part timers, low wage earners, the marginalized—and the dispossessed. Single Payer advocates together with the dispossessed could become a powerful social force to win Medicare 4 All with Everybody In and Nobody Out!

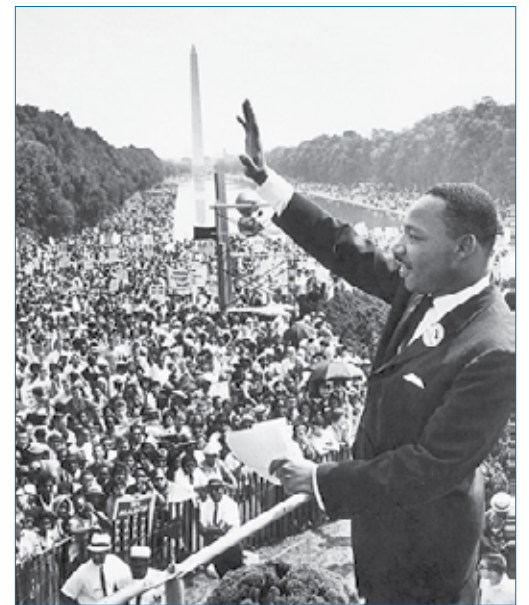
Celebrate MLK Day Stand up to demand change!

From the Editors

What do Americans do on Martin Luther King Day? If lucky enough to have the day off, we attend the many marches, celebrations and events that honor Dr. King. We enjoy free admissions to national parks. We observe it as the only federal holiday day of service, or as the Corporation for National and Community Service says, a "day ON, not a day off," with a wide range of activities, some of which are supposed to help the poor. All of that is fine and good, but as we shall see below, Martin Luther King advocated something quite different.

"Why are there forty million poor people in America? And when you begin to ask that question, you are raising questions about the economic system, about a broader distribution of wealth. When you ask that question, you begin to question the capitalistic economy. And I'm simply saying that more and more, we've got to begin to ask questions about the whole society. We are called upon to help the discouraged beggars in life's market place.

"But one day we must come to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. It means that questions must be raised. You see, my friends, when you deal with this, you begin to ask the question, 'Who owns the oil?' You begin to ask the question, 'Who owns the iron ore?' You begin to ask the question, 'Why is it that people have to pay water bills in a world that is two thirds water?'"(Excerpts from



Martin Luther King. March on Washington, August, 1963. PHOTO/PUBLIC DOMAIN

Martin Luther King, Jr., 1967 speech, "Where Do We Go From Here?")

In the year that followed this speech, Dr. King organized Americans of all colors into the Poor People's Campaign to demand an Economic Bill of Rights to end poverty. Just before the campaign began, Dr. King was assassinated.

Today, as this capitalist economy is poised to throw even more Americans into homelessness and permanent poverty, a new Poor Peoples Campaign is organizing. More people have probably heard of Martin Luther King Day sales because corporate run media won't cover the campaign.

In the words of one of the campaign's leaders, Rev. William Barber, "The surest way, then, to honor his legacy on the day that bears his name is to commit to standing up by the tens of thousands to demand change."