

How can we guarantee healthcare for everyone?

EDITORIAL



Hospital closures, particularly in rural areas, are another manifestation of denying healthcare for all.

VIDEO STILL/NEWS CHANNEL 5 NASHVILLE

From Dixville Notch, NH, to Des Moines, IA, the most important issue of the upcoming election is healthcare. Four in five Americans believe our current system has reached a crisis in terms of affordability.

One of the many indicators is that the number of uninsured people increased for the first time in 10 years, climbing to 27.5 million in 2018. The number of underinsured has also increased steadily, topping out at 44 million in 2018. In 2018 we spent \$3.5 trillion on healthcare, or almost 18% of our GDP. The average of other developed countries is 11.5% of GDP. Americans pay more for healthcare than anyone else in the world, where roughly half as much is spent.

In the past, America's allegiance to employer-based insurance made good economic sense. Wages and employer contributions were generally aligned with the yearly increase in the cost of healthcare. Now a family insured by a large employer has to contribute 67% more than it did 10 years ago. Since wages have only increased by 26% in the same time frame, one has to wonder why anyone would prefer it over a plan that covered more for less.

Corporations are now focused on improving automation technology to boost their profits. An assembly line robot doesn't need a pension or health insurance. Large retailers will need less employees for the same reason. Employer-based health insurance may meet the needs

of some for now, but expecting it to be there through retirement and beyond is unrealistic, especially with the evolution of the job market.

In the rest of the industrialized world if a person gets sick, they go to the doctor without having to worry about the \$3700 average out-of-pocket Americans pay every year. Nor do they have to worry about losing employer-based insurance should they get laid off or decide to find employment elsewhere.

Profit is the goal of our current healthcare system. For example, spending on marketing by the industry was \$17.6 billion in 1997. In 2016 it was \$30 billion, with 68% of that spent marketing

to doctors. The price of the top 20 medications taken by seniors has increased at 10 times the rate of inflation the last five years.

While the industry's profit increases more every year, our ability to pay for services of diminishing quality outpaces our earnings at increasing yearly levels. Last year the healthcare insurance industry alone made \$30 billion in profits.

We know they use fear to divide and conquer us, keeping our attention focused on each other rather than the unchecked avarice of the wealthy. But this time, this tactic is more obvious than ever. With healthcare the result is deny and die.

According to a recent Fox

News poll, 68% favor Medicare for All. Real Medicare for All would create a single national health insurance program to provide everyone in America with comprehensive coverage, making care free at the point of service—no networks, premiums, deductibles, copays or surprise bills. It would include dental, vision, prescription drugs and more.

The candidates in the upcoming election better not depend on party affiliation to carry them to victory. Even if a voter's family has been Republican since Lincoln, or Democratic since Roosevelt, it doesn't matter. What matters most is which candidate has a plan for reforming healthcare so everyone has it.

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.

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Fight for healthcare drives presidential race



COVER STORY

As we approach the primaries for what will certainly be one of the most important presidential elections in history, tens of millions of people are looking for a candidate who will challenge the corporations and billionaires, and put government on the side of the people. And it's painfully obvious that the corporate wing of the Democratic Party and the media that support it are doing everything they can to derail this massive movement for change.

You can see this in how the corporate funded presidential candidates have united against candidates who have a program in the interests of the people, such as Bernie Sanders. You can see it in how the news media brazenly promote corporate mouthpiece Joe Biden as the "leading Democratic contender," and in how candidates such as Michael Bloomberg, Deval Patrick, Amy Klobuchar and Pete Buttigieg are paraded as possible alternatives

acceptable to the corporations if the bumbling Biden embarrasses himself one too many times.

The assault on serious proposals for Medicare for All has been the tip of the spear for the corporations' attack on the movement to take government away from the corporations. Likewise the corporate ridicule heaped on those who are fighting for the Green New Deal as part of the effort to stop the human contribution to climate change.

Maggie Mills, a 45-year-old artist and university professor who suffers from multiple sclerosis, wrote recently on Common Dreams about the debilitating symptoms of MS and her fear of ending up without healthcare. "I live in crippling fear of the fact that all of the money I can summon from the people I know cannot pay for my healthcare needs, present and future. ... This is a fact. My current disease-modifying drug alone costs \$8,000 per month."

She warns her readers to think about their own possible future healthcare needs, and she

[Top] This 9-month-old baby was denied clinical trial treatment by the insurance company, after surgery for an aggressive brain cancer; the company deemed it not medically necessary. PHOTO/FACEBOOK
[Left, both] Medicare for All rally in San Francisco.

PHOTOS/CORNELIA GRIMES

implores them, "Consider, while you may acknowledge your other privileges, you may overlook your well and able-bodied privilege. Consider what it means for you to tell me that it's too hard to care for me when you do not suffer the same lack of privilege. And then fight for me. Fight for your future self. Healthcare is a right. Medicare. For. All."

Maggie's fight is everyone's fight; millions already have no ready access to healthcare, and any of us with access to care could easily lose the healthcare we have. And the struggle for healthcare is just one among many struggles such as climate, housing, education, and immigration, that are calling the whole economic and political system into question. Is government going to be transformed to serve we, the people, or is it going to continue guaranteeing the wealth and power of the corporations and billionaires? We have to keep the pressure up on the candidates, and on every political institution and level of government. This means marching, demonstrating, voting, organizing and more to deliver the message: This country belongs to we, the people, and we will do what it takes to have a government and society that serves our needs.

Impeachment: What's at stake for us all when govt serves the billionaires

The House is preparing to impeach Trump as we go to press, although it seems likely the Republican-controlled Senate will vote to keep him in office. Americans are divided on whether Trump should be removed by impeachment.

Millions are justifiably furious at Trump and they want him out, not only for the crimes he is accused of, but for the serious damage he has done to the people. He has promoted racism and violence, and launched an assault on immigrants, the poor and women. And he has done damage with his approach to healthcare, homelessness, the environment, social programs, business regulation, and his tax giveaways to the rich, among other things. He should be removed for these reasons.

Millions of others oppose impeachment for various reasons.

What we all can agree on is that millions of us are struggling just to stay alive and the question is: how are we going to do that?

First, we have to see that the fight in Congress and the media about Trump is not just about Trump's crimes, but also reflects a fight going on among the bil-

lionaires and corporations about how best to hang on to their wealth and power. Few politicians of either party are putting forward a program to help the people.

To ensure corporate interests are guaranteed, the powerful rely on a bipartisan group of Democratic and Republican politicians. A case in point: While attention was riveted on the impeachment spectacle in mid-December and millions of Americans are barely surviving, most of the House united across party lines to vote 377-48 to authorize \$738 billion for the Pentagon, including a new Space Force. Only 41 Democrats and six Republicans voted against the bill. Elizabeth Warren called the bill "a Christmas present to giant defense contractors."

There are some politicians—people like Sanders, Warren, and others in Congress and at the state and local level—who are trying to get the government to meet the people's needs. They are trying to help guarantee housing, food, water, healthcare and education for everyone. They are trying to protect the human rights of immigrants, address climate change, and defend justice and democ-

racy. But the corporate-allied Democrats and Republicans are blocking the path, and corporate media are actively undermining progressive candidates. The people need to hold every politician accountable, regardless of party.

A People's Tribune correspondent in a rural Midwest area reported that people she knows want Trump out, but they are focused on "how they'll keep their utilities on and how they'll eat. One person on disability got a \$16 raise in his benefit, but it was deducted from his food stamps. His wife had her job hours cut from 30 a week to 15. Their electricity has been shut off numerous times because they can't come up with the money to pay when they live from crisis to crisis."

The whole economic system is collapsing, and democracy, freedom, justice and our ability even to survive are collapsing with it. Impeach Trump! And, we the people must also demand that every candidate and office holder say what they are going to do to guarantee democracy, solidarity among the people, and our ability to thrive, not just survive. This needs to be the yardstick we use to measure progress.

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Stop Trump plan to round up homeless people

From the Editors

Now is the time for all people of conscience to speak out and act decisively to block the Trump administration plan to round up homeless people just like the Germans rounded up the Jews in World War Two. After complaining that homelessness is “disgusting” and reduces property values, Trump stated his intention to use police to raze tent cities and force homeless people into government facilities.

In December, Trump confirmed his plan by appointing Robert Marbut as head of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. Marbut is known as the “Joseph Mengele of the homeless” for his cruel experiments and philosophy that the solution to homelessness is punishment, not housing. After decades of failing to house its people, the government is moving to call working people no longer needed by the tech economy “Lebensunwertes Leben”—the Nazi term for “life unworthy of life”.

It is a shocking sign of the times that we have to restate this fundamental truth that no human being is unworthy of life. When we defend homeless people, we are defending life itself. Organize resistance in every community. Demand local declarations of sanctuary for the poor and homeless. Demand non-cooperation with federal anti-homeless arrests.



“Moms 4 Housing” announce their takeover of a vacant West Oakland house. PHOTO/MICHELLE DIONE SNIDER

‘Housing is a human right, and today I’m using that right’ says homeless mom

By Joyce Mills

OAKLAND, CA — On November 23, hundreds of Oaklanders joined together in a *March for Housing Now: Our City, Not Scarcity*. The event highlighted two homeless mothers who moved themselves and their children into a vacant house just days before, demanding the current owner, Wedgewood Investments, sell the home to their organization, “Moms 4 Housing” or give it to the community.

These women are the new face of America. Both became homeless while working full time. Sameerah is currently also going to nursing school. “I’m doing this so the generations that come after me don’t never have to fight for the right to live,” said Dominique Walker. “If I have to risk everything to stay in my city, then that’s what I’ll do. We are not going to change anything if we don’t speak out and show up.”

The city reports there are 4,071 homeless residents in Oakland, an increase of almost 50% from two years ago, and 4,366 vacant parcels. At any one time, there are up to a hundred “tent camps” within Oakland. “You can’t even ride through Oakland without seeing the effect,” Sameerah noted. “You literally get sick to your stomach seeing the conditions, the squalor, the way that it is. The predicament of it.”

Both women are long-time Oakland residents. Sameerah is a second-generation resident. Dominique’s family migrated from the rural south in the 1950s. The Moms and others have been holding local government accountable to meet housing needs in Oakland.

“We tried working through the system to find affordable housing. We both hold down multiple jobs and take care of our families. But this system doesn’t work for people; it only works for banks and corporations,” Dominique noted. “We have learned that we can govern as well as any of them,” noted Carroll Fife, speaking for the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE). ACCE has vowed to force the Oakland City Council to take responsibility for the housing crisis in Oakland in the coming election.

Their actions are beginning to polarize around the question of property rights in America. A recent blog posted, “This is someone else’s personal property, not public. These moms are trespassing! They have no right!” Not so, another retorted, they, like Jesus, fight for the greater good and on the right side of history.

The reality is that the takeover home is not personal property. It is corporate property. It is owned by Wedgewood, a Redondo Beach-based real estate investment company, one of the country’s biggest “fix & flip” companies that has profited significantly from the housing crisis. Supporters have been calling the company to ask them to donate the property to the Moms. On December 3, they received an eviction notice from Wedgewood Inc. As we go to press, supporters are gathering to support the Moms in their next steps forward.

“We have lost our humanity,” wrote Dominique, “There are children sleeping on the streets—we should be outraged! I am. I will continue fighting for the unhoused until we all have shelter!”

Housing Justice Village: ‘We’re not just speaking for ourselves!’

Editor’s note: On November 24, homeless-led groups set up the Housing Justice Village in front of Oakland City Hall. With 13 tents, this action was organized by The Village, ‘First they came for the homeless,’ Where Do We Go, and others. Twenty people locked themselves into their tents and were arrested, their tents and possessions destroyed. Below is a statement by organizer Maowu-nyo “Needa Bee” de Assis and some words from her tent that night, waiting for the arrests.



Housing Justice Village protest at Oscar Grant Plaza, Oakland City Hall. PHOTO/SARAH MENEFFEE

By Maowunyo “Needa Bee” de Assis

Tomorrow we start a new Village. For all of us who have had our homes bulldozed by the city of Oakland. For all of us who have had our vehicles that we lived in towed by the city of Oakland. For all of us who have our medication, medical equipment, paperwork, family photos, ashes of our loved ones who passed away, work uniforms, laptops, clothes, IDs, EBT cards thrown away in front of our eyes despite our pleas to stop. For all of us who have been left on the side of the road after the city demolishes our curbside communities. For all us who were promised support and help but instead got mistreatment—we come together, we assert our right to housing and our right

to exist, to flex our resilience...

We came out here to protest how the city is treating homeless folks and also to shed light on how they are mismanaging. This is public space, we are protesting, we are getting shut down. We were notified at 10 pm that the DPW is coming here to take out the ‘trash,’ which is us—one of their biggest jobs is to destroy homeless encampments, they treat homeless people like we are trash. They are anti-homeless, which means they are anti-human.

You’ve got the economic system, you’ve got gentrification, which is making so many of us homeless. So we’re trying to fix it. We’re giving out tents, free food, tarps, and pal-

lets to put your tent on if it rains. This government is not trying to help, they don’t do things like this, homeless people did this!

We are not just speaking for ourselves, but for the 4,000 homeless people in Oakland. Every time a village pops up, they try to destroy it immediately. They ignore people who are totally suffering. The Village creates encampments where there is no suffering, and they want to destroy us. We are speaking for the rights of people who are living like this, who have lost their homes because of gentrification. We are just gonna keep on getting louder and louder, homeless and housed folks together. We aren’t gonna leave without a fight.

Illinois youth climate strikers ally with homeless

By Adam Gottlieb

CHICAGO, IL — On Friday, December 6, as world leaders gathered at the UN's annual climate conference, young people across America and around the world joined in an international #ClimateStrike to demand that governments support a Green New Deal and take immediate action on the climate crisis. In Chicago, organizations like Illinois Youth Climate Strike, Sunrise Movement, Extinction Rebellion, and many others participated in a march and rally downtown to demand that the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois declare a Climate Emergency.

"The climate crisis is destroying people's homes and livelihoods, leaving many jobless, homeless, and with nowhere to go. Earlier this year, 50 people were killed and over 13,000 homes were destroyed or damaged in Hurricane Dorian. Last year we

saw the worst fire in California's history, the Camp Fire. 88 people died, and over 10,000 buildings were destroyed in the blaze," said Samantha Taylor, 16, from Illinois Youth Climate Strike in her opening remarks.

In January 2019, journals like The Guardian reported that scientists have identified several possible factors linking climate change to the arctic cold zones known as the "polar vortex" moving further south in recent winters, bringing record-breaking cold temperatures to Midwestern cities like Chicago.

In a beautiful display of comradeship, the young leaders of Illinois Youth Climate Strike invited Tom Gordon, Mayor of Uptown Tent City, to close out the speaker program at the Chicago Climate Strike. Following several impactful speeches from youth leaders (the youngest of whom was 13) about the daunting realities of climate change, its effects on peo-

ple's homes and housing globally, the clear need for uniting behind indigenous movements and those most historically impacted by ecological injustice, and the people's vision of a new world with an economic system based on morality and humanity, Tom captured and moved the crowd with a short but powerful, heartfelt, and eye-opening speech about Chicago winters for the unhoused:

"Hello, my name is Tom Gordon. I'm the mayor of Uptown Tent City. In the cold dead of winter, since September 18th, 2017, when the city took apart Uptown Tent City, they told people they couldn't put up their tents or they will go to jail or get tickets.

"We have seniors, we have old people, we have people from mental institutions, and we have children living in the streets in the North Side in Uptown without tents. Last year alone we lost 15 comrades to the cold.



Tom Gordon (center left), Mayor of Uptown Tent City, brought a tent to the Chicago Climate Strike as a symbol of the unhoused community on the front lines of climate change, facing deadlier winters.

PHOTO/PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

"We came up with a campaign called Bring Chicago Home. Mayor Lightfoot made a campaign promise and recanted on her statement. Now she's giving us nothing. I still have people freezing out in the cold. I don't know how many people we're gonna lose this year.

Last year we lost 15. How many more do we lose before we get housing?

"LET'S BRING CHICAGO HOME! Thank you."

Contact Tom Gordon at 312-837-8596 for information.

Austin, TX: Slight victory in fighting criminalization of homeless



Raymond Thompson, known to all as "Uncle Ray," outside his tent under I-35, near downtown Austin, prior to the state clearing out the encampments in November.

PHOTO/GUS BOVA, TEXAS OBSERVER

Editor's note: Karel Riley interviewed David Johnson, organizer for Grassroots Leadership's Homes Not Handcuffs local campaign in Austin, Texas, which is part of a national campaign, the goals of which are to stop criminalizing homelessness and poverty. In November, the state of Texas began clearing out homeless people living under the highways.

"How is it okay to criminally penalize anybody for not having permanent housing when the number of beds available is fewer than the number of individuals in need of beds?" asked David Johnson. "Criminalizing homelessness has not reduced the numbers of individuals without access to permanent housing. Having anti-homeless and anti-poverty ordi-

nances does not increase the number of beds. It does not free up dollars for resources. People should not be subject to criminal prosecution or persecution simply because they are existing in the only way that is available to the homeless."

Homes Not Handcuffs was successful in getting the city of Austin to liberalize ordinances against sitting, lying, camping, and panhandling. "We achieved that slight victory. A true victory is where there is no ordinance whatsoever making it illegal to camp anywhere, to sit or to lie anywhere or to solicit anywhere," said Johnson.

After the victory, suddenly more homeless were visible on the streets, but the number of homeless did not increase. "The individuals without permanent housing have simply been liberated. It's a good thing when people who are vulnerable don't have to hide anymore," said Johnson.

But, then, a fear-mongering campaign began by powerful interests like the Downtown Austin Alliance. They said people wouldn't visit Austin, a major tourist destination, but that isn't true. Or they say that people are being assaulted. If it is true, it's not a result of these ordinances being amended. "Governor Abbott had no comment to make about the homeless population until his deep-pocketed money funders started ringing his phone," said Johnson. The homeless were unsightly to the people who fund his campaigns.

The governor threatened to "clean up" the city unless the City Council modified the ordinances, which they did under pressure. "The governor, if he really wanted to help, could make a plea towards any of these big tech companies: Dell, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Oracle, AMD, they are all here." He could set up a program similar to the one in San Antonio that improved the conditions for the homeless. But he did none of that. "The cowardly fearmongering exhibited from Governor Abbott and the rest is a disgusting use of privilege and power that has emboldened simple-minded bigots to use violence against a vulnerable population that has only come out of hiding in search of humanity."

Austin becoming a tech hub has led to very rapid gentrification, with roots in the city's history. When Austin was established it was against the law for people of color to live west of I-35, even though a group of them had lived there before they were pushed to the near east side of the freeway, close to downtown. As the city grew, demand for that highly desirable land has driven up property values and taxes so that the people of those historic communities can no longer afford to live there. They are pushed to the suburbs where there is no public transportation or become homeless. The tech companies should bear some responsibility for solutions to homelessness.

HOMELESS

Just so
I roll up my sleeping
and step into another
shitty day
Maybe it rains on everyone OK
and the sun shines
and all of nature sings
but I have no business today
I have nothing to offer
others
yet I'm not poor
I could set the world in order
and push it like a toy car
but that's not my role
rather to be of no use at all
and be totally incapable
of cruelty
They say the day will come
when everyone will have enough
and the people will be as one
and so I prepare all my things
and so they don't get angry
I explain all this stuff to the spirits
to try to keep my mind steady
but such a wanderer
is the mind.

— Jerry Ferraz, San Francisco

CALIFORNIA, WE HAVE CHOICES AS WE ORGANIZE AND VOTE!

A nurse speaks out: We need Medicare for All!

By Elizabeth Castillo, RN

LOS ANGELES, CA — I've been a nurse for 12 years. I work in Long Beach in medical/surgical assignments. I work with all systems as an emergency room nurse. Most of my patients are diabetics. In our community care is good; patients come from all over Long Beach and even some from Los Angeles. The issue is people only come in when they're sick because they can't afford doctors, medical care, or medicine. They're in bad health and we'll see the same patients come back again into the emergency room. Diabetes affects everything in their body. Patients in our neighborhoods don't have access to good food! There are no markets in their neighborhood and good food is expensive, so they rely on the \$1 meal at McDonald's.

Obama Care, the Affordable Care Act, is not a good sys-



Rally and "die-in" in support of Medicare for All in San Francisco. Thousands of people in the U.S. die each year because they lack health insurance. PHOTO/PEGGY ELWELL

tem. More people are covered under Obamacare, but our hospital moves people out quicker! In the morning, we have meetings

about what we, as nurses, can do to get people out quicker. This is a dilemma for us because the license we get from California is

based on protecting our patients. Obama Care also meant fewer ancillary people. With Obama Care, all hospitals are pressured

into going electronic which means the nurses spend a lot more time at the computer.

At my hospital we have a union, the California Nurses Association and we are behind Medicare for All. We showed up at Anthony Rendon's (Speaker of the California Assembly) office and we went to the Assembly to plead for Medicare for All. When Rendon blocked AB 562 from a vote in the Assembly, I couldn't believe that a Democrat and a resident of the 63rd Assembly District could vote against such a health care bill. There are a lot of poor areas in the 63rd district, a lot of problems and Rendon is aware of this. His blocking of Medicare for all was shameful.

Therefore, I support Maria Estrada for the 63rd Assembly district in the California primary this March. Rendon is beholden to corporations in this district. They are some of his major contributors.

People in San Jose fighting anti-homeless law

By Robert Aguirre

SAN JOSE, CA — Laura's Law is a statewide law enacted in 2002 when a clinic volunteer was shot and killed by a mentally ill man who refused treatment. It allows counties to force treatment onto persons who refuse it. The actions of one individual 17 years ago are now used as an excuse to potentially take away the civil liberties of thousands of homeless people in Santa Clara County.

San Jose Councilmembers Johnny Khamis, Raul Peralez, and Mayor Sam Liccardo are calling on the Board of Supervisors to implement Laura's Law in Santa Clara County. They also are suggesting a conservatorship program to take over people's finances with no say from the persons affected. Once you remove a person's right to choose and take away their financial support they become your prisoner for as long as you wish. Mental health treatment should be voluntary and not decided by someone else. This is all just another weapon to eliminate houseless persons on the streets.

If the County has a mental health crisis, then why don't they provide enough mental health doctors, case managers, cli-

nicians, clinics, and beds to serve the people that are already seeking help? The state has determined that the number of psychiatric beds should be 50 beds for every 100,000 residents, but Santa Clara County only has 246 beds out of the recommended 960. If the County cannot provide beds for people voluntarily seeking treatment, why would they even consider implementing Laura's Law?

The cruel sweeps conducted by the City of San Jose actually exacerbate the mental illness problem by moving people from one place to another with no plan to help them escape their situation. The City actually makes MORE homeless people mentally ill through its endless campaigns of harassment, criminalization, and marginalization. There is also no real representation anywhere in local government of the people they claim to be servicing. There are commissions for just about everything except for people living in poverty and in the streets.

There is a severe shortage of permanent supportive housing and an emergency has been declared by both the County and the City of San Jose. They have failed to build sufficient Extremely Low Income housing to implement the



San Jose, CA policymakers are considering Donald Trump-style laws to round up homeless people and make them disappear. Over 80% of this wealthy county's 10,000 unhoused people are forced to sleep on the streets. PHOTO/SCOTT WAGERS

Housing First program. There aren't anywhere near enough shelter beds available and the barriers are too many and too great to attract people to stay in them.

This is a bad law that can and will be abused to simply make people disappear.

Your vote matters Insurgency and up

By Cathleen Williams

In this centerfold we are focusing on California, where the poverty rate is the highest in the nation. In this state, what you might call an insurgency is developing—an uprising of people who are struggling for their very survival. The Democratic Party is splitting, polarizing, and dividing between its corporate wing and its progressive wing. The fight for immediate demands—for the right to health care and housing, for protection from the climate crisis—is the driving force behind the call for new Democratic leadership. People oppressed because of their race and/or immigration status are at the heart of the growing movement.

At the same time, people are organizing against mass incarceration, the expansion of jails, the killing of our youth; they are organizing to resist ICE and protect migrants and immigrants from deportation and imprisonment. As we report this month, in California, organized resistance is also growing against police sweeps of houseless communities and the growing criminalization of houseless people, which includes proposals to force people into shelters and mental health facilities that don't exist. On

Oakland's rogue school board privatizes schools

By Steven Miller

OAKLAND, CA — Oakland's school board has gone rogue and intends to close 24 schools in the face of massive community opposition. Out of the last 18 schools they closed, 14 opened as charters. Proposed closures are in the impoverished Flatlands where Oakland is opening more than 16,000 new market-rate residences.

School board members are controlled by corporations and billionaires Eli Broad and Michael Bloomberg, major charter school supporters. They spent phenomenal amounts to win school board control, far more than most races for state assembly. Who knows what other dark money was involved?

Oakland has families who have had to change schools three times in the last couple of years due to school closures. The entire community wants to keep every school open. When they protest at school board meetings, board members cut the mic if they think you are not on "their topic." They shop online and look at email, but never, ever respond. Then



In October, the Oakland School Board called the police on an audience of over 600 people opposed to closing schools. As the protest grew, police beat and arrested parents and teachers. At the following meeting, a 'Peoples School Board' (seen in this photo) took over after officials fled. Children took the officials' seats and spoke against the police attacks. PHOTO/DONATED

they call the cops and run off to a secret room to make illegal decisions in private.

This is what corporate dictatorship looks like! Both the school board and city government regularly disregard the law in order

to implement a real estate plan that is dispossessing the city of families that have lived here for generations.

The school district does not save money by closing schools. In fact, it loses \$57 million a year

to subsidize charters. At the same time, the district regularly runs a budget surplus, partly because it refuses to spend dedicated revenue in the classroom! This alone is a criminal act!

By being "broke on purpose,"

the school district has the excuse to continue the privatization of school properties. Oakland was seized by the state of California in 2003 and is still under state-imposed supervision by a public-private corporation. So we see the state, the school board and the city government working together to destroy public schools for their developer patrons.

Organizations like Oakland Public Education Network, Oakland's Not For Sale and Bettering Our School System are demanding that no schools be closed in Oakland until after the 2020 November election. Propositions on the ballot may provide far more money to California schools. In the same election, four of seven school board seats are open. The people of Oakland intend to seize back control of the school board and compel local government to be accountable to the people, not to corporations.

Steven Miller is a retired Oakland science teacher who taught for 25 years in Flatland schools. His two boys went through Oakland Public Schools.

atters: heaval in California

another front, city-by-city, people are organizing to oppose school closures and the push for more charter schools which drain public school budgets. At the community college level, students and faculty are taking stands against the criminal disinvestment in higher education.

An emerging, diverse, multi-ethnic class—a new part of the working class—fuels this movement. Members of this new class can't get a secure foothold in the rapidly automating economy of California, or they have lost the foothold they once had because their jobs have been eliminated or downgraded due to the rise of robotics.

We have choices as we organize and vote. We don't have to accept the plans of the wealthy corporations to abandon and drive out the millions of human beings that they no longer need in the high-tech economy. We can stand up for the equal dignity and sacred value of every human life on the planet, and all life on earth as we know it. As another winter begins, deluging with rain the multitudes living on the street, we need to think about housing, health care, and education for all our people—not the profits of the billionaire corporate class.

Students and faculty fight austerity

By Kimberly King

OAKLAND, CA — The California state government holds \$19 billion in reserve "rainy day" funds, yet in Oakland, our community colleges are being slammed with austerity-justified cuts that result in criminal disinvestment in public education.

It is already raining! This torrential downpour includes a crumbling infrastructure that has put us on "fire watch" requiring security guards to patrol the campus all day to prevent fires, frequently broken elevators, a student center and library years overdue for replacement, and bathrooms that are cleaned just once a day. Massive cuts in class offerings—300 fewer classes this spring—make it harder for students to get the required courses they need to graduate and also mean the potential layoff of over 100 part-time contingent faculty who are 70% of faculty in our district.

The cost of housing is so high in Oakland and the San Francisco Bay Area that many students, part-time faculty and newer full-time faculty, are struggling to make ends meet. In a survey of contingent faculty in our district, 51% pay more than a third of their income for rent, and an additional 1.2% are unhoused or homeless. Fully 16% of contingent faculty report they are receiving welfare benefits other than unemployment. Our full-time faculty are the lowest paid of all the community colleges in California.

And if faculty, professional work-



The "10th Annual Life is Living" festival in Oakland, CA started their event by recreating the Black Panther Breakfast program. Volunteers provided free breakfast to anyone who came, no questions asked. PHOTO/MICHELLE SNIDER

ers with advanced degrees, are suffering, imagine what our students are enduring? Over 84% of students in our district suffer from housing insecurity, including the inability to pay full rent or mortgage for one or more months, the inability to pay utilities, threats of eviction, or having to choose between food and housing. Some student leaders are starting to talk about getting affordable public housing on our community college campus, to meet important basic needs for students and faculty and staff who are struggling.

Together, those of us being pushed

out by the changing job market and the digital revolution can be a powerful force for change. We need leaders that recognize rainy days and use the vast common wealth produced by society to prevent torrential downpours.

We can have quality public education for all, decent working conditions, and homes. We can hold the government accountable to provide for our basic needs. If our government leaders are too controlled by their corporate rulers to do so, then it is time for new leaders!



Doctors jailed for trying to provide care for immigrants

Six protesters, including four doctors, were arrested outside of a Border Patrol facility in Chula Vista, California as they demanded agents allow them to give migrants flu shots. “With peak flu season imminent, the U.S. detaining a record number of children, and new evidence that immigration officials lied about the horrifying, flu-related death of 16-year-old Carlos Gregorio Hernandez Vasquez, it is more important than ever that people in detention facilities are allowed access to potentially life-saving flu clinic services.” (Press release on behalf of protesters)

“Now we are locking up doctors who want to provide humanitarian relief. America are you looking in the mirror?” (Facebook post)

Editor’s note: Support for the action includes: Doctors for Camp Closure (DACC), made up of over 2,000 physicians and healthcare professionals; The Families Belong Together coalition, of nearly 250 different groups comprising tens of thousands of Americans; Never Again Action, a mass mobilization of Jews organizing to shut down ICE; and local community members are support for the action.

Food stamp cuts doom us to more hunger while corporations get fatter

Teachers in many parts of the country say their students come to school hungry.

A 75-year-old U.S. Army veteran said: “Many times, I’ve felt like I was starving. There’s neighbors that need food, too. There’s people [on] dialysis that need food. There’s hunger everywhere.”

“This is not your grandmother’s hunger,” said a New York sociologist. “Today more working people and their families are hungry because wages have declined.”

Today, one in six American households —and one in four minority households—is going hungry.

An estimated 49 million people rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, to survive. Now, the Trump administration wants to throw 3 million people off SNAP over a five-year period due

to a new work rule. For starters, 700,000 “adults without dependents” will lose their meager \$165 average monthly benefits unless they work. The implication is that the economy is “booming,” and “lazy freeloaders” are taking advantage of the program. This is a lie.

First, most SNAP recipients who can work do so. Second, more people are working two or three jobs and still don’t have money to buy enough food. *Third, there is plenty of food and everyone has a right to it, unconditionally.* In the past, humans had to struggle every day to find food. But today, there is no scarcity. In a world with 7 billion people, we already grow enough food to feed 10 billion.

So, are the poor the cause of hunger? Or is it because the great abundance of food is owned by mega-corporations and sold for profit? In 2018, food con-

glomerates like Cargill; Tyson; and Archer Daniels Midland, made \$3.1 billion; \$3.027 billion; and \$1.81 billion, respectively, in profits. Plus, corporate giants actually benefit the most from SNAP. Walmart’s starvation wages forces employees on to food stamps. Then Walmart receive billions in sales through food stamps.

We as a society can no longer allow our livelihood to be tied to the profit-making of corporations. As automation replaces millions of us, the idea that we must “work” for our food makes no sense because jobs are disappearing. We need a different kind of society—one where “we the people” own the abundance and share it equally. We can have it.

The fight of thousands to stop the food cuts, the fight to *expand* the program, is the fight for that new society. Don’t let America’s rulers get away with these cuts!

Dem candidates’ views on immigration reform

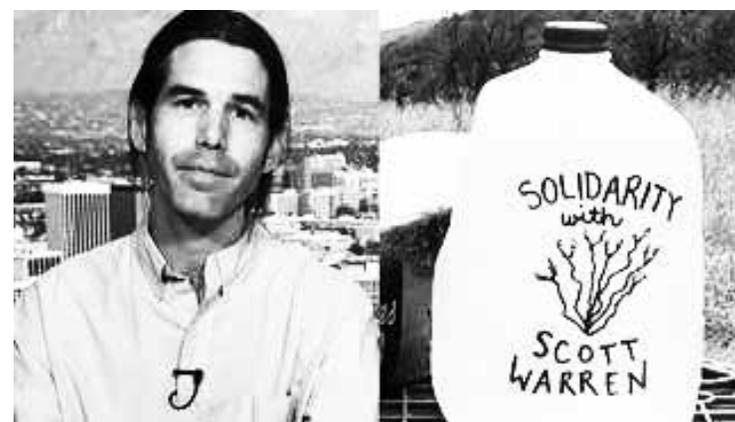
By Bob Lee

Various Democratic presidential candidates have called for reforming the immoral U.S. immigration system. Below is a representative sample of some of the more specific proposals.

Bernie Sanders: “Instead of demonizing the undocumented immigrants in this country, we are going to pass comprehensive immigration reform and provide a path toward citizenship for all of the undocumented. On our first day in office, through executive order, we’re going to provide legal status to the 1.8 million young people eligible for the DACA program and extend that program to their parents. We’re going to develop a humane border policy for those who seek asylum. We will not be a government which snatches babies from the arms of their mothers or puts children in cages. And we will put in end up to the disastrous raids of the ICE agency.”

Julian Castro: He would downgrade border crossing from a criminal to a civil offense, and chart a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, including Dreamers and those under Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure. He also calls for a 21st-century “Marshall Plan” for Central America. Castro would end the “Remain in Mexico” asylum policy and rescind the ban on refugees from certain countries. He would end the detention of immigrants, except in serious cases; eliminate the for-profit immigration detention and prison industry; end immigration raids at or near such location as schools, hospitals, churches and courthouses; and end local police cooperation with immigration agencies.

Elizabeth Warren: She would decriminalize crossing the border without papers, reduce immigration detention, and increase funding for aid to Central America. She would protect schools, medical facilities, and courthouses from immigration enforcement, and end deputizing local law enforcement as federal immigration officers. Warren would pare back immigrant detention overall and eliminate private detention facilities. She would to admit six to eight times as many refugees as Trump has in her first years as president, and would make it easier for asylum seekers to get a day in court. Warren would expand the DACA program for Dreamers and their families, and favors a path to citizenship for people who fall under Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure.



Scott Warren was found not guilty in a second trial prompted by his humanitarian work leaving water for migrants facing death crossing the hot desert in the hope of gaining sanctuary in the U.S.
VIDEO STILL/DEMOCRACY NOW!

“The government failed in its attempt to criminalize basic human kindness,” says Scott Warren to the crowd outside the Arizona courthouse after a jury found him innocent of harboring immigrants. Warren, who faced 10 years in prison, is a volunteer for No More Deaths, a group that extends kindness to immigrants who face death in their trek through the dessert. Warren was arrested soon after No More Deaths published a video of border agents pouring out water jugs left for migrants in the desert. Since 2001, more than 3,000 sets of human remains suspected of belonging to migrants who died in the deserts of Southern Arizona were identified.



Participants and panelists at the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (NAARPR) conference in Chicago.

PHOTOS/FRANK JOHNSON

In Chicago, rebirth of a historic mass defense org

By Gabriel Montero

CHICAGO, IL — On November 22, before an electrified crowd of 1,200 at the Chicago Teachers Union Hall, the renowned National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (NAARPR) seemed to come full circle. With an opening rally headlined by Angela Davis, the organization was officially refounded by the very woman it had helped to free from unjust imprisonment some 46 years ago. True to its new historic reality, this reborn NAARPR set out a distinct path and a new central task in the struggle for human rights.

The NAARPR was originally founded in 1973 as part of the movement to free Dr. Davis and all political prisoners. It was the Chicago branch that issued a call to refound the National Alliance this year as a mass defense organization that could coordinate and protect the various strands of the people's movements fighting intensified FBI targeting of Black activists; the depraved caging of immigrant families and children seeking sanctuary at the border; and an epidemic of police murder of Black and Brown men and women.

In addition, the advancements made in Chicago for an all-elected Civilian Police Accountability Council (CPAC) became the

basis for calling the refounding conference here in Chicago. Some 800 conference participants upheld the central political objectives of the renewed NAARPR: a national campaign to demand community control of the police and to protect the inalienable democratic right of the peoples' movements to protest and organize for systemic change.

Chicago Teachers Union Vice President Stacy Davis Gates welcomed the crowd to the conference and spoke of the need to defend black identity as a birthright. Activists—young and old, Black, Brown, Indigenous, queer and working class—from over 100 cities representing 25 states and over 300 local, national, and international organizations took part in the three-day event. Speaking from the lectern, Frank Chapman, Field Organizer of the Chicago branch of the NAARPR, spoke of the need to unite these various strands around “unity of action instead of unity of ideas.”

On the conference's final day, a resolution to refound the Alliance was adopted and saw Chapman elected as executive director of the Continuations Committee. That committee's main task will be to convene a delegates' conference sometime in the next year at which the Alliance's new leadership will be elected and begin writing the next chapter of this long-lived and storied organization.

Winning the fight against police torture

Editor's note: Below are excerpts from a speech by Aislinn Pulley, Co-executive Director of the Chicago Justice Torture Center, given at the recent conference in Chicago to re-found the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression.

By Aislinn Pulley

Chicago won a historic reparations ordinance in 2015, the first of its kind, that provides financial redress for survivors of police torture, [and] mandated the creation of a curriculum to be taught in all Chicago public schools about that history. ... Rahm Emmanuel denied the funding to establish the public memorial. Lori Lightfoot, to date, has not responded to the demand to create and fund [it]. ... What the reparations ordinance also called for was the creation of a center located on the South Side to treat the psychological effects of torture. ... The Chicago Torture Justice Center ... is the first, and only center in the U.S. dedicated to survivors of domestic torture...

We have 120 names from John Burge [people tortured by Burge]. He trained tons of detectives. They were

known as the midnight crew. That was only one of the crews. They are still on the force. One was a part of the Laquan McDonald assassination. So that lineage and ... torture remains alive and well. So when they talk about the “era of Burge,” don't let them use that language because the torture continues ... and we have tons and tons of survivors who don't yet know they also are connected to Burge and his henchmen. What we do have here this weekend are survivors who are going to be sharing their stories ... some remain incarcerated ... there are women torture survivors [too].

We also know that we are not yet done fighting. ... Homan Square disappeared over 7,000 people between 2004 and 2012. ... So that 120 names is not the real number. ... We have to end torture completely in this city and across this country. And we have to free all the prisoners ... open all the cages and defund all the police departments.

So while we are ... standing in the victory of the struggles and the fights that that brought us here ... we have a long way to go ... we ain't done ... we gonna win because when we fight, we win.

Millions take up the struggle for which King died

From the People's Tribune

Dr. Martin Luther King, born January 15, raised this question in a 1967 speech: “Why are there forty million poor people in America?” When you ask that question, he said, “You are raising a question 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.”

Only eight months after that speech, Dr. King was assassinated while supporting striking Memphis sanitation workers. He was shot one year to the day after speaking out

strongly against the war and militarism, tying them closely to issues of poverty.

At the time of his death, he was organizing for a massive Poor People's Campaign gathering in Washington, DC. This moral outcry against poverty, militarism, and racial and gender discrimination called for \$30 billion to fight poverty and for constructing 500,000 affordable places to live every year. Though Dr. King didn't reach the goals he worked for, his message still guides us today.

Fifty years after the first Poor Peoples Campaign, 140 million people in the U.S. are poor or one \$400 emergency away from being poor. The new *Poor People's Cam-*

paign: A National Call for Moral Revival points out that, 43.5% of people living in the richest nation in the world—representing every race, color, creed, religion, sexual orientation, and political party—don't have enough secure income to meet their basic needs.

Groups across America are organizing to raise the urgent need to end poverty now. The new Poor People's Campaign is currently conducting a 22-state organizing tour, preparing for a Mass Poor People's Assembly and Moral March on Washington on June 20, 2020.

In America today, millions are taking up the struggle that Dr. King gave his life for.



Martin Luther King Jr. at March on Washington, August 1963. PHOTO/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Hometown view of Mayor Pete from BLM of South Bend

Editor's Note: Three activists with Black Lives Matter in South Bend, Indiana, Marcus Washington, Roger Calderon, and Yemoja Redding, recently gave their views of outgoing mayor Pete Buttigieg to Allen Harris, for the People's Tribune. Buttigieg is a candidate for president in the 2020 Democratic Party primary.

Allen Harris: What is your assessment of the mayor?

Marcus Washington: He had a really good test this summer with what was he going to do about a lot of strain within the black community here in town with the shooting of Eric Logan. He has shown that he has tacit acceptance of police brutality in our community and he is not going to hold folks accountable at the organizational level. Opportunities for advancement have not gone addressed. And it came to a head and people said, "Enough is enough." People are tired of the lies, they're tired of the false promises. And now they're tired of a presidential candidate that is trying to co-opt the story of black struggle and his

white-hero-savior narrative that he is doing a lot for the community, which he is not.

AH: Is what the country sees of Buttigieg on TV not what South Bend sees?

Marcus: Kind of. I think he is running the exact campaign he actually knows how to run. And that campaign is not looking at ... his blind spot. He doesn't know what black people's issues are. He is only able to filter it through what a Harvard Rhodes scholar would be able to filter. [Buttigieg is] not surrounding himself with the downtrodden that are disenfranchised and don't have a voice. The people that need him he's not surrounding himself with.

Roger Calderon: One of the discussions that's happening right now in South Bend is what are we going to do with homeless people? A couple of years ago, Pete Buttigieg booted [homeless people] from this sort of makeshift bridge ... and that's an issue that is still being dealt with. Pete Buttigieg really thought that South Bend was going to be his "horse to run,"



Protesters at Mayor Buttigieg event announcing a glitzy new park in South Bend, Indiana say the outgoing mayor fails to address homelessness while allocating funds to gentrification.

the thing he would ride into victory and that's not going to happen. Pete Buttigieg is only going to come to South Bend when there's a photo opportunity. The last time he was here, he realized everybody wanted to yell at him.

AH: What was your reaction to the 2011 video of Buttigieg's com-

ments on poor black children and education?

Yemoja Redding: South Bend's high schools are No. 44 of the best high schools in Indiana. The total minority enrollment is 61%, and 58% of that enrollment are disadvantaged with a math and reading performance as low as 20%. Not even half of the schools' population is col-

lege bound, ranking considerably low at 30%. And that's a school on what is considered to be the good side of town. But If you haven't already, look at the private schools' stats. The numbers are noticeably different. I wonder why. Could it be the I.E.P.'s for black and brown boys and girls?

'It's our energy. Take it back' – Detroit climate activist

Editor's note: Below are excerpts from a speech by Michelle Martinez, statewide coordinator of the Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition, at the Dec. 6 Global Climate strike in Detroit.

"Close your eyes and imagine it's 2040 and we've averted the climate crisis and we have an active and alive democracy. No one's heat is shut off. We can walk to school without being afraid of violence. We can go to a job that pays us money to support us. There is no debt. Our grandparents are loved, cared for and need nothing. Trees are blowing in a soft wind and we treat each other with loving kindness. We've melted down the AKs and made them into statues of civil rights warriors and indigenous rights activists. We have a wonderful partnership with sovereign nations all over the Americas. We have the right of migration for people who need sustenance, a home and a place.

"These are the futures we're fighting for. It's a fight because fascist governments, the rich, the greedy take from us the work, money, blood, sweat, [and] tears ... [it's] the 6AM alarm clocks, the long bus rides. They take every minute of our lives [to] put it in the stock exchange and trade it amongst themselves while we toil 12, 14, 18 hours a day to be put further in debt.

"How many in this city don't have heat and have to decide whether they're going to buy Grandma their medicine or pay the DTE bill to keep their lights on. We're paying for a natural gas, fracked gas,

built out in the Marcellus Shale. We're digging pipelines up to pay DTE Energy shareholders to build Nexus, a 50% holding company with Enbridge, to put them under the Great Lakes. We know [it's a lie that] they're promising us clean energy in a net zero future. [Ask] them how ... and they say, well, 'We don't know, but it's a great media tagline.'

"That's what we're fighting ... so we don't have to pay for another generation of red gas because one more well in the ground is too many ... we don't need more science. We need solutions and we need it now. Put our people to work to renovate Grandma's home so the heat is not going out the window. Put our people to work putting up solar panels on this building and that building...

"And I want [it] to be owned by us ... it's our energy. It's our time. And if we don't take it back, we don't have a future. So take it back...

"So when I close my eyes, I imagine a parade of roses ... [you're] walking down 4th Street from the Ambassador Bridge to Marathon and we're dancing in the street. We have kids running down the street because guess what? Marathon Oil is closing. And every person walking out of that facility has a job, a home, their kids have an education. And food is on the table every day ... we're regenerating our lands, giving our farmers and urban agriculturalists and people who make our art and culture a living wage to be that, not to produce for someone on the other side of the world who's bombing somebody with our tax dollars. That's what we're marching for."



Detroit Climate strike in December. Michele Martinez (top left).

PHOTOS/VALERIE JEAN

Pensions on the line, says UMWA local president

Editor's note: Jack McReynolds, UMWA District 12 Local 2420 President, spoke with Cathy Talbott of the People's Tribune about the fight for miners' pensions, jobs, healthcare, homelessness, and clean water. Below are excerpts from that interview.

I went to a rally with about 2,000 people in Evansville, IN [December 4] about our pensions. There's a bill that's been held up by Mitch McConnell for a year but now he's on board since Kentucky voted in Beshear for governor and we think we've got that won. We had the same problem with our healthcare three years ago but got that won, so if we can get this passed we're in good shape. There's 80,000 pensioners and families dependent on them. President Truman in 1947 signed a promise (Krug-Lewis Agreement) guaranteeing us pensions and healthcare for life if we agreed to not strike and keep up production during the war.

Trump told people in West Virginia, Kentucky and Alabama that he was going to open up the mines. And they believed him. But there's more mines closed. Now they're seeing he's not doing what he said. I personally think there's going to be a blue wave this election. They elected democratic governors in Kansas, Kentucky, Virginia. All those counties that went for Mitch McConnell in Kentucky went blue and that turned his head. I think that's why McConnell put our [pension] bill on his desk to bring up in the Senate. There's more people getting organized than there's been in 40 years.

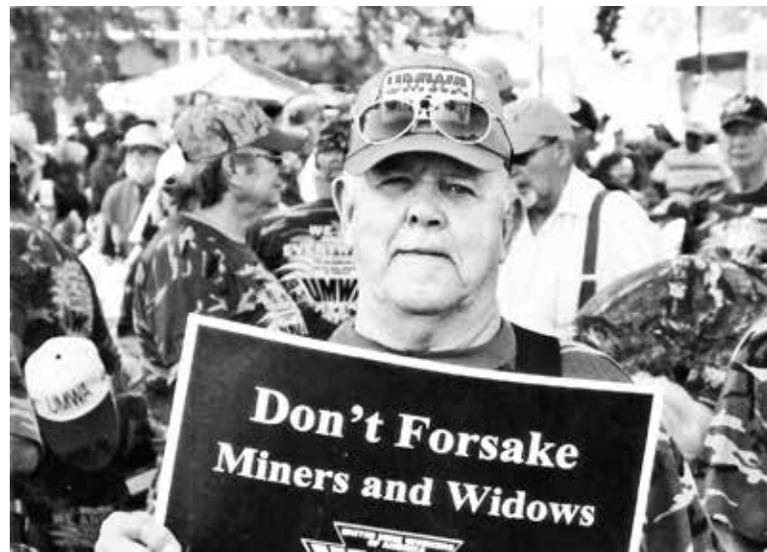
There aren't any union mines here now. There's not many mines at all. Automation has changed all that. Murray owns what we call a scab mine in Galatia and he's discharging mercury into the water; they don't give a damn. [Murray Energy filed bankruptcy in October.] He's friends with Trump. People got to get involved. Trump

ain't gonna do nothing. I'm not for fracking, either. It goes into the underground water streams and destroys the water. I can't prove it ... I don't have the equipment to test it. We got to get involved and put pressure on our representatives, both state and federal.

We gotta create jobs for people. The homeless ... a lot of them are veterans. And 75% of those in prisons are veterans. Women and children being separated [at the border] ... and another thing is the children in cages ... I call them concentration camps. That 16-year-old who died recently ... It's looking like Nazi Germany.

We gotta have new legislation for Black Lung. What we have now isn't working. I've got Black Lung-stage 2. The government says I'm not disabled. After we get this pension deal taken care of we're gonna go for that. We need to work on electing people who will support black lung benefits.

Another thing is these "right-



PHOTO/JACK MCREYNOLDS, UMWA DISTRICT 12 LOCAL 2420 PRESIDENT

to-work" laws. People need to understand that it means right to work for less. These non-union mines here, they're working in water with live cables laying in the water. [If you get injured] the compensation laws now favor the company. When I started as a young man, an older miner

told me these companies would trade any one of us for half a car of coal.

This pension bill now is very important. We were promised. Have people call their senators and ask them to support the Bipartisan American Miners Act of 2019.

Former EPA chief poised to head environmental 'advocacy' group

Editor's note: In 2017, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), an international environmental advocacy group, was among plaintiffs who won a successful lawsuit against the State of Michigan regarding the Flint disaster. Flint residents are now shocked and angry upon learning of Gina McCarthy's new gig. Below are excerpts from a letter sent to the NRDC endorsed by Flint, MI community groups.



Gina McCarthy, former head of the EPA, in 2016 testimony before Congress, refused to take responsibility regarding the Flint Water Crisis. VIDEO STILL/CSPAN

December 6, 2019

To Whom it May Concern:

We are writing to let you know of our objection to the hiring of Gina McCarthy to the position of President and CEO of the NRDC. As you well know, because of the successful lawsuit that you brought against the State of Michigan, not only the State was culpable in the poisoning of our city.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was first made aware of problems with our water in May 2014, but did not speak out until an Emergency Administrative Order was issued in January, 2016. Gina McCarthy was in charge of the EPA at that time and was ultimately

responsible for us consuming the water for months when they knew it wasn't safe. Even the EPA Office of Inspector General concluded that EPA's Management failed to protect us. (See www.epa.gov/oig Project No. 17-P-0004.)

We the members of Democracy Defense League, the advocacy groups listed below and residents of the City of Flint, feel that this appointment is a slap in the face by

an organization that is supposed to stand with and defend us from the very people who hold responsibility for the deaths and harm caused by the government agencies and individuals involved.

Disappointedly Yours,
Democracy Defense League
Concerned Pastors for Social Action of Flint
Color of Change Flint
CAUTION

Water victory against Nestlé

Editor's note: Below are excerpts from a press release by Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation (MCWC).

The citizens of Osceola township in Evart, Michigan received their just reward for several years of legal battle to enforce their own zoning ordinance in the face of Nestlé's bullying tactics and corporate clout. The Michigan Court of Appeals reversed the decision of the Circuit Court which had ordered the township to issue a permit for a booster station in spite of its violation of local zoning ordinance.

Nestlé argued that their commercial bottled water operation is an "essential public service." The Appeals Court said it is not. The Court simply showed "there is no legal or factual basis for considering plaintiff's commercial water bottling operation to be a 'public water supply' under Michigan Safe Drinking Water Act."

Nestlé claimed that public opposition to its operation improperly influenced members of the Zoning Board and the Planning Commission. The court ruled that such bodies cannot violate the law in making rulings consistent with the wishes of its constituents, but in this case, they were following the law. The Court added that people have the right to locally elect their government officials and, "that it would be improper for [local officials] to fail to take popular opinion into account." Maryann Borden, MCWC member and Osceola Township resident says, "Finally the Court has taken us seriously and the law has prevailed."

Contact Peggy Case, President MCWC, at 231-275-2244, or via e-mail at hildaheron@aol.com

'We must defend our soldiers'

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

BENTON HARBOR, MI — A true man of God, Keith Collins, pastor of the Church of the Overcomer—a blue jean friendly church—says he “presents gospel to a world that is broken and filled with broken people.” Pastor Collins also serves more than a 150 people every week. What an amazing man.

The pastor, his wife and sister-in-law were arrested for conspiracy for something they had nothing to do with it. This is what happens to anyone who stands up for justice for the poor.

Pastor Keith is a graduate of Geneva College of Business and Divinity and holds a M.B.S Divinity and Ministerial degree from Friends International Christian University. He and his wife have undertaken mission trips to Ghana and Nigeria, and Pastor Keith has completed pilgrimage studies in Greece, Israel and Egypt. He served as an infantry officer in the U.S. Army/Airborne. He also

served as adjunct professor at Delaware County Community College. He is a marathon runner and cyclist. He and his wife have been married for 37 years.

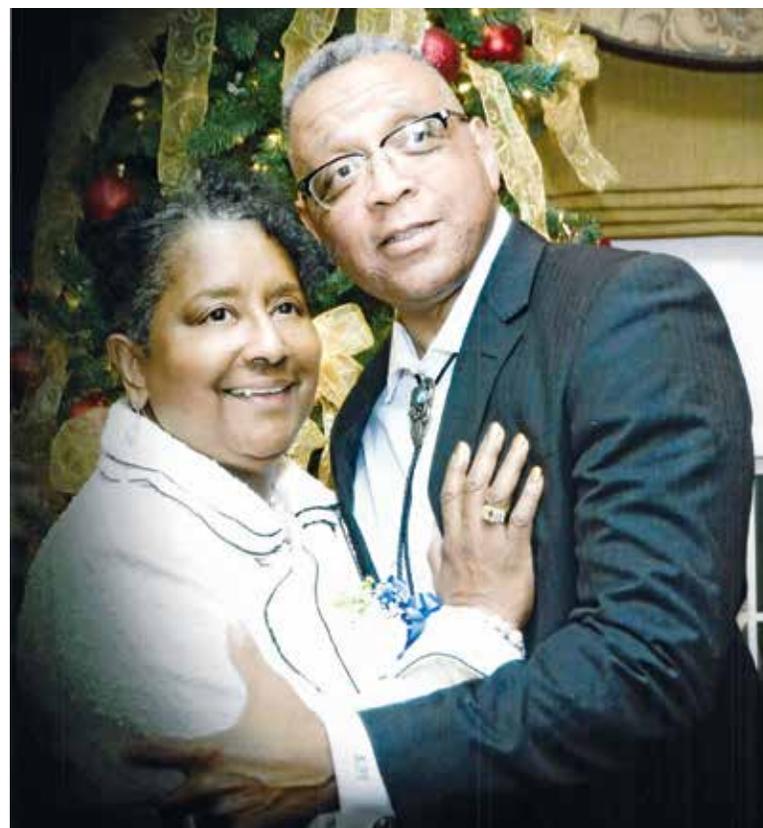
Here are examples of how the system has attacked the pastor.

The Church of the Overcomer lived up to its name by successfully gaining tax exempt status after a decade of court battles. “It has been a long horrible ordeal,” said the Pastor. “We weren’t doing anything different then we were doing for the past 10 years.”

The Delaware County Board of Assessment had issued a ruling that two additional parcels of church land, which paid approximately \$10,000 in taxes annually, would also be tax exempt, beginning January 1. “One of those parcels has a building that serves as an office, outreach center and transitional housing unit, while the other provides additional beds for those who need help getting their feet under them,” said the pastor.

The city of Philadelphia was gunning for Pastor Collins. He called in Rev. Edward Pinkney from Benton Harbor, Michigan to be the keynote speaker at a meeting held on November 22-24. The purpose was to educate and inform the general public of Philadelphia about the historical challenges faced by those who have engaged in activism and non-traditional pursuits of justice.

Speakers also included Cheri Honkala, founder of the Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign, who has been arrested hundreds of times in the struggle for economic justice and housing. She gave a tremendous speech about how we can help Pastor Keith and his wife. Then came Sister Margaret McKenna, founder of the New Jerusalem Recovery Center in North Philadelphia. She was an original member of the Plowshares movement and served time in Federal prison for her anti-war effort. She was amazing. Next was Sister Pam Africa, who fought for justice for the Move family after



Pastor Keith Collins and wife Carolyn, who stand for justice for the poor, were arrested and need support. PHOTO/DONATED

the 1985 assault and bombing of a Move home that killed 11 Move members. She has also been a leading advocate for journalist Mumia Abu Jamal, often referred to as the most political prisoner in the world. Sister Pam Africa spoke loud and clear; “We must defend our soldiers at all cost.”

Free the innocent

Editor’s note: The following is a speech by New Orleans activist Ted Quant, one of many given at the “Unanimous is Not Enough” Rally on October 6 at the Louisiana State Capitol in Baton Rouge. The rally demanded that the tens of thousands of innocent citizens still incarcerated by the Jim Crow 10/2 verdict law, which Louisiana voters got rid of in the 2018 election, be given pardons or new trials.

NEW ORLEANS, LA — We are here today, standing in an unbroken line of march from slavery to freedom. Every step forward has been met with massive resistance, including legal and extra-legal terror. The for-profit prison industrial complex of legalized slavery is the rotten fruit of this history.

Our fight for justice for the victims of the unconstitutional 10-2 verdicts is part and parcel of this fight for freedom. This struggle, like our history, contains the elements of one step forward, two steps back.

We must learn this lesson from the defeat of reconstruction. The victories of reconstruction were followed by its violent terroristic defeat. The white supremacists crowned this victory with the 1898 explicitly racist Louisiana Constitutional Convention and the infamous Supreme Court Plessy v. Ferguson decision legalizing segregation. Vagrancy laws were passed that made poverty a crime and poor blacks were rounded up and enslaved in the convict lease system. The 13th Amendment allows slavery for people convicted of crimes. This was the genesis of the modern-day system of mass incarceration and prisons for profit today.

Not until last year did we win the victory over the 10-2 legacy of the racist 1898 constitutional convention. But that victory is incomplete as people convicted under this racist law are still unjustly incarcerated. They must be freed or given new trials. That is what is just and right and legal.

At the same time, if we are not constantly fighting for our rights, we are losing our rights. Every victory can be reversed. One step forward two steps back is in our history. We must defend this victory and go on the offensive. We must organize and educate and attack with our votes the politicians that attack us with their votes.

We must ask, “who stands for freeing the unjustly con-



CARTOON BY AN INMATE DRAWN FOR BELINDA PARKER BROWN OF LOUISIANA UNITED INTERNATIONAL

victed? Who votes for providing for the needs of the poor? Who votes for regulations that prevent the environmental poisoning our people? Who votes for medical care as a human right? Who fights for the needs of “the least of these my brethren?”

Our fight for the freedom of the unjustly incarcerated is against the politicians, Black or white, who represent the profiteers of this modern-day enslavement of the prisoners of poverty that fill our prisons.

To defeat them we must organize and fight for power. One of our weapons is our right to vote. Today as few as 20% or 30% of the population votes. This means it takes only 15% of the voting population, plus 1 vote, to rule our lives.

So a very small minority of voters elect the politicians that give billions to the rich and deny everything to the poor. It is time to end this.

We are a majority for justice and equality. We must seize the time, organize, and take power.

Power to the people.

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