

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

MAY 2020, VOLUME 47, NO. 4

peopletribune.org

Nurses protest at Mt. Sinai
Hospital, Manhattan, NY.
Photo/Democracy Now video still.



**FROM
PANDEMIC
TO
ECONOMY
TO
ELECTIONS:
THE
PEOPLE
SAY
HUMANITY
COMES
FIRST!**



Low-wage
workers protest:
Amazon
workers walk
out over safety
and hazard pay
in New York.
Photo /
MakeTheRoadNY



Housing: LA homeless families
take over state-owned homes
Photo / Reclaiming Our Homes

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Welcome to the People's Tribune Digital Edition

This is our first digital edition. We are doing this issue, and probably a number of succeeding issues, in this form in part because of the pandemic crisis, for financial reasons, and to facilitate the digital distribution of the People's Tribune. Please remember that we are supported entirely by donations, and we do still need your continued financial support. And please circulate this digital edition to your email lists and through social media. As always, we welcome your feedback at www.peoplestribune.org or info@peoplestribune.org. Thank you!

Designed by Mauricio Rivera / Rivera Design & Illustration

Resistance mounts as a failing system kills us

As stories in this digital edition of the People's Tribune show, the economic and public health catastrophe now gripping America is exposing a for-profit system and a government that doesn't give a damn about people's lives and is not competent to deal with the crisis. But we also see the unprecedented outrage, humanitarianism and growing resistance by the people.

The pandemic has the greatest impact on the most vulnerable, who the government refuses to protect: the homeless, people of color (especially African Americans and Native Americans), people without health care, the elderly, low-wage workers, prisoners in crowded jails, immigrants in detention centers, health care workers without proper protection, and so on. Likewise the economic crisis is forcing many people to do without income or assistance they depend on, increasing hunger (while government allows food to be destroyed), and making people homeless or leaving them homeless (while empty hotels and apartments stand vacant). The economic crisis could well kill more people than the virus.

The net effect is a genocidal assault against our people, and especially against those that the billionaires who run this country want to eliminate: people whose labor is no longer needed in an increasingly automated economy.

The for-profit system paved the way for the disaster with decades of hospital closings, cuts in the public health system and social safety net, denial of health insurance to millions, having no adequate national stockpile of emergency medical supplies, diversion of trillions in public funds to the military and the wealthy, and the squandering of capital on an orgy of speculation in the financial markets while automation and off-shoring of jobs left millions in poverty.

The lack of a coordinated national response to the virus by the federal government led to the disgraceful lack of testing and the chaotic competition among states for scarce medical supplies. Meanwhile, the government hands out trillions of dollars to big business, while giving crumbs to the workers, small businesses, and state and local governments.

But the people are fighting for their lives, organizing, making demands on government for nationalized health care, for food and an income, rent relief, release of vulnerable prisoners, etc., and for a coordinated national response to the crisis that ensures the health and economic well-being of all people. People are also thinking and talking about building a whole new society based on cooperation, not competition for profits, and where humanity comes first. We can't go back to what was. — *The Editors*

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From pandemic to economy to elections: The people say humanity comes first!

By People's Tribune

"While this campaign is coming to an end, our movement is not."

Those words spoken by U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders during a live-streamed speech April 8 ended the contest for the Democratic presidential nomination. They came in the midst of a coronavirus crisis that is proving the most important plank in Sanders' program: America needs health care for all!

During the race for the Democratic nomination, some candidates discussed serious national problems, issues now even more urgent as the pandemic unfolds. The Bernie Sanders campaign elevated "Medicare For All" into the national conversation. Sanders' campaign emboldened people to fight for the basic human rights to health care, education, decent wages, housing, and other essentials of life. Andrew Yang's Humanity First campaign pointed out how technology is increasingly replacing human labor, proposing a universal basic income in response.

These life-and-death issues existed well before the 2020 presidential campaign began. Built on the firm foundation of the many struggles for change which preceded it, the 2020 Bernie Sanders campaign in particular helped congeal the somewhat dispersed battles for health care, confronting climate change, free college, public education, immigrants' rights, housing, and other issues into a more united national struggle. This is now becoming a full-blown movement to transform a country reeling from the coronavirus and the deepening economic crisis. Bernie Sanders' exit from the presidential race did not and could not end this movement because it's made up of people who simply have no choice but to fight for change.

The coronavirus has ripped the covers off a rotten system. This country was disfigured by massive, historic inequality, a woefully inadequate health care system, gross racial disparities, and spreading poverty long before the virus emerged, but the pandemic has intensified all the country's problems and exposed them to the light of day.

The pandemic has dramatically increased widespread misery. It has exposed the total failure of America's private health care system and for-profit economy. As cities and states scramble to obtain essential equipment like ventilators and masks, heroic health care workers struggle to aid desperately ill patients. Now, with 26 million people filing for unemployment benefits by late April, the country is headed toward the highest poverty rate in more than 50 years.

When the death toll finally begins to decline, we cannot accept

a return to "normal." "Normal" is what created this crisis. We must fight with a vision of a new society as we demand that the government act on behalf of the people. As a start, we should insist that the temporary and partial emergency measures taken at the height of the crisis – things like housing, health care, and prisoner releases – be made permanent and complete.



Children in Colorado fighting to protect the Earth.

Photo / Chris Goodwin

In the effort to hold the government accountable, we should utilize every weapon of influence that our ancestors won for us. One of those is the ballot. The ballot is only one of many tools in the tool kit of social change, but it's an important one – especially this year. The 2020 election will be the most significant in history. No one should sit it out. Every person eligible should vote – despite the obstacles.

In the 2020 elections, we have to find a way at the national, state, and local levels to defend the progressive program advocated in the primaries by Bernie Sanders and other candidates while at the same time doing everything humanly possible to defeat Donald Trump and the other advocates of an outright fascist program. As the coronavirus crisis so graphically demonstrates, nothing less than the future of humanity is at stake.

We would like to hear our readers' views on how to respond to the coronavirus crisis and the 2020 election. To comment, please e-mail info@peopletribune.org or go to: www.peopletribune.org

Stop Silencing Doctors: A Covid Clinician Manifesto

By Dr. Zubin Damania, on YouTube
(Stanford-trained physician), #SilentNoMore

I've heard about the firing of Dr. Ming Lin in Washington state, physician and ER doctor . . . for speaking out about the complete lack of PPE and protection for front line staff...

As clinicians, as the tribe of healthcare, Covid 19 will be the catalyst that burns this broken system to the ground.

When you have a dominator hierarchy where the profession is run by MBAs at the top getting ridiculous salaries, who have never touched a patient—I'm not talking about clinician leaders or those organizations around the country so well run as a team, where everyone has a voice and is practicing together in the service of patients and each other, that's called health 3.0. That's not what we have in most institutions in the country.

What we have is a scenario where a business person turns [our] beautiful sacred calling into dollars and cents and yachts and bonuses and golden Parachutes. And then when a crisis happens, where we are called on to sacrifice our lives in service of this calling, they say 'you can't have a voice.' Ok, this ends today. This is the end of the administrative technocracy that has destroyed medicine. Covid 19 will wash this filth back into the sea . . .

We on the front lines of healthcare will hold every single leader accountable when this is over. . . We will never forget. . . We demand . . . an end to gag orders . . . to non-clinical leadership telling us how to care for patients . . . to administrative technocracy, to HIPAA . . . used as a sword against clinicians who need to speak out . . . You say you're worrying about patient privacy. No. You're worried about someone figuring out how much you make and how little you do for patients... we demand you be fired, instead of us . . . an end to nurse slavery, they are not commodities, cost centers; [they're the] beating heart of medicine, part of our team . . . and we demand . . . every person in the team has a voice, is practicing at the top of their training, and collaborating with us to support not just our patients but each other . . .

We would like ...to actually have quality science be a thing . . . [and have a] focus on preventative. The Covid will be the catalyst to bring it down and the new will emerge . . . technology will enable our human relationship . . .

The above are excerpts from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mvlqh0JN55M> ■

We should nationalize the health care system, says nurse

By People's Tribune

In April, workers at Harlem Hospital held a protest over hospital policy: using the same mask for five 12-hour shifts (60 hours); no sick leave and told to work with virus symptoms and no testing. Nurses worry they are trying to help heal people but could be doing the exact opposite. . . Below are excerpts from an interview on Democracy, Now with Sarah Dowd, a registered nurse who treats Covid-19 patients.



Sarah Dowd, a registered nurse who treats Covid-19 patients, helped organize a protest in front of Harlem Hospital in NYC.

Still shot, Democracy, Now!

I work at a public hospital within the Health and Hospitals Corporation system. We rely on public funding that has been cut continuously over the past several decades. We're looking at a system of healthcare, not just in New York, but throughout the country, that prioritizes extracting a profit . . . people [are] running the system that are . . . absorbed with their bottom line, and the politicians who write the policy are owned by them. . . And really, the people that suffer are the people on the frontline and the patients.

And so, it's been really interesting to hear this idea of nationalizing the healthcare system come out of this, because right now we're dealing with a scarcity of resources and disjointed resources. And with a nationalized system, [we have the] ability to share resources across the system as needs arise.

This is not a time to be sitting on the sidelines. We need to make big demands of the system, that it be changed in a way that can make it so that in the future we're not cut to the bone in a situation like this, that we have a robust healthcare system. I support Medicare for all, absolutely . . . and even further measures such as nationalizing the healthcare system. ■

Low wage workers organize to save themselves and all of us

Compiled by People's Tribune from online sources

Workers from Amazon, Walmart, Whole Foods and other grocery stores, transit workers, delivery drivers and domestic workers considered essential employees are organizing walkouts or staying home because they aren't being given proper PPE or hazard pay while endangering themselves, their families, and customers from possible exposure to Covid-19. Migrant farmworkers, some of the lowest paid workers with no protection, are speaking out and standing up for their rights. Below are quotes from some of these workers.

Amazon workers walk out in protest over health protection and hazard pay.
Photos/ Facebook



Chris Smalls, fired from an Amazon warehouse for organizing a walk out over lack of safety for workers, said: “The guidelines I was fired for [violating] did not exist in March. Instead of taking care of employees, they focus attention on me . . . I was the sacrificial lamb. I’d do it all over again to make sure awareness of front liners [workers] is out there.” Asked if coworkers are intimidated by his firing, he said, “This time it empowered us. Support is uplifting and motivated us more than anything. I may have started a revolution.”

John Samuelson, Transit Workers Union: [Dozens of “essential” transit workers have died from Covid-19 across the country.] “We’re not getting what we need to protect ourselves. We’re calling on the federal government to intervene; to establish national standards in every municipality and every public agency that provides transit. Workers have only themselves to depend on right now . . . [corporate entities] don’t give a rat’s

ass about worker safety.”

Bertha Morales, Oxnard, CA harvests cilantro: “We are afraid to get sick. If one family member is infected they quarantine everyone. Who’s going to go out and work?” [The 2 ½ million farmworkers in the U.S. are “essential” workers maintaining the food supply chain. They already have the lowest poverty wages and the Trump administration is working on a plan to slash the wages even further for the quarter million guest migrant workers. These workers are demanding better conditions in the fields.]

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Florida is circulating a petition which states: “Make no mistake; Immokalee is like dead tinder in the path of a wildfire.” They are asking Governor Desantis to build a field hospital and want resources allocated to their community in this crisis. The nearest hospital is 40 miles away and they have no transportation to get there. “Instead,” says Gerardo Rejes Chavez, “we are met with news of cutting our wages. Our jobs are considered essential but we aren’t treated that way.”

Dilcia de la Cruz, part-time cleaner at Philadelphia’s Aspira Charter School: [Hundreds of low-wage workers in Philadelphia attended a virtual town hall to request a coronavirus relief fund to help the tens of thousands of low wage workers left jobless with little hope of public aid. Dilcia de la Cruz doesn’t know if she has a job anymore now that schools have shut down. They were told the city doesn’t have any money]. She said, “They told us we don’t have to go to work, and now we don’t know if they’re going to pay us.”

Zach A. works at a Walmart pharmacy in Midwest. He was forced to sign a liability waiver saying he wouldn’t sue the store if he got sick.

Jennifer Suggs, a Walmart cashier in South Carolina:

“Walmart’s profit margins matter more than us. We’re not essential. We’re sacrificial. I will be replaced if I die from this. I don’t have a mask or gloves. The only thing I have is a stupid blue vest.”

Maya Smith, a worker at a Walmart in New Orleans: “My manager said customers saw our masks and kept asking if we were sick, so they banned us from wearing them in the store. All they care about is if we clock in and clock out.” [Maya has teamed up with Walmart workers around the country to demand that Walmart offer hazard pay, paid sick leave, healthcare and protective gear for all employees. She says, it’s unfair that the people who need the most protection are getting the least.]

Compiled by People's Tribune from on-line sources: Democracy, Now!; www.no.org, Facebook, billypenn.com, Rising with Krystal Ball and Saagar Enjeti. ■



Photo / Donated

The Santa Cruz Police Rangers and local police drive the unhoused from street to street hour after hour. Rumors of hotel rooms are chased day in and day out in search of warm tap of water to wash your hands and fresh water to drink. Locked toilets and locked hearts of the city authorities make an even more dire situation for hundreds who live 'unsheltered in place.'

—Keith McHenry, Co-founder of the global movement Food Not Bombs.

Corona and homeless

By Maowunyo de Asis ("Needa Bee")

OAKLAND CA — I have a compromised immune system because of my multiple sclerosis. That has not stopped me from spending a lot of time in deplorable conditions in Oakland curbside communities.

So now folks are coming to me with questions and concerns about how do I interact with the encampments during this Corona epidemic? Am I not scared for my health?

I've been scared and deeply concerned for my health and the health of everyone living/serving curbside for years. YEARS! And whatever health/sanitation measures government agencies, nonprofits, the health industry and concerned citizens are finally taking now should have happened years ago. And guess what? It's still not enough.

Hopefully this sudden concern for health and public safety in the encampments is maintained. And how much concern is about actually valuing the humanity of those living curbside? How much is motivated by the panic? ■

House people now, and permanently!

As the Corona virus sweeps its deadly way across the country, homeless-led groups are demanding real housing and calling for taking over empty spaces, whether 'given' or not. One of the most glaring failures of local and national governments, in a system that cares nothing for workers companies don't need, is their failure to protect homeless people, and everyone, by placing them in some of the hundreds of thousands of hotel rooms standing empty everywhere. Though there have been calls by medical professionals and homeless advocates to do so immediately, and some like California's governor have given it lip service, little has actually been done, as the death toll mounts. In San Francisco, even after outbreaks in two crowded shelters, the mayor said that putting homeless people inside the city's many vacant hotels is 'untenable'; as people pitch tents near City Hall. In Las Vegas, city officials drew a grid on a parking lot for people to sleep on, in the shadow of empty hotel casinos. And if people are placed in hotel rooms, will they be kicked back onto the streets, to continue dying there, when it is considered 'safe' again? Housing should be immediate for all, and permanent. As the saying goes, 'We only get what we are organized to take'. — *The Editors*

Homeless Tent City: "It's A Modern Day Genocide"

By "Lil Bit,"

resident of Roosevelt & Desplaines Tent City, Chicago, IL

Message to the Mayor:

Mayor Lightfoot, you tellin people to stay home — how's the homeless gonna stay home without homes? I done walked down State Street, Madison Street, it's people, they're staying in hallways, doorways. You can't quarantine yourself if you staying in hallways, cause you getting arrested... What are the homeless supposed to do? ... And I feel it's a modern genocide. Y'all want to get rid of the elderly and the homeless, so ain't nothing left but the middle class and the high class. It's a modern-day genocide.

We need housing. [There are] 2,000 apartments that's open. Open them up for housing for the homeless! On every corner you see somebody panhandling. And it ain't never been that way in Chicago. I grew up in Chicago.

Continues on next page ...

Homeless people are not drug addicts, they're not alcoholics, none of that. They done fell on their luck, and they can't pay this expensive-ass rent! A studio is going, like, \$700 to \$800 a month. If you makin \$10/hour, you can't afford it.

Don't nobody wanna be out here livin in no tent! Cause we're freezing to death out here in these tents. If we ain't got propane, we're freezing to death. Or 4, 5, 6 in a tent, keeping body heat to warm up.



Lil Bit, resident of Chicago's Roosevelt and Desplaines Tent City, displays a banner in honor of Wayne Warren, who froze to death February 15, 2020.

Photo / Donated

Remembering Wayne, Tent City Resident and Army Veteran Who Recently Passed:

I been knowing Wayne for 3 years. He always had a cigar in his mouth. And the shelter kicked him out [unfairly]... Y'all kicked him out, so he got to be out here on the street, and he froze to death out here. An army veteran. Where's the army at? Where's the government at to help this man? ...We had to find his body froze. That's terrible shit to live through... don't nobody want to wake up and shake a person next to them - "Ay, get up" - and they ain't getting up cause they done froze to death! We need propane out here, we need water, we need underwear, we need socks, hand sanitizer...

Wayne was discharged from one of the major shelters in Chicago, after which he went back to Tent City, and about two weeks later, on the morning of February 15th, he died in his tent of exposure to cold. "Lil Bit" is an organizer with the Campaign to re-establish the Homeless Union of Chicago. To get involved, contact chicagohomelessunion@gmail.com. ■

Reclaiming Our Homes in Los Angeles

By Steve Teixeira and Xochitl Palomera

LOS ANGELES, CA — Coronavirus slammed into America like a winter hurricane, driving everyone to shelter – if they had any. In the pandemic's first days, people defended their communities, because the government did not.

On March 14, homeless people and their neighbors launched a campaign to take over vacant State-owned homes, as activists opened the first house for two moms with kids, and a 64-year-old welder who lived in his van. They called their movement Reclaiming Our Homes, and on March 18 they put people into eleven more homes.



Mother and daughters at state-owned home taken over in Los Angeles in March, 2020.

Photo / Xochitl Palomera

"I'm a native Angeleno," said Reclaimer Martha Escudero. "When I was growing up Skid Row was just downtown; now it's the whole state." She and her two daughters, 8 and 10 years old, had been couch-surfing for 18 months between the homes of family and friends. Then activists told her that Oakland moms had taken over a vacant home owned by a company that bought homes to "flip" them for the highest price possible.

"Moms4housing in Oakland were my inspiration. I thought 'Wow, we could do this.' She agreed to join the Eastside Café organization's campaign to put people into homes the state had purchased for planned freeways that had been cancelled. The March 18 action started with a rally at a Caltrans home moved into by Ruby Gordillo and her three kids "With this public health crisis and this housing crisis, we need every vacant house to be a home for those who don't have a safe

Continues on next page . . .

and stable place to sleep in...a home which the state had kept people from using, despite the twin epidemics of virus and homelessness.”

Under pressure from the organizers, several state legislators and the Los Angeles mayor Eric Garcetti called on the state to make Caltrans homes available to those in need. At the same time, the California Highway Patrol began stationing a fleet of vehicles to guard the state homes that had not yet been occupied.

To learn how to help, contact: www.reclaimingourhomes.org (see the Gofundme section) or TEXT: “RECLAIM” to 323-214-3761 to get updates on how to support the Movement.

Steve Teixeira is a writer, editor and retired university educator, and Xochitl Palomera is an activist, educator, community wellness advocate and healer. ■

KC Tenants and the Power of Community

‘We’re trying to take you with us,’
says Tiana Caldwell

By Danny Alexander

KANSAS CITY, MO — Only a year old, KC Tenants managed to pass a Tenants’ Bill of Rights in Kansas City, Missouri and inspire similar organizing in Kansas. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, they have fought for the bill’s enforcement, held organizing workshops, established a hotline, and held a statewide online rally of 200 (and 2000 more viewers) calling on Governor Mike Parson for a rent and mortgage suspension. Leaders among leaders, Tiana Caldwell and her family stood central to all of this action while dealing with an eviction, loss of work and Tiana’s second battle with ovarian cancer.

Tiana and husband Derrick first faced cancer when their 24-year-old Stevie was a baby. This time, their son A.J. was 10. “When it came again,” Tiana explains, “I was really scared, but we decided to fight. Then the bills started piling up, and we eventually lost our home.”

Derrick “tried every agency and every avenue for our crisis,” and met Tara Raghuvier, an expert on the housing struggle, who invited Tiana onto a local radio show.

“We got a lot of calls, and it took off quicker than expected.” KC Tenants first met February 17, 2019 with 12 people who soon grew to 60 attending each week. Caldwell says KC Tenants helped her through this bout with cancer. “Whatever needed to be done, KC Tenants have shown up.”

Caldwell’s vision is core to KC Tenants. If she ran the world,

“Everyone would have housing. There’d be no landlords. Communities would have spaces for people to come with problems and solve them as a collective. Success would be measured from where people are on the bottom. Our kids would be immaculately and imaginatively educated.”



(Right) Tiana Caldwell and son A.J. at a KC Tenants rally.

Photo/Jeremy RizuchRizuch

Though COVID has made everything harder, Caldwell understands struggle. “Everything from the Civil Rights Movement to the fight for LGBTQ rights has seen opposition. Change is hard, but it’s necessary. The world is changing, and if you don’t change with it, that’s when you begin to feel left behind. We’re trying to take you with us.” ■

Homeless in Vegas

By R. Joshua Collins

My name is Pastor R. Joshua Collins, and I am an ex Mathematics Instructor from Spokane, Washington. JESUS called me and empowered me to live over ten years with the homeless in various cities along the west coast, and one of the cities where I was treated the worst was in Las Vegas, Nevada. Nearly 40 times I was arrested in Las Vegas for preaching and doing peaceful protests for the homeless. In Las Vegas I remember laying back on a park bench as a homeless person, and having a police officer tell me to sit up. I refused and was taken to jail. This happened twice, and on the third time this officer came to me, he refused to arrest me. Sometimes I would sleep outside city hall and get arrested on purpose in protest of their abuse of those in need, and was also arrested during an Occupy Wall Street protest in Las Vegas for blocking a police van that was taking

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Covid-19: More lives of homeless at risk

While there are tens of thousands of hotel rooms standing empty all over Las Vegas, the city drew these grids on a parking lot for homeless people to sleep and 'distance' themselves!

Photo /
Video still from
social media



the homeless
keep on dying
on our streets of gold

— Sarah Menefee

protesters to jail. I often was arrested for street preaching on sidewalks near Casinos also. On my 24th arrest I beat the city of Las Vegas as my own attorney after doing 22 days in jail for supposedly interfering with a pedestrian on a sidewalk. You typically needed to wait at least 21 days in jail to fight cases unless you could bail out, which normally I could not. Since I was always fighting my cases and at times lost some due to corrupt judges, you can just imagine how much time I did (some of that time in an isolation cell). Currently with the help of a local attorney we are creating a homeless camp in Buena Park that is completely legal. Your prayers for this ministry and for those trapped in addiction are greatly appreciated, and I do hope to hear from you soon!

My You Tube channel is "R. Joshua Collins," and my email is servingjesus99212@yahoo.com. ■

Unfreedom for the poor

By Cathleen Williams

SACRAMENTO, CA — No one can predict the steps various agencies across California will take to remove unhoused people from their encampments once the Covid crisis begins to abate. But the phrase "emergency shelters" cropping up suggests that homelessness can be compared to a flood or a fire or disaster. In emergencies, you have to restrict freedom, increase control, impose deprivation and regimentation.

According to the Bay Area's online site *Curbed*, proposals for "centralized" facilities have been "gaining momentum." "Centralized" means massive concentrations of unhoused people. "Fairgrounds, decommissioned hospitals, and Caltrans properties" are the types of sites being surveyed for these shelters, according to *Curbed*. Anywhere but the cities and towns where unhoused people have history, family, and community.

The Trump officials who visited L.A. last fall apparently discussed a plan to move 10,000 unhoused residents of Skid Row to a vacant building near the airport. Mayor Eric Garcetti says the city is working closely with Trump on homeless solutions.

One California entrepreneur has even proposed building an entire new city for unhoused people at a cost of \$3 billion. It's going to be really far away and hard to get to.

The policy of crowding people into isolated facilities is called "warehousing." It's *relatively* inexpensive. And warehousing gets rid of unhoused people, forcing them out of sight, invisible to passersby.

And the plan is also unlawful, cruel, and absurd.

One nonprofit director pointed out that this was tried before. 120,000 Japanese Americans were forced into camps during World War II. Also, with relocation, "people are falling into homelessness. Every day in Los Angeles County, roughly 130 people are housed, but 150 people become homeless." (*Curbed*)

Robert Marbut, chief in the U.S. Interagency on Homelessness founded a vast shelter complex in San Antonio in 2010. Marbut's policy is the "'velvet hammer' strategy—that emphasizes

banning panhandling, centralizing services for the homeless in massive facilities far from urban centers, and providing food and shelter only as a reward for good behavior." (*Curbed*)

The people targeted for warehousing? I would say they have just begun to fight. ■

By Scott Bird

We stand in line with a heavy dose of the unfettered capitalist frontier while the cops race their way through town dodging buses and screaming at a little unhoused lady crossing Market at Duboce with her bags full of nothing.



Voices of Chicago tenants for a rent freeze

On April 1 in Chicago, the Autonomous Tenants Union (ATU), in conjunction with the Democratic Socialists of America, the Lift the Ban Coalition and others, livestreamed a Chicago Rent Freeze Virtual Town Hall to hear from tenants who had suddenly lost jobs and the ability to pay rent because of the pandemic. Below are a few voices from tenant testimony. The ATU called for a rent freeze for all of Chicago and Illinois, and immediately housing the homeless. (Hear the entire livestream on the [ATU's Facebook page](#).)

"Please freeze rent in Illinois. I am a server and because of coronavirus my restaurant has been shut down. I have no income coming in and will not be able to pay rent until I am able to go back to work." — **Heather**

"Please! I have my own rent and my mother's rent to cover. Please freeze rents." — **Frida**

"[Undocumented immigrants] are not eligible for many of the resources sent to them [and] they're struggling to meet their basic needs for the children, which is food among other things [and rent.] I think as a sanctuary city . . . [relief benefits] should also apply to immigrant families. These people contribute to the economy, but yet . . . people with no citizenship, they're being left behind . . . It's really important that there's no distinction between us or them because we're all struggling on the same page." — **Vanessa**

"[My boyfriend and I both lost our jobs.] It's April 1, and I have \$400 in my account, and \$1,600 is supposed to go to the landlord. The social safety net is not coming through for us. What we really need to do is get our government officials who are supposed to be taking care of us to get on board and to figure out that this is affecting people now." — **Autumn**

Illustration / Rent Strike 2020

New tenants movement takes its first steps

By JC Collivan

As businesses shutter and entire industries shake, workers around the country are faced with an impossible dilemma: go to work and risk infection, or stay at home and risk eviction. The choice is unconscionable, forcing people to decide between their right to health and their right to shelter. Tragically, under our current social system these are not

human rights but privileges with price-tags. While health experts plead for everyone to take all possible precautions, bosses still expect our obedience and landlords still demand their cut.

But on April 1, this outrageous status quo was challenged in a quiet but powerful way: 31% of American renters did not pay rent, according to the National Multifamily Housing Council.

Continues on next page . . .

Whether out of organized or spontaneous defiance, this act should be recognized as the sign of popular resistance it is. Such a courageous refusal challenges the logic behind landlords' right to our wages, laying bare a cold truth — rent is extortion, premised on the ever-present threat of eviction.

The pandemic is a crisis for landlords as well, upending the steady racket they usually depend on. In Los Angeles, word has spread of a landlord whose threatening mass-email, sternly warning against tenant organizing, unwittingly put more than 300 tenants in touch with one another—resulting in a tenant union organized in short order and in full force. Meanwhile, new tenant unions have spread like wildfire from Southside Chicago to Brooklyn, New York, according to the Chicago Tribune and the New York Times. Such reports testify to the state of pandemonium currently gripping the landlord class, as well as the people's creative initiative even under desperate circumstances.

While this initial rent strike is a promising sign, serious training, coordination, and community support will be necessary for the young tenant resistance movement to succeed. But there are reasons to be optimistic. In city after city, new grassroots coalitions have sprung up, taking up the call for a rent moratorium and homes for all. Meanwhile, the burgeoning Autonomous Tenants Union Network (ATUN) has united Tenant Unions from across the entire North American continent to collaborate on a series of townhalls and coordinating assemblies. If this project can successfully connect with the millions of striking tenants and provide the support needed to protect frontline tenants from eviction, we may see at last the formation of a new weapon for people's liberation: an organized and militant Tenants Movement, capable of breaking the corporate monopoly on housing. ■

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Chicago Teachers Union VP: 'We have to be bolder'

Editor's note: Below are excerpts from Chicago Teachers Union VP **Stacy Davis Gates**, speaking during the Chicago Rent Freeze Town Hall April 1

"This past fall we [teachers] were on strike for 11 days and one of the demands [was] affordable housing. What Covid-19 did is expose the realities . . . [that] the social safety net doesn't exist. . . under the guise of austerity, the public sector has been marginalized, the ability to have employment that actually pays a fair wage has also been marginalized.

"In this moment we have to be bolder . . . we have to take a bigger megaphone to this. This is not simply about getting through Covid-19. It is actually about setting forth a path that restarts what it means to have a social contract in the city of Chicago, the state of Illinois, and this entire country. And we have to organize across our sectors, and make sure that the power we have been building in our silos, that we connect that power, and if necessary, we can shut things down like this virus has shut things down . . . And that is the work of our union [CTU] . . . and in coalition with community groups and other labor.

"The recovery we need has to look like rent control . . . look like a moratorium on mortgages and rent until people are back on their feet . . . and are employable.

"You know, be careful because our enemies are mobilizing . . . the parrots for the billionaire class are talking about marginalizing what doesn't even exist anymore. So what I want to say to folks is that this is exactly what we're supposed to be doing. Let this provide the opportunities to . . . organize and build together . . . [and] when this shelter in place order is . . . rescinded, move together to make sure recovery happens in the places we need it to . . .

"I'm very, very, proud that we have real elected officials willing to put their reputations on the line and organize with us . . . but the power is in the people, and we're going to have to continue to organize . . . reciprocate aid to each other and . . . remake Chicago into the Chicago we need, not what they, the billionaires, the elite class, want it to be, but what we need it to be. I'm humbled to talk with you and I'm willing to fight with you."

Editor's note: The Chicago Teachers Union strike last year fought for affordable housing for their members and for the 17,000 homeless school children in Chicago. The strike raised the question of what would a new America envision for its children? ■

Capitalist pyramid scheme may come crashing down 'There will be no recovery. There will be social unrest.'

By Dave Ransom

The economy was on thin ice even before the virus hit. Wall Street commentators said all it would take to push it over the edge was a "black-swan" event — something unexpected that came from the sky.

The coronavirus is that event.

Since the 2008 financial crisis, central banks (including the U.S. Federal Reserve) have been pushing trillions of dollars into the capitalist economy to keep it afloat. They have put huge amounts in cheap loans into the hands of banks, corporations, and speculators.

While the rest of us have struggled to make ends meet, these capitalists have been using that money to make more money, widening the class divide.

But robotic production has been lowering both wages and profits in industry, so there have been few places for that cash to go productively.

Instead, corporations have used it to buy back stock, thus artificially inflating stock prices. Hedge funds have thrown billions into the stock market, too, further driving up prices. And they have thrown billions into buying the "junk" bonds that zombie corporations issue to keep themselves afloat. Speculators also flowed billions into the one thing they could

still reap profit from — real estate. They drove up rents and housing prices, sucking the last remaining dollars out of working-class pockets.

Now, that pyramid scheme seems about to come crashing down.

"The risks have been building in the financial system for decades," the Financial Times wrote in early March. "most striking in the U.S., where corporate debt has risen from \$3.3 trillion before the financial crisis to \$6.5 trillion last year."

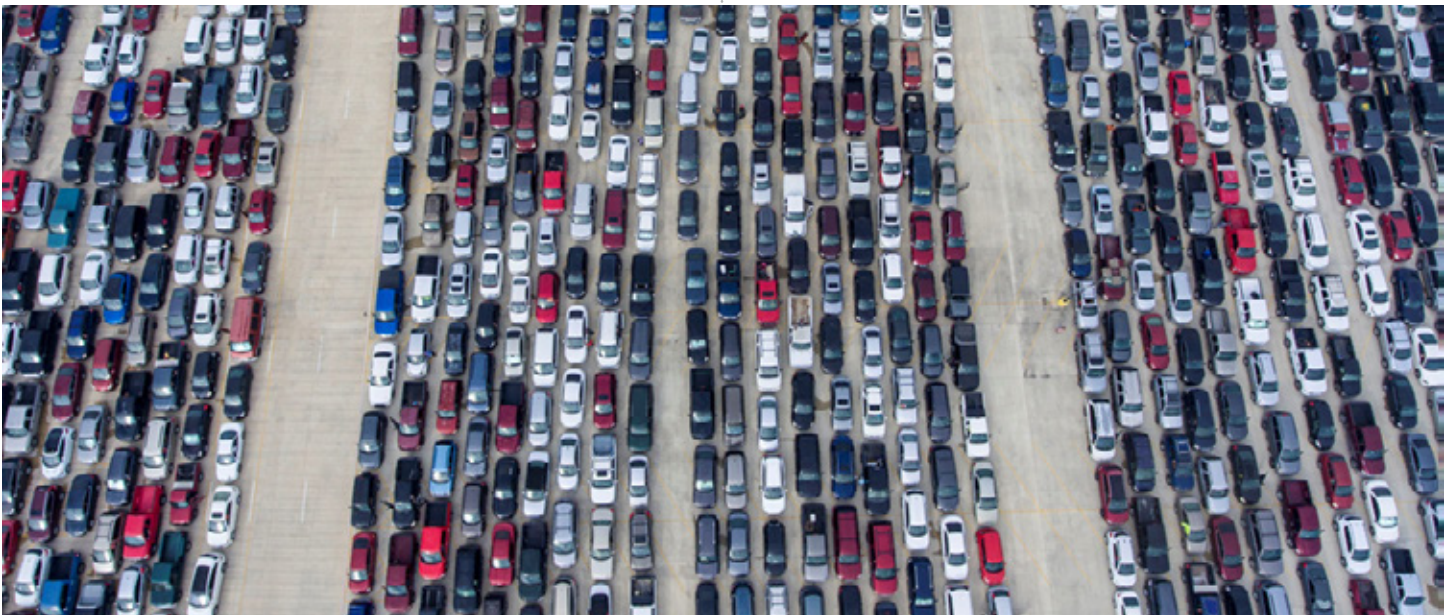
With businesses laying off and shutting down due to the pandemic, they foresee a domino effect — corporations defaulting on their bond payments, speculators (who used bank loans to buy those bonds) also defaulting, thus throwing a wrench into the whole banking system.

With the whole capitalist system in collapse, it would be worse than 2008 — by far. Even Trump administration officials now predict 20%-30% unemployment. It could be much worse.

What happens then? One of Europe's biggest capitalists, industrialist Jacob Wallenberg explained. "There will be no recovery," he said. "There will be social unrest."

In effect, it will be a brave new world, one in which, as the old song says, we the people "bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old."

Not a bad outcome, when you think of it. ■



April 9, 2020, San Antonio, Texas: 10,000 people wait in their cars for the San Antonio Food Bank to begin food distribution. The need for emergency food aid has exploded due to the pandemic. It is estimated that 130 million more people worldwide face starvation. There is plenty of food. Food is a basic human right.

PHOTO/ © [William Luther](#) San Antonio Express-News via ZUMA

Blood On Their Hands

By Nicolas Lampert

Editor's note: This article was written before the April 7 Wisconsin primary.

MILWAUKEE, WI — No one should ever have to choose between protecting their health and exercising their right to vote, but that is the scenario Wisconsin voters face as the Wisconsin Supreme Court rejected [Democrat] Governor Tony Evers decision to move the primary election from April 7 to mid-June.

The Republican legislators, led by [Wisconsin Assembly Speaker Robin] Vos and [State Senate Majority Leader Scott] Fitzgerald (the same crooks who brought us ACT 10 in 2010, which stripped collective bargaining rights from public workers) pushed to have the Primary on April 7 despite the state and country being under Stay-at-Home orders during the Covid-19 pandemic. These crooks are trying to steal another Wisconsin Supreme Court seat and they know that having the Primary during a pandemic will produce a low turnout, especially in Milwaukee, where only 5 polling stations out of 180 will be open.

[On April 7] Wisconsin voters [stood] in a two-hour line outside Riverside High School in Milwaukee (shortly after a hail storm) at one of the 5 poll sites that were open in the city. ... Respect to the voters and polls workers who are risking their lives during the Corona Virus epidemic. This election should have been postponed until June had the corrupt Republicans and WI Supreme Court not defied the Governor's orders. This is all about reducing voter turn-out to steal yet another election.

[What's at stake? The most closely watched statewide race is for a seat on the state Supreme Court. Republican Daniel Kelly (endorsed by Trump) and Democrat Jill Karofsky are running (Editor 's note: Karofsky won.) The winner gets a 10-year term in the court, which will likely review a major voter suppression case.]

This has national implications. Republicans have been trying to remove over 200,000 Wisconsin voters from the registration roll for the upcoming November Presidential election and a Republican-leaning Supreme Court could possibly achieve those ends. (Remember that Wisconsin is considered a key swing state that could decide the 2020 Presidential election.) Republicans have long since had to steal elections to win them, but now they are literally endangering public safety. Voters and poll workers are now risking their health (and possibly their lives) to vote, while

potentially spreading the virus to others. April 7, 2020 will go down as the most corrupt, unsafe, undemocratic election in Wisconsin's history.

Nicolas Lampert is a Milwaukee-based interdisciplinary artist, educator and author whose work focuses on themes of social justice and ecology. He is a member of the Just Seeds Artists Cooperative and author of A People's Art History of the United States (2013, The New Press). ■



Graphic by Nicolas Lampert

US Supreme Court curtails Wisconsin voter rights

By People's Tribune

On April 6, the U.S Supreme Court refused to postpone the Wisconsin primary until June, forcing voters to go to the polls in April. The ruling resulted in the disenfranchisement of thousands of Wisconsin voters. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, in her dissent, said, "Either they [Wisconsin voters] will have to brave the polls, endangering their own and others' safety. Or they will lose their right to vote, through no fault of their own." It has now been reported that 19 people who either voted in-person or worked at a polling location during Wisconsin's state elections have tested positive for Covid-19. ■

Los Angeles Bernie Metro Squad: Grassroots Uplifts Sanders

By Betty "Faye" Toto

LOS ANGELES — The Sanders campaign hired me. However, I had worked for Bernie Sanders long before the campaign started.

The grassroots importance during this campaign cycle and the previous cycle is what uplifted Bernie Sanders. It was the people. The organic creativity and the clear commonality, of families in need, between the candidate and his supporters is what energized this campaign. The campaign was a festival, a community gathering. At the rallies it was not what was onstage but the people in the audience that mattered most. When the audience saw ordinary people coming out of their comfort level, it was extraordinary. This organic connection between the voters and the candidate continued to build the social justice atmosphere.

The embrace of the single payer bill inspired people to throw their support to Bernie. He didn't win but we're going to take this and run with it.

The Bernie Metro Squad consists of everyday, ordinary people. We learned dance steps; we wore goofy hats. At the West Hollywood Pride Parade many wanted selfies with us. People were feeling the energy of the campaign. Similar things happened during the People's Rose Parade when people along the parade route joined us for the entire six miles of the parade.

We started as "Feel the Bern" in the San Fernando Valley. People who came out were Latinx, African American, many were over 65, and there were many

high school students who campaigned for Bernie. At Pierce Community College they formed Students for Bernie. These kids witnessed their parents' struggle. At the College they would table for Bernie every week and were successful in petitioning for a voting center at the College.

The next steps for many in the campaign are to start working on mutual aid such as working at food banks and making masks for medical personnel. There are some hard feelings about the elections. Many are not prepared to work for Biden with the same intensity. These Bernie supporters didn't support Bernie's campaign because of his personality but because of his platform. The facts are that Bernie didn't take money from corporations, and worked for years on the issues we all believe in and wasn't an insider. Biden isn't this.

Betty "Faye" Toto is a member of the Bernie Metro Squad. ■



Los Angeles Bernie Metro Squad

Photo / Betty "Faye" Toto

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Earth Day 2020: a fight for survival

By Cathy Talbott

April 22, 2020 marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day where 20 million people demonstrated to increase environmental awareness in America. In 1970, the EPA was established and legislation on pollution, clean water and endangered species was passed.

Fast forward 50 years and Earth Day is no longer a cause for celebration of the progress made in cleaning the environment and holding industries accountable for dumping



Photo/
Brett Jelinek

toxic waste in our rivers and streams, for killing the oceans with plastic waste, oil and harmful chemical dispersants, for polluting land and air by mining and burning fossil fuels and saturating soil with toxic cancer causing pesticides. Instead, the EPA has been captured by corporate forces intent on lifting all regulations on industry to benefit their bottom line.

In the era of rapid climate change and global warming, we now face the deadly coronavirus pandemic linked to the destruction of habitat and forests. Wildfires, devastating hurricanes and tornadoes, and air pollution are threatening all life. Trump's response to the pandemic has been to abolish clean air regulation.

On a positive note, this year, more and more activists want to make oil and gas publicly owned and democratically decide how to transition to a new economy based on clean renewable energy, as in the Green New Deal.

On these pages are articles that illustrate this fight. Send your articles to the People's Tribune at info@peopletribune.org ■

Another victory in fight to stop Keystone XL pipeline

By People's Tribune

A federal judge has ruled that the US Army Corps of Engineers violated the law when it approved a key water crossing permit for TC Energy's Keystone XL tar sands pipeline and many other pipelines nationwide. The ruling invalidates Nationwide Permit 12, prohibiting the Corps from using this fast-tracked approval process for any pipelines nationwide. The ruling could block construction through hundreds of water crossings along the Keystone XL pipeline route. Tribal nations, farmers, ranchers and environmentalists have joined together to fight the Keystone XL pipeline. ([Bold Nebraska.org](http://BoldNebraska.org))

A #People's Bailout Pending Revolution?

By Patrick Baranovskis

CHICAGO, IL — We, the young people of this planet, united with all who suffer under corporate-fascist governments, demand our dignity and lives back. Here in the U.S., we are now demanding so much.

I organize with Sunrise Movement, a youth-led movement demanding a Green New Deal to reverse the climate crisis and create millions of good jobs. In addition, in this new era of the coronavirus pandemic, we've united with 800+ other grassroots organizations calling for a People's Bailout. We demand so much because we know what we're up against: trillions of dollars to "stimulate" the stock market and a bipartisan political establishment interested only in the most meager steps to contain the virus and its economic fallout, while avoidable deaths skyrocket.

Continues on next page . . .



Art by Sam Wallman, Workers Art Collective

As Emily with Sunrise Chicago points out, “When you think about the climate crisis, we are seeing direct links between air pollution and covid-19 deaths. And that is a part of why 70% of the deaths in Chicago have been Black folks, when Black people make up 30% of the population. Obviously we’re continuing to fight for a Green New Deal and other things we desperately need, but not be fighting for those things in a vacuum, but to see [them] as directly and exactly aligned with the crisis.”

While we understand that the U.S. government has always been premised on profits over people, and while we continue to actively engage in efforts to provide Mutual Aid to those whose needs aren’t addressed by the state, we make these demands because we know the government has enormous power and wealth, which, if pushed hard enough, will bend in our favor. It will have to, since the economic system is rapidly developing new technological forces in automation. Production can take place increasingly without human labor. But, without democratic control of it, we will continue to see the basic necessities of life go to waste. Our first demand is health for all people.

In Chicago we are mobilizing Sunrisers to get directly involved providing mutual aid to the unhoused and food insecure. In collaborating with Food Not Bombs, we are seeing how this system would rather throw food in the dumpster than distribute it to hungry people. This was happening before, but now it can’t be tolerated.

While we mourn the campaign to elect Bernie Sanders, we continue to recognize the need for a political revolution which can assure that people, not corporations, control the distribution of the abundance of what people need. A People’s Bailout must be premised on the simple transition our society must now make, from a distribution system where profit rules, to one where people rule. ■

A movement for nationwide ban on water shut offs

Compiled by People’s Tribune from news.trust.org

As a result of grassroots demands, Detroit, which has since been followed by at least 240 cities, has put in place a moratorium on water shutoffs so that all residents can regularly wash their hands amid the coronavirus outbreak. There is now a movement for a nationwide ban on shutoffs. “We’ve been fighting this for six years,” said Maureen Taylor, chairwoman of the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, in an interview with Thomson Reuters Foundation news. She called the city’s move an “instant water-affordability plan”.



“Taylor and other members of a Detroit coalition, the People’s Water Board, have sparked a national conversation around what activists say is a dire need for income-based water billing”, writes Carey L. Biron of Thomson Reuters. Detroit alone has seen tens of thousands of water shutoffs in recent years.

“There is [now] an appetite for a water-affordability plan nationwide,” Taylor said. “People are quite aware that you cannot put together a program where you disengage access to fresh water and sanitation based on people’s ability to pay.”

Food & Water Watch has estimated that some 15 million Americans, or nearly 5% of the population, had their water service cut off in 2016. “And a lack of running water can quickly lead to even larger consequences,” said the group. “You could be evicted, families could be torn apart, it could even be considered child neglect in a number of states.”

“Once you allow an affordability plan like this, how will you go back?” asked Maureen Taylor.

Information for this article is from

news.trust.org/item/20200322092211-ttjec/ ■

West Virginia town goes without water during coronavirus pandemic

Compiled by People's Tribune

"We are out of donations," she said. "We need water. People can't come out and get it, and we can't go out and deliver it while social distancing and quarantining. The National Guard needs to step in and bring us our water." — Tonya Shuler

Paden City, a small town in West Virginia on the Ohio River, was faced with a crisis of poisoned water before the Covid-19 pandemic. For over a decade the city's water supply has been contaminated with the chemical tetrachloroethylene, or PCE. EPA standards considered levels higher than 5 micrograms per liter of water unsafe for humans. Levels have been as high as 49.6. Residents were not informed of this toxicity when it was discovered.

Some of the people fighting for clean water in Paden City, WV.

Photo/FB



A group of women lovingly referred to as the Mama Bears, have stepped up to help their community where the local and state governments have failed them. In addition to raising funds to supply families with clean water and preparing food for many elderly and disabled, the Mama Bears recently started conducting surveys of locals to determine how many residents are suffering from diseases that could be caused or worsened by PCE. Surveys have revealed five cases of ALS, seven cases of MS, eight cases of acute leukemia, four cases of lupus, five cases of brain cancer and numerous cases of breathing difficulties.

"On Feb. 3, a large crowd of residents attended the city council meeting to get information about our water (...) this is when we started getting mixed messages from our mayor about his plans to help our town get clean drinking water," Patty Wright, a resident of Paden City, said. "It wasn't until Feb. 20 that we learned that the Governor had declared a state of emergency on Feb. 4. Yet the mayor stated in a

public town meeting on Feb. 22 that he learned of the state of emergency at the same time we did when it came out in the paper."

Even with the social distancing order in effect due to the pandemic, residents are petitioning the governor: "Our town is in a double state of emergency. Not only are we worried along with the rest of the country about quarantining and staying safe from the (coronavirus), we are (also) at high risk because we are left to consume contaminated water because we can't afford to buy it, we can't go out to buy it, (and) if we do, the shelves are empty." The petition calls on the governor to use his power to supply the town with safe drinking water.

Even though the petition was signed by the mayor, many question his commitment to getting safe water to the residents. WTOV 9 FOX reported: "In the meantime, the mayor is encouraging residents to buy their own water and not rely on the supply the city has."

Editor's note: Information for this story came from Paden City Water Crisis Facebook page and an article by Douglas Harding on Medium.com ■

Government agencies protect industry — not the people

By Georgia De La Garza,
Shawnee Hills and Hollers; Women for Justice-Midwest

CARBONDALE, IL — Standing on the front lines in Southern Illinois over the last eight years, organizing communities facing the devastation they see their neighbors experiencing and knowing the IEPA, IDNR, Army Corps of Engineers, Forest Service, and IDOT easily sign anything the coal industry wants, has taught us how much we are on our own.

When we sit down with our lawmakers on both sides of the fence and ask for help, we hear the same line: Clean coal and nuclear energy is the way of the future. We respond with the same line: It's not burning coal and using nuclear energy that is killing us, it's the extraction and the waste left behind.

Eighty percent of Illinois coal is burned in China. The industries take our resources and our resource wealth. They abandon us with sickness and in poverty trapped in the coal industry paradigm. Stripping regulations leaves us scratching our heads. It's not like regulations have been respected here anyway.

We have witnessed thousands of homes lost from long-wall and surface mining.

Continues on next page ...

Agricultural land has become useless to farming from the ripple effect of land caused from long-wall mining and renders land dead from surface mining.

Don't use the word reclamation in front of us. There is no such thing. We have watched thousands and thousands of acres of old, beautiful forest clear cut for this fossil fuel industry. Families move out, wildlife disappears, homes and churches torn down, roads sold, crumbled infrastructure, toxic water, air pollution, high rates of clustered cancers, and extremely high property taxes to clean up the industry's mess.

Our homelands and our lives will never be the same. As long as we allow campaign contributions to be gifted to our Representatives, Senators, U.S. Congress, all the way to our White House, living under the rule of Citizens United, we can call ourselves compliant to viruses like Covid-19 and be sure, soon, we will find out what else we are exposing as we watch our world being pillaged by the power struggle of the oligarchy for our resources while in the emergency of climate change.

For more information contact Georgia de la Garza, shawneehollers247@gmail.com

See:

<https://psmag.com/magazine/a-look-inside-the-coal-communities-in-the-illinois-basin/>

https://thesouthern.com/news/local/former-strip-mine-one-of-worst-sites-in-midwest/article_207b052c-ce1d-11e1-90cd-001a4bcf887a.html ■

Blockade to stop Peabody Coal from strip mining and destroying the town of Rocky Branch, IL

Photo / Shawnee Hills and Hollers



CA utility justice campaign slams PG&E deal

From a **Reclaim Our Power** press release

SAN FRANCISCO, MARCH 24, 2020 - Reclaim Our Power Utility Justice Campaign, the largest coalition of Californians organizing for fundamental changes in the state's energy system, slammed Gov. Newsom's deal with PG&E, saying the deal amounts to "business as usual" for a company with a deadly track record.

On March 23, PG&E admitted guilt for the deaths of 84 people killed in the Camp Fire in Northern California in 2018. Three days before, the governor announced a deal with the bankrupt investor owned utility that would allow them to change executives and continue to operate as the monopoly providing energy to Northern California.

Mari Rose Taruc, coordinator of Reclaim Our Power, said, "The people of Paradise died because PG&E values profits for Wall St. shareholders over the lives of the people of California. When will the governor stand up and say that enough is enough and do away with PG&E?"

Nearly 100 organizations from across the state joined Reclaim Our Power Utility Justice Campaign to present a not-for-profit, democratic, renewable utility model to the governor's office earlier this winter as an alternative to the state's failed investor-owned utility model.

California's investor-owned utility system relies on nearly 200 dirty gas power plants to generate massive amounts of electricity and carry it across dangerously long distances, often through wildfire-prone areas. This system produces profits for a few at the expense of many.

"What we need is a radically different system—one that is safe, clean, and controlled by communities and workers, not Wall St.," said Jessica Tovar from the Local Clean Energy Alliance.

The Reclaim Our Power Utility Justice Campaign is a statewide coalition made up of fire survivors, people with disabilities, and immigrant and environmental justice communities. Learn more at:

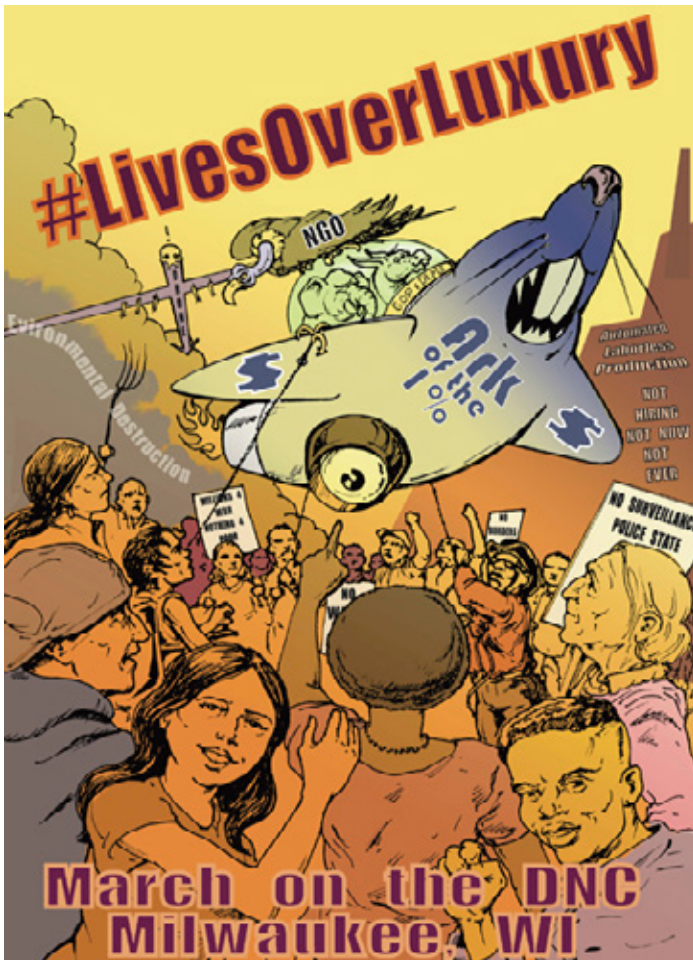
[ReclaimourpowerCA.org](https://reclaimourpowerCA.org) and <https://www.facebook.com/utilityjustice/> ■

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Pandemic exposes possibilities for laborless humanity

By Galen Tyler

PHILADELPHIA, PA — We are at a time in our lives that humanity can make a decision to ensure that every man, woman, and child, plus future generations, can have the necessities to thrive on the planet, not just barely survive. With today's technology, it is possible.



Since the 1950s to the early 1970s, with the introduction of computers and robotics into society, human labor has been slowly replaced with machines that store and retain information longer than people, and that help humans work in a more rapid, precise, and efficient way. This allows companies to use less labor, and get to where jobs are eliminated altogether, which has been happening.

The American people were taught that you provide for your family by getting a good-paying job, or two jobs if needed or wanted. This would allow you to pay for food, clothing, housing, healthcare, education, rest and relaxation.

This pandemic has allowed both bosses and workers to see what it is like when workers don't have to come to work. The boss gets their chance to cut workers and see if they lose or gain profits. But from an organizing lens, that workers are not needed creates an opportunity to get them involved in a new kind of class struggle. The elimination of jobs has pushed millions of people without a way to provide the things needed to thrive. The pandemic is allowing the ability to speed up robotics, computer programs, and permanent replacement of workers. Yet this same technology could provide all of us with abundance.

We are at a crucial moment where working and poor people can unite to transition to a better way of living. It's a similar time to the 1880s when the union movement arose to fight for the 8-hour day and weekends. Around May 1, 1886, in Chicago there was a battle between police and striking workers, in which police died and the state blamed and executed eight anarchists as scapegoats. This sparked the creation of May Day, an International Workers' holiday celebrated all over the world.

Similar to that time, we are calling for the poor, unemployed, newly-unemployed and all working people to join us for the #LivesOverLuxury March on the DNC and RNC, whenever those conventions happen. We need to unite as a class, take power, and create a world fit for all people. ■



Cartoon / LYNCH

Farmworkers are essential, yet vulnerable

By Irene de Barraicua, Líderes Campesinas
& Marco E. López, former UFW General Counsel

Recent interviews with California farmworkers conducted by Líderes Campesinas reveal that although considered essential to the U.S. economy, they are also the most vulnerable link in our nation's food supply chain.



The photo is of a member of Líderes Campesinas.

Photo /
Dave Getzschman
for Earth Justice

Among the reasons for this are:

1. Only a minuscule percentage are unionized
2. Over 50% are undocumented
3. Among their numbers many are from deep in Mexico, indigenous (Mixtecos, Zapotecos, Triqui, etc.), and suspicious of all governmental agencies—for obvious reasons. Thus, because of their distinct reality, farmworkers in large part do not qualify for benefits such as unemployment, food stamps or public/private medical insurance. Many are saddled with medical debts, as high as \$40,000 or more; and are unable to pay.

But as the rhyme goes, I owe, I owe, so off to work I go! And they do! – despite their burdens, insecurities, reductions in work hours, risks of infection with coronavirus, and growing fear. Ironically too, while they are busy picking our fruit and vegetables, food shelves are being emptied by us, full-fledged citizens.

The long and short of it is that farmworkers live an intolerable and inhumane mode of life. In the midst of National Farm Workers Awareness Week and the advent of César Chávez Day, let us commit to focusing on the special needs of those that continue to put food on our tables, the very workers César once led. ■

‘Don’t let us die,’ say women in ICE custody

By People’s Tribune



Women in ICE custody

Photo/
Video Still The
Intercept

Women asylum seekers in ICE custody at the for-profit jail in the small rural town of Jena, LA are desperate due to the Coronavirus. “We are afraid because we know we will die inside here . . . We don’t have a way to protect ourselves. . . They are in charge of protecting us and they are not protecting us. We know the virus is killing many people . . . Once one of us is sick [infected], all of us will be sick,” said the women in a CBS video. Concerned about the lax social distancing and hygiene practices, women started screaming that things are wrong. “So they opened the door and some of us decided to go out the door and call the ICE agents and doctors and the agents here and tell them they need to attend to us and answer our questions,” they said. Officials then pepper sprayed women, saying they were disruptive and confrontational.

Groups throughout the country are calling for the release of all detainees, inmates and prisoners because of the coronavirus. La Resistencia in Washington state organized a caravan rally to support hunger strikers inside the NWDC to amplify the demands for release, said activist Maru Mora-Villalpando. The Youth Justice Coalition organized a car protest in downtown Los Angeles because of the “horror stories from people inside who say there is no sanitation or care, and there is fear people will die.” Protests took place in Chicago, and in Philadelphia, by car, text and tweets. “Now is the time to end the pandemic of mass imprisonment,” said Edgar Reyes of Pueblo Sin Fronteras. ■

Children detained in migrant shelter test positive

At least 37 children plus two staff members have tested positive for the coronavirus at the Heartland Alliance facility, a migrant shelter in Chicago. Groups and some politicians continue to pressure government to release immigrants from custody during the virus, but unconscionably, it has not yet happened.

Eyewitness account: Migrants tell of fleeing atrocities in Mexico

By Jennifer Harbury,
attorney and human rights advocate

REYNOSA, Tamaulipas, México – The shelters in Reynosa began to fill to overflowing once again in December, just as the cold arrived. Thanks to Church World Services, we were able to get a lot of blankets to them. The new people were coming in from Africa, Haiti, and Central America for the most part.



**Migrant woman
cooks for hundreds
of migrants living
in tents in Mexico
awaiting processing
to come to the U.S.
(December, 2019)**

PHOTO:
MARGARITO DIAZ

The big change has been an abrupt and very sharp rise in Mexicans arriving from the Mexican states of Tabasco, Guerrero and Michoacán. There have always been asylum seekers from that region, which has been hard hit by the cartel wars for many years now. But the violence there has exploded since last November.

People showed me photographs of themselves with black and blue bruises from head to foot, and with badly battered faces.

One photo showed three men being led away with their hands tied behind their backs and hitched to the person behind them. Another photo showed a large pit with the severed limbs and heads.

In many areas, schools have closed due to the kidnapping of children. There are many reports of children being killed to punish their parents for disobedience to the gangs or to sell them for their organs. There have been reports of several children's bodies found with their torsos hollowed out.

Pre-teens are being taken for trafficking or forced recruitment as well.

Some families have reported being run out of their homes at gunpoint, past burning houses and vehicles and dead bodies on the ground. They were told their lands had been confiscated.

Many of them have fled to avoid being forced to work with either cartel, but if they return, they could be punished for fleeing. These people have been arriving totally shellshocked.

So are people arriving from Cameroon in West Africa, most of whom had fled village massacres and have no idea where their families are.

The Mexican government stopped sending assistance to the shelter, leaving the pastor to deal with a sharply rising population, no funds for food and no school.

The Angry Tías have stepped in and we are providing funding for at least a full month. There are no teachers. At least the Médicos Sin Fronteras team is still there. The coronavirus is no help. The shelters could be shut down at any time.

I was last there on March 16 and am now sheltering in place. I am willing to continue crossing if that is permitted and justifiable, and then self-isolate back in United States. But I fear the bridge may close down soon as well.

Meanwhile, the Prompt Asylum Claim Review (PACR) and Humanitarian Asylum Review Process (HARP) programs and the Guatemala safe-nation status have proven deadly. We were all delighted with the great new Ninth Circuit federal appeals court case, declaring the MPP program to be unlawful. But the injunction was promptly stayed while the case went to the Supreme Court.

So, people remain trapped in Tamaulipas, the most dangerous area, on the heels of the Ninth Circuit decision.

And now coronavirus will lock people into northern Mexico in an even worse way. People are terrified of being quarantined in the shelter, which would be much like the Princess cruise ship experience. So, they are moving into unsafe apartments outside the walls.

The Angry Tías will keep the shelters well stocked and with decent communications systems in place. For now, the virus has not spread much into northern Mexico, but it will. As medical needs shift, we will see how we can best assist. ■

Thoughts from a veteran fighter

By Magdaleno Leno Rose-Avila

I know that we are all strong and creative. Remember this is not an issue only of your town, city, county or state or country. This is a WORLD ISSUE, and we must have a coordinated cooperative effort to gain control over this virus. Or, the other option is for us to run into our caves or basements and lock ourselves up for a couple of years. It will not be easy but we can do this. Let's help each other to be strong as we move forward . . .

‘Fight for the Health of Your Community’

From Seder Readings for Passover 5780
by Rabbi Brant Rosen

Maror

Before we partake of maror [the bitter herbs eaten at Passover], we acknowledge the bitter irony of the current moment: while we preach the importance of social distancing, we continue to crowd people into prisons, detention centers and refugee camps in record numbers, putting them—and the world at large—at risk. Indeed, there are already increasing reports that the coronavirus is spreading from incarcerated populations to the world outside.

Are we ready, at long last, to heed the hard lesson taught to us by the pandemic: that walls, fences and militarized borders will not ultimately keep us safe? Are we ready to embrace a new vision of collective security: one that does not depend upon the involuntary imprisonment of human beings? As we taste the maror now, these bitter questions challenge us more deeply than ever before. ■

Inequality and injustices spread Pandemics

By Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, 3/30/20 on YouTube

“We cannot emerge from this pandemic and go back to the same thing, where we had a pandemic of greed and lies... Before the virus hit, 140 million people were poor and low wealth — 43% of this nation...and 700 people a day were dying from poverty and low wealth, according to a study... Everybody said we didn't have the money [to deal with this], but now all of a sudden in one night we found \$1.5 trillion for Wall Street...Until we field a stimulus plan from the bottom up, not only is it bad for the economy, but it will cause more deaths, because pandemics spread through the fissures that exist in our society because of inequality and injustices. If America wants to live, then we have to make sure the poor and low wealth are protected...Dr. King said to us some 50 years ago that any nation that puts most of its money toward militarism is headed toward spiritual death. What we ought to be doing is putting the resources of the military budget in the hands of public health officials.” ■



Graphic, Photo by Clark Tibbs on Unsplash

“Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.”

— **Author and activist Arundhati Roy**

For Wayne

By Adam Gottlieb

While countless cars
rolled past
and downtown
rushed to work
and rats
rummaged through dumpsters
and I woke up
in a bed
in a warm house
There was no morning for you
Chicago's winter
pressed your vital force
While the sun rose
over lovers still sleeping
in each other's arms
That cold Saturday
after St. Valentine's
You said goodbye
to all of us — or didn't —
who couldn't hold you tight enough
Friends found you
in your tent
with one arm frozen
as if reaching
for help
They hung your cane there, in that tree
the cane you decorated with those stripes
of red, and white, and blue, to show your love
for a nation that would never love you back
Except for us — who promise on our lives
that we will make yours matter, Wayne
We swear ■

“Grant, O God, that we
lie down in peace,
and raise us up, our
Guardian, to life
renewed.
Spread over us the
shelter of Your peace.”
- Hashkivenu
(Traditional Jewish
Prayer)

May First Actions!

Actions beginning on May 1 aim to build a US and global movement that determines how we emerge from the crisis with life itself as the primary value. It is about a true vision and reality of a loving and just world. Here are some links to some events, May Day Hashtags and websites. #MayDay2020 #PeoplesBailout #GeneralStrike2020 #CancelRent #FreeThemAll #GrassrootsFeminism #KeepItInTheGround; People's Bailout Day of Mass Action <https://thepeoplesbailout.org/>; General Strike 2020 <https://www.genstrike.org/>; Car Rally for Essential Workers; Jobs with Justice Rent strikes; Causa Justa [#CanceltheRent campaign](#) and #FreeThemAll campaign; EMEAC is supporting the struggle to get water restored; Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) joins webinar on health, housing and detention; About Face is raising funds to support undocumented people. ■

National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression Statement on Covid-19 crisis

By Frank Chapman, Interim Executive Director, NAARPR

Below are excerpts from a longer statement at <https://conta.cc/2WALwLR>.

CHICAGO, IL — We must stand up and fight back. We must put forward and fight for a program of action that will get us out of this pandemic crisis by helping the 140 million people living in poverty, and the hundreds of thousands of adults and children who are homeless, by helping the millions without health insurance, by ending mass incarceration starting with the wrongfully convicted and those too poor to make bail, by ending the ICE raids and the immigrant detention centers, by bringing the working class to the round table to curb the feast of the beast that is monopoly capital, to address fissures in our society created by racism, sexism and national oppression. We must vigorously reject the Department of Justice's move to suspend habeas corpus under the guise of emergency powers. We suggest that in your respective localities you push for the following demands [particularly the release of prisoners from local jails and state prisons, especially those known to be wrongfully convicted] as well as the release of immigrants from ICE detention centers. All power to the people!

Editor's note: In addition to the above demands go to <https://conta.cc/2WALwLR> to see the complete list of demands which include prisoner and detainee release, health protection, medication, visits, phone calls, moratorium on deportations, Right to Family legislation for undocumented immigrants, and economic relief to all U.S. residents, regardless of immigration status. ■

Writer's grandson among hundreds in Cook County Jail who have Covid-19

By a People's Tribune reader

Editor's note: This story is about the experience of the author's 21-year-old grandson, Zachary Thomas, who has been detained since mid-March in Chicago's Cook County Jail, now an epicenter of the spreading COVID-19 crisis.



On April 9, my grandson Zachary was tested and then transferred to an isolation division in the jail. He said the unit is not clean. He wanted us to tell everyone not to believe what Sheriff Dart says about the jail being safe and clean. "Sheriff Dart is lying," he said. Zachary had tested positive. He was one of the 276 detainees who had tested positive for the virus on that day.

On April 9, ruling in the Mays v. Dart lawsuit, Federal District Judge Matthew Kennelly rejected the plaintiff's request to immediately release all medically vulnerable Cook County Jail detainees to prevent COVID-19 casualties. However, the judge also rejected Dart's assertion that he was providing for the detainees' safety; Kennelly wrote: "...the infection rate in Cook County was 1.56 per 1,000, whereas, in the Jail, it was 50 per 1,000 people. The disparity between these rates tends to support the contention that the conditions at the Jail facilitate the spread of coronavirus and exacerbate the risk of infection for the detainees." The judge ordered the Sheriff to stop the policy of putting all new detainees into bullpens where the infection easily spreads.

In the isolation unit, Zachary's shortness of breath increased. He was still having severe headaches and his temperature ranged from 99.8 to 100.4, but on the evening of April 13, Zachary's blood pressure climbed to 141/93. He said his heart was beating very fast and he began to shake uncontrollably. The nurse who came to check on him called for another nurse to assist. A nearby detainee called to tell us what was happening. We immediately called the Medical CareLine, only able to leave a message. The next morning, a medical social worker called us back and we were able to give her some of Zachary's medical history. Zachary called later and told us he had experienced a panic attack. The medical staff are paying more attention to him, he said.

As of April 16, a total of 600 detainees and staff have tested positive, and a third detainee has died. Each of those cases is a person, with a family. For us, as one of these families, this is deeply personal and we are terrified.

Visit <https://bit.ly/pandemicCCJ> for information on how you can help. ■

Covid-19 'exposes US racism in a stark new way'

By People's Tribune

The Covid-19 pandemic is disproportionately hitting communities that have historically suffered from racism and unequal treatment, including African Americans, Latinx, immigrants, and Native Americans. In Chicago, for example, African Americans are just 30% of the population, but they account for 70% of the city's virus deaths. Below are some recent remarks from two public figures dealing with this question.



Photo / Flickr

Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones, family physician, epidemiologist, and past president of the American Public Health Association:

"COVID-19 is exposing U.S. racism in a stark new way, because the black and brown bodies are piling up so fast that these deaths can't be normalized or ignored. And the way that racism is operating in this pandemic. . . It's increasing exposure to the virus, and it has increased vulnerability to the virus. . . We are in more front-facing, low-income, underappreciated jobs, where we are part of the essential workforce that really isn't getting its full attention, and certainly not getting the full protection that we need. [And] racism has increased the vulnerability of us to this virus, because living in racially segregated communities that are resource segregated, without adequate access to food, and [suffer] environmental racism. . . has made us carry in our bodies all of those same diseases—diabetes, high blood pressure, renal disease, asthma—that are making people who get infected by the virus sicker and die faster from it. [There are] three principles for achieving health equity: valuing all individuals and populations equally, recognizing and rectifying historical injustices, and providing resources according to need—not equally, but according to need."

Congressmember Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, whose district in New York includes parts of Queens and the Bronx, and the Rikers Island jail: "The community surrounding Elmhurst Hospital and Elmhurst, Queens is one of the most working-class and blackest and brownest [and heavily immigrant] communities in New York City....now that we have this

pandemic and it is hardest-hitting in communities that are heavily immigrant and also with strong historically black communities, as well, that people are either afraid to go to Elmhurst Hospital out of the cost or out of sheer fear that they will be put in the public charge list [and deported]....We've been calling very strongly on the governor and the mayor to take a strong decarceral approach to Rikers [where an inmate died from the virus]....And that also goes for our immigration detention facilities....ICE is knowingly packing these detention facilities with people who have not committed crimes."

As we go to print, it is reported that Native American communities are also disproportionately impacted by Covid-19. New statewide data, for example, shows that more than 36% of all positive cases in New Mexico are Native Americans. ■

We are at war: Covid-19 kills

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

BENTON HARBOR, MI — My very good and loyal friend, Harold Davis, a Chicago good guy, was a great activist, business man and leader. Harold was a loving person who cared about the city of Chicago and Benton Harbor, MI, but unfortunately Harold Davis has died of Covid-19.



Harold Davis

We must survive. The pandemic is real and the damage left in the wake of the virus is realized mostly in our communities, along with bad policies, institutional neglect, and overexposure that places us disproportionately in arm's reach of this deadly virus.

A number of factors have contributed to the higher death rates in Black as well as Latino communities compared to other racial groups. These include not having proper health insurance, having pre-existing health conditions and employment that doesn't allow for the possibility of being able to work from home.

We are essential workers. We are the most impacted, yet the focus of resources aren't invested in us. We cannot wait for a government that has never prioritized us. We must look out for ourselves at all cost.

In the past 30 days, Americans have lost, or should I say, have willingly surrendered, the free exercise of Religion. The freedom to peaceably assemble. The freedom of travel. The freedom of work. The freedom to obtain a firearm. The right of autonomy over one's own property. The right to withdraw a large sum of money. You can withdraw a small sum, but not a large sum.

When elected officials fear that their base is slipping, they will do anything. I mean anything. We must fight back at all cost. ■

People to People Fact-Finding Delegation to the U.S. Mexico Border is Delayed

Dear Supporters of the
People's Tribune,

Due to the coronavirus crisis and the closing of the U.S.-Mexico border, we are postponing the People to People Fact-Finding Delegation to the U.S.-Mexico Border. (The delegation was originally scheduled to travel April 22 – May 3, 2020.) This in no way lessens the delegation's commitment and desire to put the spotlight on the situation faced by migrants and the border communities on both sides of the border.



**Migrant family in Tamaulipas,
Mexico shelter.**

PHOTO: FLOC

On the contrary, now more than ever, given the coronavirus crisis worldwide, we redouble our vigilance and attention on these vulnerable populations – migrants and refugees.

We are going to refocus our efforts. Those of us in the delegation from Illinois, California, Texas and Michigan will write dispatches, articles and communiqués reporting on the conditions and the fight for migrant and refugee rights.

These will be disseminated digitally, including via the Tribuno del Pueblo and the People's Tribune. But we won't stop there. The members of the delegation will be putting the spotlight and attention on other vulnerable populations — including the prisoners, those in detention centers, and the unhoused — so that we can continue to be part of the momentum until they are freed and housed.

We reach out to those who have donated and ask you to give us permission to keep your cherished donations in a separate fund until the Delegation visits the U.S.-Mexico border communities in the future when we are able to travel.

Thanks to all, and we'll keep you posted. ■

Independent Media Are Needed More Than Ever

In a time of crisis, the People's Tribune brings to our readers our own reporting and also the voices of those fighting for a society and a government that meets our needs. We are 100% run by volunteers and 100% donor-funded. Please donate whatever you can. Go to peopletribune.org/pt-news/subscribe or send checks to **People's Tribune, PO Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654-3524**. Thanks!

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About the 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 a 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.

Articles that are unsigned, such as the cover story and editorials, reflect the views of the editorial board. Bylined articles reflect the views of the authors, and may or may not reflect the views of the editorial board.

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