

PIPELINE FIGHTERS DEFEND LAND & LIBERTY



Protesting Bayou Bridge Pipeline which threatens Louisiana's land and water.

PHOTO/JULIE DERMANSKY



PHOTO/NATIONAL NURSES UNITED

Medicare for All
Page 9



IMAGE/PRAZIS IMAGES, SHUTTERSTOCK

Reunite families!
Page 2



PHOTO/FERNANDO LOPEZ, SURVIVAL MEDIA AGENCY

Surviving 'Death Alley'
Page 7

Reunite families, stop the deportations

EDITORIAL

In mid-April, Laura Mara-diaga-Alvarado, an 11-year-old girl now in Houston, received a deportation order terrorizing her and her family. Laura faced deportation back to El Salvador, a country that she had fled with her mother and sister for fear of their lives. Deportation would have separated her from her mother and sister, who had been given permission to stay in the U.S. while they seek asylum. It turned out that the deportation order was a clerical error, and a judge has halted the order for now. But this does not take away the inhumanity of the immigration system.

Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo denounced the deportation order in a Tweet. "This is heart-wrenching," he wrote. "... Family values? American values? Judeo-Christian values? ... The Nazis enforced their laws as well. You don't separate children from their families! Ever! You'd have to kill me to take my child from me simply because I was trying to get them to a better place for a better tomorrow. I am glad to be on the right side of history."

Texas is more and more emerging as the front line of the fight for democracy and human rights. The Texas SB 4 "show me your papers" law was upheld by federal courts last year. Among other things it bans sanctuary cities in Texas and essentially makes state and local police an arm of federal immigration authorities, allowing them to question the immigration status of anyone they arrest or detain. A bill currently before the Texas House would repeal in-state tuition for undocumented immigrant students. There is also the Hutto immigrant detention center at Taylor, Texas, which became notorious

for the sexual abuse of detainees by guards. Then there was the recent case of the Border Patrol holding men, women and children under a bridge in El Paso behind a fence topped with razor wire. The American Civil Liberties Union called the detention of migrants in outdoor pens "an unprecedented and extreme violation."

In Texas and elsewhere, the separation of families, the caging of children, the sexual abuse, the tortuous conditions of detention, the raids and the unwarranted arrests and deportations, the illegal refusal of requests for asylum, the deaths of people in government custody—it's not only

immoral for us to tolerate it, it's a threat to everyone's rights and freedom.

The economic system is breaking down and can no longer provide for the people, so the powerful are trying to protect themselves by destroying democracy and turning us against each other. But millions are against this assault on democracy and human decency, and they are joining forces. One fighter in Texas reported that those fighting for the human rights of immigrants are becoming stronger and more united. "When we stand together, we have unlimited power," he said.

People have the right to migrate and to seek asylum. We must end the militarization of the border, and stop the detention and deportation of immigrants. The immigrants are part of America's working class. If we allow ourselves to be divided, we will all be living in poverty under a dictatorship of the billionaires. There is plenty of everything for everyone. United, the people can take control of this country and build a true democracy where everyone has all they need. Our motto must be "All for each, and each for all!"



CARTOON/ANDY WILLIS

American and Mexican artists are painting a mile-long mural on the U.S.-Mexico border fence celebrating peace and unity.

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

The *People's Tribune* is devoted to the understanding that an economic system that doesn't feed, clothe, house, or care for its people must be and will be replaced with a system that meets the needs of the people. To that end, this paper is a tribune of the people. It is the voice of millions of everyday people who are fighting to survive in an America in crisis. It helps build connections among these fighters and the awareness that together, we can create a whole new society and world.

Today, technology is permanently eliminating jobs. Our needs can only be met by building a cooperative society where we the people, not the corporations, own the technology and the abundance it produces. Then, everyone's needs will be provided for.

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

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

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

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

People's Tribune Editor: Bob Lee

Editorial Staff: Ran Dibble, Brett Jelínek, Chis Mahin, Sarah Menefee, Joseph Peery, Sandra Reid, Ben Schlotthauer, Cathy Talbott

National Office:
Phone: 773-486-3551
Toll Free: 800-691-6888
People's Tribune, P.O. Box 3524
Chicago, Illinois, 60654
E-mail: info@peopletribune.org
Web: www.peopletribune.org
Facebook: [fb.com/peopletribune](https://www.facebook.com/peopletribune)

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Reach us locally at:

Ann Arbor, MI: zettir@gmail.com
Atlanta, GA: atlanta@peopletribune.org
Carbondale, IL:
carbondale@peopletribune.org
Chicago, IL: 773-486-3551
peopletribunechicago@gmail.com
Denver, CO: info@peopletribune.org
Detroit, MI: 248-629-0897
Houston, TX:
P O Box 231281, Houston, TX 77223-1281
Los Angeles, CA: 310-548-6491
Merced, CA: TPPT2017SJV.CA@gmail.com
Oakland, CA:
oakland@peopletribune.org
Washington, D.C.:
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Pipeline fighters defend land and liberty

COVER STORY

“You think we live in a democracy? The federal government will not protect you.”

“I’m angry because I feel that private citizens no longer have rights; the country is now controlled by big business.”

“They are taking our renewable natural resources and allowing a few private investors to sell it for their own private profit—risking our water, land, erosion potential, the health and safety of people that live along the pipeline path; all this so a few guys can make a buck.”

These are the bold statements of common people—pipeline fighters—taking a stand to protect a way of life that is quickly disappearing as oil and gas pipeline corporations take people’s land through eminent domain with the aid of the federal government.

Owners have been arrested and charged with trespassing on their own land. Water protectors have been jailed for kayaking on open water near pipeline easements. Leaders have been threatened and shot at. Militarized security and sheriffs’ officers turned water cannons on protestors at Standing Rock, also using rubber bullets and concussion grenades, nearly tearing the arm off one young woman.

Another pipeline fighter asks, “Is this the American dream, is this what I grew up paying taxes to support? Is this the future of this country—that the average American doesn’t count at all, that it only matters if you have pull on Wall Street

and pull in Congress and pull at the state level? What’s going on, who’s minding the store? This means we’re not in control.”

Pipelines being constructed to carry these volatile fuels from points of origin to coastal refineries and ports, such as the Keystone Pipeline System (including Keystone XL) owned by TransCanada Corporation, running from Alberta, Canada to Illinois, Texas, and Oklahoma; the Dakota Access Pipeline, that will cross four states from North Dakota, to Patoka, in southern Illinois, crossing beneath the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, as well as under part of Lake Oahe near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation; the Enbridge Line 3 from Alberta, Canada, through the ancestral homelands of the Anishinaabe people, the lakes and rivers of northern Minnesota, to Superior, Wisconsin, crossing more than 190 bodies of water, jeopardizing the means of survival of the Ojibwe people; the Bayou Bridge Pipeline in Louisiana; and the Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coastal Pipelines and other proposed lines through West Virginia, Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York are being challenged by farmers, ranchers, indigenous tribes and even nuns whose land is being taken by eminent domain with or without consent by pipeline companies with the blessing of the courts.

The people are demanding to be heard. They’re demanding construction be stopped. They want renewable energy technologies. And they’re organizing. As one fighter said, “The people of this land are standing



[Above] Nebraska farmers Helen and Art Tanderup sign a deed gifting a piece of their land back to the Ponca Tribe, alongside Ponca Tribe of Nebraska Chairman Larry Wright, Jr., and Ponca Nation of Oklahoma Councilwoman Casey Camp-Horinek. The gifted land lies both on the historic Ponca “Trail of Tears,” and the route of the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, which they all are fighting (see page 7 for article on pipeline fight).

PHOTO/ALEX MATZKE, BOLD NEBRASKA

up to big corporations, standing shoulder to shoulder, despite differences and everything else they use to divide us.”

The fight is now over who the government is going to serve. Will we, the people have a government that protects the environment, water, and our way of life through democratic means, or will we have government dictated by for-profit corporations which sacrifice all life for their private gain? We must demand that every politician answer to the people the question, “Which side are you on?”

See pages 6 and 7 for articles on the fight for water and the environment.



Pipeline Fighters protesting the Mountain Valley Pipeline crossing the Blue Ridge Parkway celebrate as construction was stopped along the entire 300-mile line when a judge revoked permits through national forest land last August. The people are determined to stop the pipeline corporations from using eminent domain for corporate gain, destroying natural resources.

PHOTO/WLSL 10 VIDEO

Freedom of speech and the Assange arrest

Regardless of how anyone feels about Julian Assange or Wikileaks, Assange’s arrest and the plan to extradite him to the U.S. for trial threatens everyone’s freedom everywhere.

His real crime has been to commit journalism—to reveal the dirty secrets of the powerful, especially those of the U.S. elites.

Daniel Ellsberg, who was prosecuted for giving the press the Pentagon Papers in the early 1970s, noted that this is “the first indictment of a journalist, editor or publisher, and if it’s successful, it won’t be the last.” He called the case “an attempt to rescind the freedom of the press.”

Freedom of speech in all forms—which is the foundation of any democracy—has been under assault in the U.S. for years. In April, Reporters without Borders ranked the U.S. 48th out of 180 nations in terms of press freedom, down from 20th in 2010. Four states have passed bills restricting the right to protest oil and gas pipeline construction, and at least eight others are considering such laws. The government has threatened musicians regard-

ing their song lyrics. The list goes on. The growing scope of restrictions on Americans’ freedoms goes back at least to the Patriot Act of 2001.

In an era when the people are increasingly forced to challenge corporate control of society just to survive, free speech—including independent journalism—is ever more important. As renowned journalist John Pilger has said, independent journalism is key because “mainstream journalism doesn’t challenge the powerful except on a trivial level.” Pilger said the Assange case represents “The abandonment of basic democracy, which is based on dissent, on holding the powerful to account.”

Assange must be released, and the phony charges dropped. And we, the people, must do everything we can to support and practice independent journalism and the right to protest. The corporations could gain complete control over our lives. Defending our rights to know the truth and speak out is part of the fight to break the power of the growing corporate dictatorship.

Donate to help us cover the fight to save humanity

The *People’s Tribune* is a voice of and for the fighters to save our planet and humanity from corporate destruction. We have been invited to cover protests in Appalachia, the South and other places where people face environmental catastrophes. Won’t you donate to help our reporters get their voices and visions heard?

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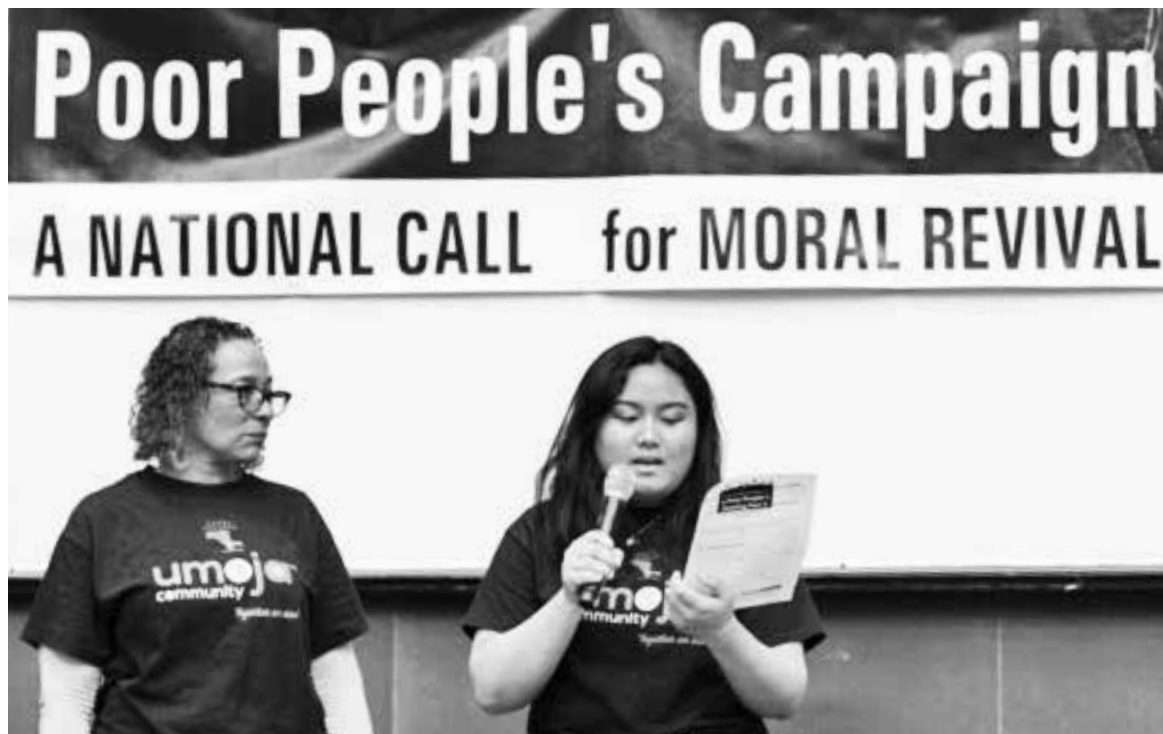
Poor People's Hearing: U.S. has abundant resources to end poverty

By Austin Long-Scott

OAKLAND, CA — A homeless technology worker living in his van in a parking lot. A 17-year-old high school student afraid climate change won't let her live to have children of her own. A husband snatched by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), leaving his wife and four children without income. A demand to outlaw landlords and make housing free.

Those were just a few of the painful travesties described at a mid-May "Poor People's Hearing" sponsored in the shadow of Silicon Valley's billionaires by the Laney College chapter of the new Poor People's Campaign in rapidly gentrifying Oakland, CA. The hearing explored "Housing Education & Healthcare For All with solutions for Poverty & Homelessness."

An audience estimated at 200 heard there are 4,000 homeless students at San Jose State University. A spring 2017 survey found 51.2% of the responding students in the Peralta system of 4 Bay Area community colleges were housing insecure, and 30.2% said they were homeless. People testified they lived in constant fear of not making ends meet because "the state continually decides that



An estimated 200 people heard testimonies from people in fear of not making ends meet, and a discussion of solutions to poverty and homelessness in Oakland, CA, as part of the Poor People's Campaign.

PHOTO/MICHELLE SNIDER

our lives are not a priority."

"As an Uber driver I am one catastrophe away from going back to being homeless," said student Amy Marshall.

"We have a capitalist crisis, a system crisis, not a crisis of the people," said teacher Alicia Caballero.

Ethel Long-Scott of the Women's Economic Agenda Project

quoted one of the 12 "Fundamental Principles" of the new Poor People's Campaign, being organized in 40 states: "We believe that people should not live in or die from poverty in the richest nation ever to exist. Blaming the poor and claiming that the United States does not have an abundance of resources to overcome poverty are false narratives used to perpet-

uate economic exploitation, exclusion, and deep inequality." Prof. Kimberly King said 68% of the estimated 3,000 homeless living on Oakland's streets are black while only 28% of Oakland residents are African American. "Why is Trump saying there's a national emergency on the border and not noticing there's a national emergency in our cities? The gov-

ernment should guarantee housing and a stable life for everyone."

"We have seen that the Industrial Revolution which produced so many good jobs and strong labor unions in the 20th century is almost dead," Long-Scott said. "We have seen that its replacement, globalization coupled with the digital revolution—robots replacing workers—has changed the way power politics is being played. Workplaces as we have known them are disappearing. Corporations are getting richer and richer with fewer and fewer workers. Elected public officials are increasingly throwing their lot in with what global corporations want, rather than what workers need. This includes stripping entire populations of their democratic rights."

"We want a quality life for our children," said Rachel Harralson from Parent Voices Oakland. "We want safety. We want security. We want the same things Google wants."

The new Poor People's Campaign, co-chaired by Rev. William Barber, is holding hearings nationwide to lift the voices of the disenfranchised and dispossessed in America as part of a national call for a moral revival.

'We're all human beings!' says fighter for homeless rights

From the Services not Sweeps action in Harbor City, CA

HARBOR CITY, CA — On April 6 over 19 endorsing organizations conducted an action at a homeless encampment in Harbor City, CA, demanding that "the City of Los Angeles and all of its Departments must change the approach to unhoused communities in our public spaces, and provide health-based solutions and resources that improve living conditions for all of us." On any given day there are up to 40 sweeps of unhoused encampments! More information is available at www.servicesnotsweeps.com

Comments by Shadow:

Good morning, my name is Shadow. I want to thank everyone here for the service they're providing. Services not sweeps. Services instead of sweeps. We have been ridiculed by the police, we have been robbed by the police department. We have been treated like non-human beings by the police department. Who polices the police department is really what I want to know.

We're all homeless, we're try-

ing to find a place to live and to get back into the system. Trying to get back to living at home and we get all of our stuff taken away on a daily basis. So how do they expect us to move forward and progress and get to school or get into a job when we can't have a place to stay and we have to carry everything on our backs?

This doesn't make any sense to me, this is a Catch 22. I don't know who is getting the funding, but for some reason they want to keep this problem the way it is. They have all kinds of resources they can provide for us so that we don't have to be out here. But for some reason they're not providing those resources.

There's a couple of people that help us tremendously, like Craig. He's one of the most tremendous people I've met in my life. This guy has helped me and has shown me how I'm supposed to get out of here. But even in that, knowing how to get out of here I'm still having to do that under a tent that's put flat after 6:00 in the morning so that I'm not sure how I'm supposed to get ready or present myself to society to do anything

when the first thing in the morning at 6:00 a.m. they're down here taking our tents down.

And if you don't take your tent down you're ridiculed and threatened with getting arrested. Well I've heard somebody say that being homeless is not a criminal act. So why am I getting arrested for being a criminal? Why am I being threatened if I'm homeless? If I'm homeless I should be getting help and services, not being sent to jail every day and losing my stuff.

Cause it doesn't seem that that many of the community are against us because they're all helping us. We're all human beings. I mean it doesn't matter if you have a house or not we're still human beings. We still deserve the same amount of respect as everyone else. So I want to thank everyone again and thank you for your time.

Shadow, an unhoused resident, speaks about the need for the city of Los Angeles to provide services, not sweeps, as Pete White and General Dogon of LA Community Action Network listen.

PHOTO/BILL ROBERSON



‘Life is a marathon, not a sprint’

Remembering Nipsey Hussle

By Carvell Holloway

On April 11, in the African American tradition, a homecoming took place for Ermias Asghedom (aka Nipsey Hussle), who had been shot and killed in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Los Angeles on March 31. Tens of thousands of people, from youth to grandparents, partied in the streets as his casket made a 25-mile procession through the streets of South Central, Watts and the Crenshaw district.

The love shown for Nipsey Hussle came in part from the music he made as a Grammy-nominated rapper. But only part. Nip was a product of the streets and relied on the very community he came from to inspire him, raise him, and financially support him. He turned this around to raise up and financially support that community.

He developed numerous businesses to provide for youth, the poor and others in the community. He was known to give

away clothes from his clothing store to parolees, not to mention going to court to assist people from the neighborhood facing trial. Nipsey sold his CDs for \$100 or gave them away to those who couldn't pay.

Nip was a gang member who made music and videos with rival gangs. At the memorial for him, in front of 20,000 people at Staples Center, Snoop Dogg gave a moving tribute, noting that “For those of you who knew Nipsey Hussle personally, you knew that he had nothing but love for every gang member from Southern California, I don't care what neighborhood you were from.”

Nipsey Hussle was from an immigrant Eritrean family and so it was no surprise that during the 2016 presidential campaign he and fellow rapper YG put out a video called “Fuck Donald Trump.” The video spoke from the point of view of the streets (“Speaking for some people that you probably ain't know”) and its context was the people vs.



Nipsey Hussle mural in Atlanta, Georgia.

PHOTO/XTAROS

the police.

Above all, the video, which has been viewed by 22 million people, is filled with the spirit of unity which defined Nipsey Hussle's life. It begins with the words. “Sep-

aration is the enemy,” then continues:

*It wouldn't be the USA
without Mexicans
If it's time to team up then
shit, let's begin*

*Black love
Brown pride
White people feel the same
as my next of kin*

*Carvell Holloway is a music
teacher in Compton, California.*

Columbine's 20th anniversary provokes student campaign

Editor's note: As part of the 20th anniversary of Columbine, the #MyLastShot campaign is a violence prevention project led by students from Columbine High School and activists across the country. The following are excerpts from the group's statement and others in the campaign.

We were inspired by the graphic imagery of Emmett Till and the movement his mother created by showing the world what had happened to her son by having an open casket at his funeral.

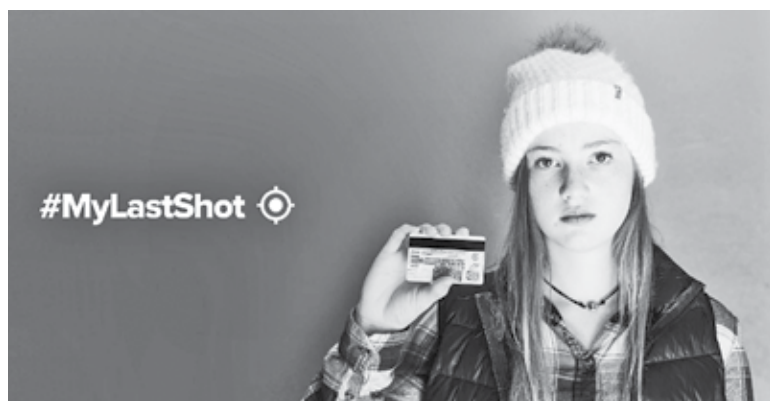
People could see what racism really looked like and it helped to spark the civil rights movement.

If Emmett Till, Napalm Girl, Little Aleppo Boy, Alan Kurdi (the list goes on) helped create change because it didn't censor the truth, could we apply the same logic towards gun violence? Could we show the true horrors in an effort to create change?

Photography has changed the United States and the world.

Our goal is to essentially spark conversation around what gun violence really looks like.

This project gives the power to the individual to make that



#MyLastShot campaign is a violence prevention project led by students from Columbine High School and activists across the country, to make visible the victims of mass shootings, to make this violence impossible to ignore, and move politicians to action.

call whether or not they want graphic imagery of their body to be published in the event they die from gun-violence by another person. ...

We hope that #MyLastShot will never have to go into full effect ... but rather it is used to make a shocking point to those in America who continue to be complacent to the country's gun violence epidemic.

While this campaign is starting with the youth of America, it is open to anyone and everyone living in the country ... gun violence does not discriminate.

There's so many communi-

ties in this country burdened by everyday gun violence.

[We're] making the public realize that violence isn't normal and it shouldn't be normalized in our country ... these are real people. These aren't just another one of the 40,000 going to be lost this year.

Participants in #MyLastShot would give consent to show their body at death through their signature on a sticker that would go on a card or their drivers license. The family is asked to abide by the wishes of the person.

Notre Dame fire: Anger at billionaires and visions of a new society

Billionaires from around the world pledged over \$1 billion overnight to restore the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Although most people favor rebuilding the historic cathedral, they are angry at the reality that there's plenty of money—but not to take care of things like basic human needs, refugees or climate change. Some comments from the U.S.:

“While I appreciate the beauty of the symbolic and iconic Cathedrals, having visited Italy and seen its beautiful Cathedrals, including the Vatican ... it does not compare to the importance of standing in solidarity with the Cathedral of the oppressed and poor, with groups such as Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, with the homeless and hungry, who are the Church, who are the Body of Christ. (1 Cor. 12 and Matthew 25, Isaiah 58) ... It also should not be lost on people of Faith and people of good conscience that the sacred Cathedral of the deep ecology of planet earth, the Cathedral of the planet, mother earth is being destroyed and we face extinction.”

— Rev. Bruce Wright

“And why is this loss deemed more valuable to white Europeans than the loss of a mountain, a stream, people's livelihood, health, and well-being for cheap coal? ... Why does the media drag on and on about Notre Dame in the blatant absence of reporting about mountain top removal, or historic Black churches burning or mosques destroyed ... or countless other losses ... often with actual human suffering? Maybe this moment is a way to reach people and help them understand [our] loss is universal, and that the media is a reflection of dominant culture, not human values. Maybe then we can have empathy and action.”

—Excerpted from a Facebook user

5 years and counting... Fix Flint now!

Editor's note: These are excerpts of a press conference held on day one of the fifth year commemoration of the Flint disaster.

By Reverend Monica M. Villarreal

FLINT, MI — “We stand here today in front of the Flint Water Treatment Plant to commemorate the disaster that continues to affect the people of Flint. [It is] five years after the government on all levels failed to properly treat the water supply when the city began using the Flint River on April 25, 2014. The community ... is still in imminent peril. While national news [failed] to be a check on government, the voice and suffering of Flint residents has not been silenced.

Today we will be heard. Flint's tap water is not safe to drink.

In May 2018, the state government ... abruptly cut off Flint's bottled water supply, leaving everyone. ... to fend for themselves, while residents pay one of the highest water rates in the country for water that cannot be

consumed.

We call upon President Trump to grant Flint a Federal Disaster Declaration. Federal resources could have made Flint a model city for recovery. ...

State government [is responsible] to. ... restore democracy and abolish the Emergency Manager Law that precipitated. ... the poisoning of this great American city. The voters across Michigan rejected the aggressive law that remains on the books. ... Unless there is change, the Emergency Manager Law will continue to harm Michigan.

We urge Gov. Whitmer to keep her campaign promise to restore state supported bottled water for Flint residents. Reopen the Water PODS and fund expansion of the ... community HELP Centers [and] a delivery program. ... Flint residents should not have to rely on ... charity to access basic services that are the responsibility of the government.

The World Health Organization recognizes that without clean water and sanitation, there is a pub-



Participants share a moment as a spirit-filled community forum winds down on the second day of events commemorating the five year anniversary of Flint's water poisoning. PHOTO/LAURA GILLESPIE MACINTYRE

lic health risk. We implore the city to stop water shut-offs and for the state to implement a water affordability plan. Access to clean, safe, reliable and affordable water is a human right. ...

Flint's fight ... highlights the importance of civic engagement. Flint has many water warriors who. ... have been fighting for the truth of the water crisis. We must stop police brutality and dismiss charges against people standing

for water rights. People should not have to fear arrest for speaking out.

We have yet to see accountability and justice. Flint families need government to settle the civil lawsuits so recovery can continue.

Rather than labeling our children or using punitive [school] suspensions, children need proper support services to mitigate the pervasive effects of lead. ... poisoning. We demand Medicare for all ... impacted by the water crisis.

Today, as a community we light five lanterns to represent each year of the water crisis and to memorialize the many people who lost their lives in this disaster. May the human spirit that unites us all, bond us together in compassion, hope, and service. We are Flint strong.”

Reverend Villarreal is pastor at Salem Lutheran Church and an organizer for Michigan United.

Rebuilding a sustainable economy in West Virginia

By Maria Gunnoe

WEST VIRGINIA — On February 26, 1972, the coal slurry impoundments at Buffalo Creek failed, releasing 132 million gallons of black-waste water and coal sludge. Seventeen towns were swept away in the flood. One hundred and twenty five were killed, 1,100 injured, and over 4,000 left homeless. The remains of six babies and a 74-year-old were never found. Although after 47 years the survivors remain haunted by the event, many West Virginians are unaware that it was not a natural flood.

One hundred and fourteen coal slurry impoundments still dot the West Virginia landscape, restraining tens of billions of gallons of toxic mine waste. With maintenance of these dams in incremental decline, and without intervention, further disasters similar to Buffalo Creek appear inevitable.

With the increase in violent storms due to climate change, there are sure to be more disasters like Buffalo Creek. In January of this year in Brazil, a tailing dam owned by Vale SA, a Brazilian mining company, collapsed, flooding millions of tons of toxic mud into the town of Brumadinho; 206 people died and 102 are missing. Scrolled on the town's walls are these words, “Vale is a recidivist murderer ... profit is what

Vale is all about.”

In Boone County, WV, Mother Jones Community Foundation (MJCF) is demanding investment in our communities. Coal has left the communities devastated and in dire poverty in the midst of massive un-reclaimed mountaintop removal, water pollution, drug addiction, abandoned mines, coal waste dams, and crumbling coal preparation plants.

MJCF is working with a large group of unlikely allies in the hopes of rebuilding a sustainable economy. The people once employed by the coal industry will soon find gainful employment in reclaiming abandoned mining operations.

Appalachian women have brought all sides of the coal issue to the table to discuss the future of our area and to meet the massive challenges at hand. West Virginia's Republicans, Democrats, independents, scholars, coal miners, coal operators, and award-winning environmentalists have a plan to sustain our people well into the future and clean up after an industry that has no active plan to clean up after itself.

After 150 years of coal extraction, we should have something to show for our sacrifice. MJCF is appealing to ALL entities that have profited from the demise of our communities to invest and help us build a sustainable econ-



Maria Gunnoe, award-winning environmentalist, is a founder of Mother Jones Community Foundation (MJCF). MJCF is working with others to insure there is not another coal sludge disaster in West Virginia. PHOTO/SCOTT DAVID

omy that supports our future generations of Appalachians.

We will no longer tell our young people to “get your education and get out.” We want to rebuild a place that people want to come home to.

MJCF is meeting this challenge and we invite all sides to join us and invest in the future of Appalachia.

Contact MJCF Executive Board for more information: Mari-Lynn Evans mlevans-ESP@gmail.com, 330-289-4514 or Maria Gunnoe whollowgirl@gmail.com, 304-989-9581.



Car dragged by toxic mud into a river after tailing dam collapses in recent Brazilian mine disaster that flooded mud into a city. PHOTO/FERNANDA LIGABUE, GREENPEACE



“Blood on the Mountain” is a stunning documentary directed by Mari-Lynn Evans and Jordan Freeman about the bitter, ongoing struggle for economic and environmental justice in West Virginia. Go to bloodonthemountain.com.

On these pages, the *People's Tribune* brings you stories from the fighters in battle to save the Earth and humanity from corporate destruction. Please send us your story: info@peopletribune.org

— The Editors

Fighting to survive in 'death alley'

By Bob Lee

The *People's Tribune* recently interviewed Pat Bryant and Robert Taylor, who are among those fighting environmental poisoning by the petrochemical industry in what is known as “cancer alley” or “death alley” along the Mississippi River in Louisiana. Below are excerpts from their comments. For a fuller transcript of these interviews, go to peopletribune.org.

Pat Bryant, a member of the New Orleans-based civil rights group Justice and Beyond, and of the Coalition Against Death Alley:

Between Baton Rouge and New Orleans we have over 200 petrochemical companies that are permitted to put anything they want, just about, in the air, land and water. It's a zone of national sacrifice and the regulation is so lax that companies from Japan and China and everywhere want

to come here and locate on the Mississippi River, because there's a volume of water that will take all of the effluent into the ocean and there's so many contributors that that they would not be detected.

I have not seen a cumulative tally of what's being put out in the air, but it's choking. We're killing people down here fast. There are so many funerals. We've been fighting against these companies for more than 30 years. And the state of Louisiana is still bringing these companies in and offering them free taxes.

Robert Taylor, executive director of the Concerned Citizens of St. John's Parish:

The community that I live in, a little town called Reserve, there's this DuPont Denka plant. They are bombarding our community with 29 different chemicals, which are the results of their manufacturing processes. The

KXL Pipeline: Water protectors vow to never allow 'black snake' be built

By Art Tanderup

NELIGH, NE — On March 29th, water protectors gathered at the Rosebud Sioux Tribe Spirit Camp near Ideal, SD. They gathered on that beautiful hill to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the founding of the camp, and to show continued resistance to the Keystone XL pipeline.

Many miles away, the leader of the United States withdrew the 2017 KXL permit. Immediately afterwards he issued a new cross border permit. That permit would allow KXL to enter the United States from Canada and proceed approximately 1.2 miles to the first shut off valve.

On April 10 President Trump issued two more executive proclamations. The first was “to avoid duplicative and redundant studies and reviews.” The new presidential permit appears to circumvent restrictions under the National Environmental Policy Act and other laws, because the statutes apply to executive-branch agen-

cies, but not to the president. It specifically targets Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. The goal is to deny tribes and states local control on Water Quality Certification.

The second executive proclamation states that cross border infrastructure project permit decisions “shall be made solely by the President.” Why was this done? A Great Falls, Montana, federal court halted construction of the KXL Pipeline when Judge Brian Morris issued an injunction until further environmental review of the U.S. State Department's Presidential Permit. That ruling has been appealed to the 9th Circuit. Fearing a defeat in the 9th Circuit, the administration hopes to fast track the project.

Our country was founded on a checks and balances philosophy. This guarantees that one branch of government cannot dictate.

What has happened here is clear abuse of presidential power. The profits of a foreign corporation trump the will of the Amer-



Protesters march in St James, Louisiana, on Sept. 8, 2018. St. James, part of the area known as cancer alley or death alley because of chemical pollution, is a small, predominantly black community at the end of the Bayou Bridge Pipeline. PHOTO/FERNANDO LOPEZ, SURVIVAL MEDIA AGENCY

number one chemical at issue is chloroprene.

We have an elementary school about 1500 feet from the plant, and those children are regularly exposed to 300 to 400 times what the EPA has established as a safe level of exposure for human beings. And it has gone as high as 500 or 600 in what they call peaks.

According to the EPA, in the census tract that I live in, we're at a 1500 times greater risk than the national average for cancer. And the government is allowing that to go on. To me, that is plainly genocidal. Reserve is going to be

wiped out, and it's a largely black, poor community. Fifteen hundred times the national average—that is ungodly and inhuman. Is that really America? Is that the way America feels about its citizens?

I think that our Coalition Against Death Alley (CADA) is going to be effective because it's uniting all of the communities up and down the river. We want to unite all of them in Louisiana, and eventually all of the poor, disadvantaged people. We want to unite all of these people all over the country. We have to get them to understand that as the group that is designated as expendable,

we need to come together, and put aside any petty differences. And that's not just black people, because there are poor white communities right here in Louisiana that are suffering the same thing. We are going to fight for our rights to life and liberty and to be able to breathe fresh air, for our children to have a chance to live.

Editor's note: CADA will hold a march May 30-June 3 from Reserve to the state capitol at Baton Rouge. For more information, see the Coalition Against Death Alley Facebook page.

ican people and the laws of the United States.

Congress provides jurisdiction over the Bureau of Land Management lands (BLM). The BLM has not granted a permit. The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers has not granted permits for the pipeline crossing the Missouri, Yellowstone, Cheyenne and Platte rivers as well as their tributaries. Attorneys for the tribes, the environmental groups and the landowners continue to challenge the abuse of presidential power and the law.

Meanwhile along the route, TransCanada continues to push forward with actions not defined as “pre-construction” by the Montana court. On the ground and “in the air” surveyors have been out working the route. Landowners in Nebraska who have not signed easements, recently received letters threatening them with eminent domain if they did not sign easements by April 2. The Nebraska route is currently in the courts, so TransCanada has no



Art and Helen Tanderup, Nebraska landowners who are fighting the KXL Pipeline. PHOTO/DONATED

power of eminent domain.

This foreign corporation has also sent letters to local banks seeking “subordination” agreements. This allows TransCanada to collect if there is a problem with a subcontractor. The landowner faces a potential lien on their bank note and mortgage. This scenario recently happened

in Meade County, SD.

TransCanada is not new to this bullying behavior; they have been issuing false and misleading claims for almost a decade now.

The water protectors continue to pray as they vow to never allow this “black snake” to be built.

Chicago elections: A sleeping giant awakens

By Lew Rosenbaum

CHICAGO, IL — A specter haunts the ruling circles of Chicago: the specter of a working class that cannot find a job in a city where many no longer work. Only 30 percent of registered voters went to the polls, but those who voted took what they had been fighting for in their communities to the ballot box and told some of the long-entrenched incumbents to get out of town.

Altogether, among the winners in the general election and the runoff, two incumbents and eight challengers represented demands put forth by the people: housing for all, fully funded public education, defense of immigrant rights, and police accountability. Three wards were so close that a recount may be needed to decide if challengers won.

People are angry that government has betrayed them. Six socialists won their electoral battles, but this is not a battle for an abstract “socialist” idea. A life-and-death fight, carried out for the basic right to survive, propelled these candidates to victory.

Jeanette Taylor had been active in her local school councils for decades before running for office and had led a successful hunger strike to keep

a neighborhood high school open. Byron Sigcho-Lopez, an educator and researcher, has fought against gentrification and exposed the corruption in the UNO Charter School network.

Talking about Sigcho’s victory in the April 2 runoff election, Pilsen Alliance Board Chair Rosa Esquivel said, “Each one of us have put our hearts in the campaign. We really believe in something. We are tired, tired of all the corruption of [former alderman] Danny Solis, tired of the displacement and the dehumanization of people.”

These struggles come out of the polarization of wealth and poverty, caused by jobs being automated out of existence forever. In this context, the legendary ability of the Democratic Party “machine” to mobilize voters is dissipating. Organizations like United Working Families (UWF), Reclaim Chicago and others are claiming the allegiance of workers. After Maria Hadden handily beat the incumbent alderman last February 26 with a program focused on schools and housing, she committed her volunteers to campaign in other key City Council runoff races.

In the mayoral runoff, two African American women faced off.

Although Lori Lightfoot



Incoming alderpeople Maria Hadden, Mike Rodriguez, Daniel LaSpata, and Andre Vasquez protesting a tax giveaway to private developers, money that could be funding Chicago public schools. PHOTO/DONATED

has extensive Democratic Party connections, she promoted herself as an outsider and won all 50 of Chicago’s wards.

She campaigned against Toni Preckwinkle, who has been a Democratic ward committee-woman since 1992 and chair of the Cook County party since April 2018. Preckwinkle also is president of the county board of elected commissioners.

The vaunted party “machine” split down the middle,

with some supporting either one or the other candidate. The real story is that the machine could not bring out the vote. Even in the aldermanic elections, some incumbents outspent their challengers by more than 5 to 1 and still lost.

We won enough in this election to whet our appetite. Despite the low election turnout, signs point to a sleeping giant that is awakening. How quickly we don’t know, but direction is

more important than speed.

Ten aldermen are prepared to join forces to fight for a program of the working class, but real estate and corporate interests are still in control. We especially won the responsibility to intensify the fight, as Andre Vasquez put it, “for affordable housing, for open and transparent government, and for a city that devotes its resources to its people, not the corporations, not the private developers.”

‘We’ve found the enemy, and it’s not each other’ says winning candidate



Jenn Carrillo was elected to the Bloomington, Illinois City Council in April. PHOTO/WGLT

Editor’s note: Below are excerpts from a speech by Jenn Carrillo made in Dwight, Illinois prior to her winning election to the Bloomington, Illinois City Council in April, 2019. Jenn is a community organizer who fights with and for the people.

I came to the U.S. as a child. As an immigrant, and as some-

one who lived undocumented for over a decade, I understand firsthand the ways in which our racist immigration system works to maintain a subclass of people and employs terror to keep us silent in our exploitation... I know the American dream is not the reality we encounter when we arrive. [It] isn’t a reality for people whose parents, grandparents, and great grandparents sought hope and refuge here in Dwight, Illinois generations ago.

Today, we show up ... in solidarity with the people here and throughout this part of the state, and throughout the country. People whose struggle leaves them desperate, and eager to sustain their families, just like the families that the monied interests seek to attain. We come today to ask the people of Dwight, not to do the bidding of the real outsiders, the suits who have no roots in this community, and who sell human bondage for a buck, and expect

you to do the dirty work.

This is the game of corporations in cahoots with opportunistic politicians looking to line their own pockets and serve their own interest. They changed the rules of the game to make it more profitable for corporations to uproot and establish elsewhere; leaving communities like this one, barren and unable to support dignified life for their people.

These same corporations have invaded our home countries to extract all the possible wealth from the people and the earth, and when they have sucked us dry, they move on to find the next best things, leaving us in shambles, and forcing us to seek refuge in neighboring economies. Here we are exploited, abused as workers by another set of people seeking to profit from us. And then we are criminalized and hunted down by yet another set of rich people looking to extract profit from our misery.

To keep the system afloat, to keep us from rising up, we are told that we are each other’s enemy. Immigrants are told to avoid communities like Dwight, because of how racist they are. And residents in this community have been convinced that immigrant refugees are the culprits of their suffering.

And now, they are told that the only way out of their misery and desperation is to be the enforcers of misery upon immigrant bodies.

There are going to be people

who disagree with our cause but remember...

The people of Dwight, are not our enemy.

Our enemy is ICE.

Our enemy is a brutal system of mass incarceration and those who profit from it.

Our enemies are the politicians who benefit from pitting brother against brother. And sister against sister.

Repeat after me: We’ve found the enemy, and it’s not each other.

So beautiful
She was.
On the sidewalk

Asleep.

— Ayat Bryant-Jalal

Vote for Medicare for All: Healthcare for everyone

By the People's Tribune

According to PBS, 44 million Americans don't have healthcare and another 38 million have inadequate health insurance. Net-Quote, an insurance lead provider, claims 130 million Americans don't have dental care. Millions of Americans are flooding into Mexico yearly to get cheap medical and dental care, in far more numbers than the immigrants that even Trump claims come to the United States. During April 2019, United Health Group, the largest private healthcare insurer, suffered major losses to its shares while overall healthcare has been the worst performing sector in the stock market this year. Wall Street is blaming this on drug pricing reform and "Medicare for all" proposals coming from many of the front-runners

in the 2020 presidential elections. A January 2019 Poll by Kaiser Family Foundation found that 56 percent of those asked favored "Medicare for All."

What do all these facts have in common? One, that healthcare has become such a huge issue in this election cycle, that it even has the potential to cancel out Trump's immigration rhetoric. Two, that a critical mass of Americans is concluding that private health insurance must be replaced by some form of universal healthcare for all.

Health insurance and pharmaceutical companies make huge profits by denying care and inflating the costs of premiums, procedures, treatment, deductibles, co-pays and medicine. How much so? So much so that Americans who go to Mexico for care say that care there, plus round-

trip airfare, hotel accommodations for a week and then enjoying the sights is cheaper. If you bring your kids, the Mexican government won't throw them into cages.

Today's Americans who are suffering from a private healthcare system that kills them are tomorrow's electorate that will vote it out. That private system is campaigning with propaganda that says universal healthcare for all is socialist, a threat to jobs, to doctors and to care.

Bernie Sanders recently shot back at that campaign when he said, "When we are in the White House your greed is going to end. We will end the disgrace of millions of people being denied healthcare while a single company earns \$226 billion and its CEO makes \$7.5 million in compensation."

In this electoral season, the *People's Tribune* will feature stories of the burning issues facing the American people and what they demand any politician must do to solve them.

— The Editors



Electoral rally in Michigan last year.

PHOTO/JIMWESTPHOTO.COM

Stacey Abrams resists Georgia voter suppression



Stacey Abrams, who ran for governor in Georgia, founded a voting rights group that is suing state officials over voting irregularities. PHOTO/JOHN RAMSPOTT

By Gloria Slaughter

ATLANTA, GA — After Stacey Abrams lost her bid to become the first African American woman to become governor of Georgia, she said that she was angry, sad and despondent for eight days. But she turned this anger into action. She crisscrossed Georgia making speeches and rallying for free and democratic voting rights. She founded the Fair Fight Action, a voting rights group that is suing Georgia officials over voting irregularities.

Her opponent, Brian Kemp, not only ran against her for Governor but he oversaw the elections as Secretary of State. On November 7, 2018, Kemp declared victory over Abrams with 50.3% of the vote ver-

sus her 48.7%, while Libertarian Ted Metz trailed behind both with 0.9%. The following morning, Kemp resigned as Secretary of State.

Abrams challenged Kemp's actions in the election because in his position he purged voting rolls, disqualified voters whose names varied across the state databases and he closed polling places. Stacey Abrams gave examples of the "systemic dismantling of our democracy" by citing that thousands of Georgians were purged from the rolls wrongly, including a 92-year-old woman who had voted in the same area since 1968. She was a civil rights leader. Abrams also stated that thousands stood in long lines for hours because the polling places were understaffed and more than 300 had been closed. Thousands of people had been put on hold with their registrations and many absentee ballots were not counted because voters had not received them in time, and couldn't meet the deadline to return them.

But, on November 16, every county certified its votes with Kemp leading by 55,000 votes so Abrams stated that she could not win the election and she suspended her campaign. She contends that because Brian Kemp oversaw the elections for eight years that there could not be free and fair elections in Georgia.

Abrams' campaign turned out a record number of Black, Latino and Asian voters and she won a larger share of the

There's no democracy in Texas

"Senate Bill 9 is part of anti-working-class pro-fascist legislation that passed the State Senate and is now sweeping the Texas House. Back in January, the Department of Public Safety (DPS) claimed that there was a list of over 98,000 illegally registered voters in Texas. However, Federal Judge Fred Biery said there is no evidence of widespread fraud in Texas and temporarily halted the search for illegal voters. With SB9, Texas voters would face a state jail felony for providing any false information on their voter forms. Another part of SB9 says that if you provide transportation to polling places, you must complete forms stating the voter is physically unable to go without assistance."

— Manuel Torres, of the South Texas Resistance Movement

white vote than President Barack Obama, Jason Carter, and Michelle Nunn. Presently, she is considering running either for the Senate or making another run for governor of Georgia. Her platform consists of expanding Medicaid insurance, prioritizing spending on public education and to overhaul Georgia's criminal justice system.

Stacey Abrams lost the election by 1.3 percent of the vote. She explained that there was a massive increase in voter registration and turnout for the 2018 elections and she revealed the systemic problems that occurred. Thousands of Black votes in Georgia disappeared. Eventually, there was a congressional oversight committee tasked with looking into charges of voter suppression in the Georgia November 2018 midterm elections. What they found is that there were intentional efforts by Georgia's former secretary of state, Brian Kemp,

who is now governor, to disenfranchise Black voters.

Presently, Georgia has a governor that won by not playing fair. Stacey Abrams has a bright future with her campaign against voter suppression and has vowed to continue her Fair Fight Action.

People's Tribune discussion groups

Call or email us to find out if there is a *People's Tribune* discussion group in your area.

(800) 691-6888

info@peopletribune.org

20/32 Movement: The end of labor peace in Mexico

By Jose Torres and Manuel Torres

RIO GRANDE VALLEY, TX — On January 12, 2019 seventy thousand maquiladoras workers in the northern region of Tamaulipas, Mexico went on strike for the first time in decades, chanting “unity and join the walk-out.” (Maquiladoras are foreign-owned factories in Mexico where imported parts are assembled by low wage workers into products for export.)

The workers’ demands were basic. The Mexican federal labor commission increased the federal minimum wage by 20% and a one-time 32% bonus. It’s from here that the demand of “20/32” derives. The strike also inspired a wildcat strike wave that spread beyond factories to supermarkets and other employers, with all the workers demanding “20/32.”

According to the federal labor Secretary Luisa M. Alcalde, the minimum wage increase would be higher in the northern border states due to the free-trade zones and the lower taxes for the big multinational corporations.

In one week of the strike, the maquiladora industry lost



Strikers of the 20/32 movement in Mexico are write-in candidates for the City Council of Matamoros. They fight for cross-border unity of workers. PHOTO/DONATED

\$20 million. It directly affected the big three automakers Ford, GMC and Chrysler. The majority of the maquiladora employers were forced to come to an agreement with the striking workers on February 1.

Yet there were some employers who preferred to close their factories instead of giving the workers the federal minimum wage increase set by the federal

labor commission of Mexico.

The strike was led and started by the rank file of the border maquiladoras. In the process, other smaller plants and factories were left out, like the Spellman, Tapex, Toyoda, Gosel, and Coca-Cola workers who are paid \$17 dollars per week and who work 10-to-15-hour days.

These workers have become the most militant and conscious

workers. They have become the real leaders of the 20/32 Movement. To control the strike and to prevent it from spreading, state riot police attacked the strikers. Three workers ended up in the hospital. Word was spreading throughout the border region, up to Reynosa and west to Juarez and El Paso, Texas.

What are the lessons for the workers of the 20/32 movement?

On the one hand, it reaffirms what we already knew. It shows us that the multinational corporations and the ruling classes are global. And if we follow this line of thinking, then the workers are a global workforce, and as such, it must seek unity across borders.

This global corporate class aims to exploit the workers to the max. Our brothers and sisters in Mexico are an example of it. Even with the minimum wage increase, Mexico continues to have one of the lowest minimum wages in Latin America. Meanwhile, the corporations get a tax break in the free-trade zones. Corporations set up maquiladoras and they quickly get their increases in a matter of weeks.

The Coca-Cola workers and others in smaller factories have created a movement. The formation of the 20/32 movement is signaling the end of labor peace in Mexico. These workers know that they are the most exploited, and the ones that are a step away from being in the streets. These workers understand they have no ties to the corporate class or to any political party that wants to take over the movement and take it off its natural course.

Mexican autoworkers are not to blame for plant closures

Part 2, Chrysler

By Al Gladysck

DETROIT, MI — The original Chrysler Corporation was founded in 1925 by Walter Chrysler from the remains of the Maxwell Motor Company.

- As of May 11, 2015, Chrysler has 26 factories open around the world. 17 of those factories are in the United States.
- As of May 11, 2015, Chrysler has a joint venture in Cairo, Egypt named Arab American Vehicles since 1977. That means that Chrysler owns 49% of Arab American Vehicles which builds Jeep civilian and Military vehicles.
- As of May 11, 2015, Chrysler has closed 29 factories around the world. Nineteen of those factories were in the United States.
- As of May 11, 2015, Chrysler has 5 factories open in Mexico.

(From List of Chrysler factories on Wikipedia.)

Chrysler, like GM and Ford, is a global entity just like the rest of the auto industry around the world. All of Chrysler’s factories are owned by Chrysler. They can build a factory or close a factory when ever they want and where ever they want.

The autoworkers around the world do not own the factory they work in or the vehicles they build. They have to go into debt to buy them from the company just like the non-autoworker. Or they could

just walk to work or take a bus to work and make pickup trucks, SUVs or cars and walk home or take a bus home.

On February 26, 2019, Chrysler announced that it would convert a closed engine plant and convert an open engine plant on Detroit’s southeast side next to its Jefferson North plant where pickup trucks and Jeep SUVs are built. It will also upgrade the Jefferson North plant. All of this will cost \$4.5 billion.

On the next day, February 27, Chrysler announced that it was laying off 1371 autoworkers by running its Belvidere Assembly plant near Chicago, IL on two shifts instead of three. The Jeep Cherokee is built there. Experience tells me that means they are going to replace that plant when upgrades to Jefferson North and the new Chrysler plant planned in Detroit are completed.

A sideline story is that Detroit billionaire Matty Moroun owns some of the land that Chrysler wants to build the new plant on. Community members in the area say that Chrysler wants the city to drive them out once again, using eminent domain. They do not exist in Chrysler’s eyes.

I can only say that we must support autoworkers; whether in the United States or in Mexico and the autoworkers need to support one another around the world. Workers everywhere want to be able to provide for their families. They do not want to see their lives or communities destroyed. It is the same situation for all of us.



CARTOON/GARYVARVEL.COM

‘Voices from the Border’

Speakers who traveled to the border to bring back the voices of the refugees to the public, and other experts on immigration, are available to speak. Speakers discuss visions of a society that is organized around meeting people’s needs, and where people are no longer divided by borders, gender, race, religion or age.

Speakers include Maria Martinez, Los Angeles; Margarito Diaz, Chicago; Laura Garcia, Chicago; Gloria Sandoval, San Joaquin Valley; and others.

Contact Speakers for a New America at 800-691-6888 or email info@speakersforanewamerica.com to bring a speaker to your city.



Some of the many recent worker protests and strikes, including (left to right) farmworkers, West Virginia teachers, GM auto workers, and grocery workers.

PHOTOS [LEFT TO RIGHT]/FACEBOOK (LEFT TWO PHOTOS), JIMWESTPHOTO.COM, AND UFCW LOCAL 328H

May Day: Fight for a new society beginning to take shape

By Richard Monje

May Day commemorates the battles for the 8-hour day from 1886 and afterward. It is recognized the world over as the day when workers and their organizations reflect on and summarize their experiences, and strategize about what direction to take going forward.

The working class struggles are influenced by the fight of workers as workers, and by the struggles based on how workers live in their communities and the rights extended to or denied to the various sectors of the working class.

The crisis of capitalism continues to affect the entire globe—economic, social and political

conditions are changing dramatically. Many factors influence the speed and depth of those changes, and one of the most fundamental is the application of technology to production. The transition away from national agricultural economies and peasant production to mechanized and globalized agricultural production has driven millions off the farms to the cities, and to migrate to other countries. These changes are affecting whole continents.

Technology has also been eliminating jobs by the tens of thousands for the last 50 years. In the United States this has devastated whole cities, and certain communities especially, and more recently it has affected all communities and sectors of the work-

ing class.

As a result, workers are finding new and creative ways to fight. The communities first affected by the economic crisis came under attack and were isolated from other sectors of the working class by those attacks. As minorities, as women, and as immigrants (to name a few), the expansion of their rights and advances has been systematically blocked or has suffered setbacks. Discrimination, police attacks and denial of services and opportunities (over affordability) are obscured by the media's anti-working class propaganda.

On the front of workers as workers, in 2018, there were 20 major work stoppages involving 485,000 workers. This was the

highest number of major work stoppages since 2007, when there were 21. The number of workers involved in 2018 was the highest since 1986, when 533,000 workers were involved in work stoppages. This is an interesting development.

On the other hand, the social struggles are evolving in such a way as to influence the development of an awareness and consciousness that can lead to a new revolutionary plan of transformation. Increasingly, the immigration struggle is not just for the undocumented. The police killings of African Americans and the discrimination and isolation associated with them is not simply a question for African Americans, but of moral and political

significance for the entire working class. There are indications of this development for the other sectors as well, and many are emerging daily.

This is becoming obvious from the discussions around the elections. Many candidates and representatives of the fronts of struggle are beginning to articulate the reshaping of our strategy and tactics in the form of programs for solving our problems through transforming the political and economic system. Those of us in the fight should do everything we can to keep it on track toward where it is already headed historically—a whole new society that puts the needs of the workers first.

VA system as model for healthcare access and delivery?

By Megan Rokey

DETROIT, MI — As a healthcare professional and Senior Care Advocate, it's a call I get often: "I am a veteran and I want to go through the VA for my medical needs, because they will take care of everything. How do I get started?"

Navigating the VA system is a challenge, without the right help, so I often refer these patients and clients to VA Care Managers and elder law attorneys so veterans (and spouses of veterans) can utilize their well-deserved benefits—and make the most of them. There are often long wait times but because the benefits can be really beneficial, most of our clients and patients are willing to wait for this top-notch care.

There are 22 million veterans

in the U.S. today. They are often poor, and the Vietnam-era veterans are getting to an age where they need more health care. The VA has pioneered quality initiatives, delivery system changes and an electronic medical record that is far ahead of the private sector. Veterans' service organizations praise the VA, even as they complain about waits, precisely because of its high quality.

But any health care program that benefits low-income individuals and families (including the VA, because today the poor are more likely to join the military) is politically vulnerable to budget cuts or calls for privatization, and is likely to suffer from more problems than a health system that benefits everyone—rich and poor, young and old, soldiers and civilians, i.e., the entire pop-

ulation. Otherwise there will be pressure to underfund it.

In our current privatized system, healthy adults (or their employers) pay private insurance companies huge amounts of money for their entire working lives, and not one penny of that helps take care of them when they grow old. How great would it be if instead, a small portion of that money actually went into the same insurance pool that will take care of us when we are old and really need health care and prescription drugs?

In addition, the VA has a special benefit called "Aid and Attendant Care". If you are a veteran overwhelmed with the high cost of long-term elder care, such as paying for assisted living facilities, home care aids, adult day-care, or skilled nursing, the Vet-

erans Aid and Attendance benefit could be the solution to help offset these rising care costs. A wartime veteran or their surviving spouse with limited income may be eligible to receive a non-service connected pension (this means that the need for care does not have to result from one's military service). There are three levels of VA Pensions:

1. Basic Pension/Improved Income—for healthy veterans over the age of 65 with low incomes

2. Aid & Attendance—for veterans over the age of 65 that require assistance with their activities of daily living

3. Housebound—for veterans with a disability rating of 100% that prevents them from leaving their home, but it does not have to be related to their mili-

tary service.

The Aid & Attendance and Housebound pensions provide additional monthly income over and above the Basic Monthly pension. To be eligible for either, one must also meet the requirements for the Basic Pension.

The VA's innovative health system and these additional benefits could be an excellent model for Single-payer national health insurance. An improved Medicare for All will offer a single tier of high-quality care to everyone. It would address wait times in an organized way, be transparent and accountable, and allocate medical resources based on need, not ability to pay.

Stop the cover-up of contaminated Benton Harbor water

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

BENTON HARBOR, MI — I am the current President and CEO of Black Autonomy Network Community Organization, better known as BANCO. I am also Pastor of God's Household of Faith, and a community and state activist. Last year, BANCO partnered with Freshwater Future to complete water testing for residents in Benton Harbor for lead and other metals after the city fell out of compliance with the Lead and Copper Rule.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Grand Rapids District Office wrote Mayor Marcus Muhammad and City Manager Darwin Watson a letter stating, "The major findings below indicate a number of areas needing immediate attention by the city, many of which have the potential to impact public health by allowing or introducing con-

tamination to the water supply. This is of utmost importance. A review of the financial information finds the city presently lacks an adequate financial mechanism to conduct necessary improvements to hire necessary staff to properly maintain and operate the water system. We strongly advise the city manager and the Mayor to work with a qualified financial consultant to identify the revenue necessary to support operation and maintenance and to implement effective revenue collection methodologies. Investment from the city's rate payers is essential for resolving the below significant deficiencies and for ensuring the long term vitality of the water system."

Neither the other remaining elected officials of Benton Harbor, nor the citizens of Benton Harbor, were provided a copy of the letter from the Department of Environmental Quality. BANCO

went out to get more testing, which confirmed that there is a major lead and copper problem in the city of Benton Harbor's water. This resulted in more testing and the distribution of water filters for all of the residents.

We must confront the Benton Harbor city manager and Benton Harbor mayor and force them to tell the truth about the water. Clean water is a human right.

I am available to speak about these issues. I have engaged young people in voting activism across the country. I have organized workshops on various issues including social justice and environmental issues, and medical and mental health issues in the justice system. I am the recipient of many awards, including the State of Michigan Outstanding Citizen Award. Please contact me at 269-925-0001.



Rev. Edward Pinkney [left] with members of the Poor People's Campaign stand in front of Whirlpool Corporation in Benton Harbor, MI prior to the distribution of free water to the people in the town.

PHOTO/VALERIE JEAN

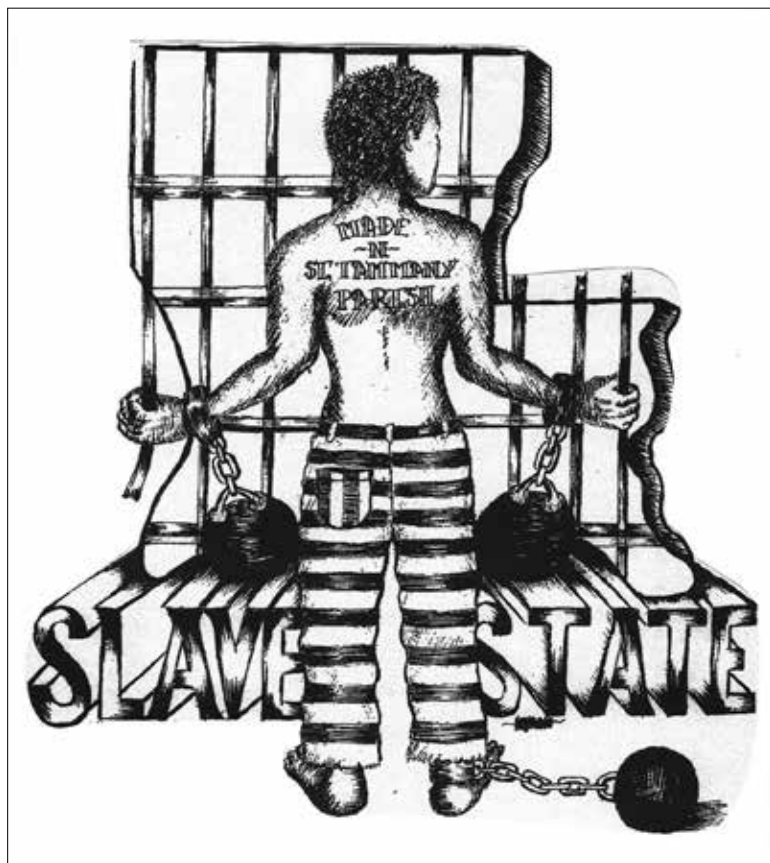
Unanimous Is Not Enough: The struggle continues

By Joseph Peery and Ted Quant

As the struggle continues on the part of the Unanimous Is Not Enough movement to free all those wrongfully convicted by the state of Louisiana's Jim Crow 10/2 law, it reminds us of when author William Faulkner once said, "The past isn't dead, it isn't even past."

Louisiana's voters made it clear by a margin of two to one, that there shall be no more non-unanimous jury laws in their state from 2019 moving forward. But, the Unanimous Is Not Enough movement asks us, "Isn't Jim Crow just as wrong in 2019 as anytime in the past? And if so, shouldn't the new law be retroactive to include all those unjustly convicted in the past but still incarcerated?" The 'powers that be' have answered that this would be damaging to the state's economy. It seems justice has no place in a multi-billion-dollar prison industry that extracts profit from unpaid convict labor. This reality is rooted in a past of slavery and racism, and we continue to be haunted by them both because neither has ever died.

The 10/2 law, originally 9/3, finds its origins in the 1898 Louisiana Constitutional Convention and it reads as follows: "Cases in which the punishment is neces-



This cartoon was drawn for Belinda Parker Brown, of Louisiana United International, by an inmate.

sarily at hard labor, by a jury of twelve, nine of whom concurring may render a verdict." (*Louisiana State Constitution, Article 116. Trials With or Without a Jury, Page 148.*) At Louisiana's 1974 Constitutional Convention it was changed from 9/3 to 10/2 to avoid possible Supreme Court action.

Also at the 1898 Convention, Article 197 was designed to disqualify black men from voting or registering to vote in every conceivable fashion. The convention president, Earnest B. Kruttschnitt in his closing remarks said, "We have not drafted the exact constitution that we should like to have drafted; otherwise we should

have inscribed in it ... universal white manhood suffrage, and the exclusion from the suffrage of every man with a trace of African blood in his veins. We could not do that on account of the fifteenth Amendment." *Official Journal of the Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Louisiana, 1898. Page 380, left column.*

Such laws, so explicitly white supremacist, combined with the 13th Amendment, somehow survived the Civil Rights movement and today give us a Louisiana that regularly practices illegal voter suppression and is the most incarcerated state in the most incarcerated country in the world. It is the

13th Amendment, which should be called the re-enslavement amendment, that has kept slavery alive and well in the United States because of the clause that reads slavery is abolished, "except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted."

The political battle lines are forming now for elections in 2020. Support Unanimous is Not Enough. Join the fight in your state against modern day slavery and voter suppression.

Contact Belinda Parker Brown of Louisiana United International/Unanimous Is Not Enough at 269-369-4751.

Voices of Benton Harbor

"Whirlpool has destroyed our community, [with] tactics used in gentrification across the United States. We only have one high school and they have torn that down and apart to coincide with the name change they plan to implement for the city and high school. They are looking to change the name of the City from Benton Harbor to Harbor Shores, which will soon erase history out of children's minds for generations to come. God loves his people. But Whirlpool is in control and when you (Whirlpool) make more or just as much as the state itself, what can we do without any resources?"

— Colin Aiden