

# PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

MARCH 2021, VOL. 48, NO. 2

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## GROWING MOVEMENT DEMANDS ACTION TO HELP JOBLESS, HUNGRY, HOMELESS



Bloomington, Indiana Police tell Daniel he has to move from where he pitched a tent on a Bloomington street.  
Photo: © Jeremy Hogan/SOPA Images via ZUMA Wire)

**FIGHT FOR \$15 • NO EVICTIONS • END CHILD DETENTION**

**Shouldn't vaccines be publicly owned?** P. 14

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773-486-3551, People's Tribune, P.O. Box 577250, Chicago, IL 60657-7331

Thank you!

## World Water Day March 22!

### Broad coalition urges Biden to halt water and utility shutoffs



For World Water Day, 2021, we highlight the effort of a coalition of over 600 environmental, rights and religious groups who urged Joe Biden to mandate an immediate National Moratorium on Water and Utility Shutoffs until at least two months after the pandemic ends. Banning shutoffs helps struggling families, reduces infection rates, and the disproportionately affected communities of color. But we cannot let up! "We must commit to a serious long-term solution that extends beyond the pandemic, wipes out existing debt, and ensures that nobody ever lives without running water ... we will defeat this virus soon, but that cannot mean people are forced to live without running water in the richest country the world has ever known," said Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib of Detroit, Michigan.

*(Information for this story is from The Guardian.)*

*See P. 5 for story on Flint's continuing fight for justice.*

## 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. Ultimately, 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.

*Designed by Mauricio Rivera / Rivera Design & Illustration*

# Growing Movement Demands Action to Help Jobless, Hungry, Homeless

From the **Editors, People's Tribune**

America is in crisis.

The ex-president who sent a lynch mob to attack the U.S. Capitol has escaped impeachment — and just received a hero's welcome at a festival of right-wing political operatives.

The total number of coronavirus deaths in the United States now exceeds 500,000 people.

Early February brought the grim news that the economy added only 49,000 jobs in January — with just 6,000 of those being in the private sector. The New York Times called the January jobs report “evidence of a metastasizing crisis.” The newspaper noted that while December's job losses were concentrated in a few pandemic-related sectors, “manufacturers, retailers and transportation companies all cut jobs [in January], indicating that the economic damage is spreading.”

The long-term jobless now account for at least 40 percent of all unemployed workers, the biggest share since the aftermath of the recession of 2007-9.

And this metastasizing crisis is about to get worse. On March 14, the current round of jobless benefits begins to expire. Most analysts believe that money is needed immediately if the states are to put a new round of aid in place in time to prevent unemployed workers from losing those benefits.

On February 27, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a new economic stimulus bill. As we go to press, the U.S. Senate is debating the measure. While the final shape of the bill will be important — and is yet to be determined — without the massive turn-out in the 2020 election — and especially in the Georgia U.S. Senate run-offs, most elected officials in Washington would simply be ignoring the millions hit hard by the current crisis. Without the heroic efforts of millions of people who risked their health during a pandemic to vote for candidates pledged to fight for people's needs, this bill would never even have been introduced.

The final version of the bill will contain some relief for the many who are suffering — but not enough. The millions who used the ballot as a weapon to advance their interests will have to keep the pressure up even after the stimulus package is signed into law.



*Pressure from below must continue.*



*Family at food give-away in Michigan, where joblessness is growing.*

*Photo / [jimwestphoto.com](http://jimwestphoto.com)*

There is much more work to be done. We have to demand the government raise the national minimum wage to \$15 an hour — whether in the current stimulus bill or through some other measure. The economic payments in the bill will provide temporary help, but one-time payments will not solve the urgent problems of those without work or with poverty wage work.

Across the country, people are demanding the government act in the interest of the vast majority, not the one percent. This pressure from below must continue. The federal government must be compelled to mass-produce the COVID-19 vaccines and distribute them immediately. If the government has to use the Defense Production Act to seize the pharmaceutical companies or deploy other emergency measures — so be it. Even after the stimulus bill is signed into law, we must continue to fight for income guarantees for all those who need income, for as long as they need it, along with a housing guarantee. And the far-right extremist groups who attacked the U.S. Capitol must be crushed.

More than 80 million people voted for change on Election Day 2020. Their demands must be heeded!



*More and more homeless families are living in their vehicles.*

# Women's liberation is humanity's

## International Women's Day March 8

### We are the Women in a Pandemic

By **Kathy Powers**

We are women always. We take care of humanity. We are called to serve again. We learn from the working women, we learn from each other, we take care of each other.

Noteworthy, Jacinda Arden said, “You just have to get on with it. There’s a job to be done. Any self-doubt we ever have, just as a human being, doesn’t mean that always translates into doubt around what needs to be done.” She saved New Zealand from COVID twice.

Among millions of women: young workers, health workers, home workers, women of all colors, we are always somewhere, nurturing, helping, quietly and in chanting in the streets. We reject racism, gender violence, sexual harassment, macho cultures, victim blaming, and misogyny, and indecent living conditions.

We inspire and explode movements. This is nothing new for us: we sacrifice, we protect all in our scope. We don’t make new goals; we steadfastly sustain the best lives possible.

Sometimes we perish, like the mother who had to leave her child home to go to work and was arrested. Sometimes we

suffer to stay home so our children don’t have to go to unsafe schools. Sometimes we take the risk to send our children there because we cannot survive otherwise. Some of us suffer and die at the violent end of a domestic partner. We strive to save as many victims as we can.

Our heroines, like Karen Jennings Lewis, [the late former Chicago Teachers Union president] echo the roots of women over a hundred years ago, and conquer a dangerous administration the size of the City of Chicago. Some of us walk with her.

Some of us stay home and mind the store. Some of us don’t even see the struggle.

We teach each other. We share information and active suggestions about the tenacious struggle against oppression, inequality, and exploitation. Some of us are homeless. Some of us are rich. All of us are teachers and nurses of some kind. We approach all with humility, patience, and flexibility. We listen.

We are the Women in a Pandemic and we will be here ‘til the end of humanity, taking care.

### Karen Lewis: a fighting leader

*Below is an excerpt from an article by Matt Ginsberg-Jaeckle about the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) which includes a remembrance of the late Karen Lewis, former president of the CTU.*

“Of all the times for us to remember what the Chicago Teachers Union is made of, this moment, in the shadow of the passing of one of its giants, the great Karen Lewis, is the time. This is the union who, after the victory of Karen Lewis and CORE, became a leading force nationally in beating back the neoliberal school privatization ‘deformers,’ as Karen called them. It is the union that turned to the community and said let’s work together to build a movement for justice in this city. It is the union that helped spark a resurgence of labor organizing nationally. It is the union that help create United Working Families and begin to turn the tide in the city council away from the old corrupt machine and the big business puppets and towards the type of visionary and grassroots politics of a new crop of leaders willing to fight for those who haven’t had a voice in Chicago politics since the days of Harold Washington. It is the union that said the problems that kids come into the classroom with, from homelessness to trauma to fears about immigration



Karen Lewis speaking at stop Chicago school closings action, March 2013

*Photo / Love & Struggle photos (Sarah-Ji Rhee)*

status to the threat of police violence, are our problems too and we will fight with them to address them. Simply put, the Chicago Teachers Union, from the perspective of the Commercial Club of Chicago and the LaSalle Street financial elite, has been enemy number one. . .”

[See full article by clicking here.](#)

# Is the Flint settlement protecting our children or the powerful?

*Editor's note: Below are excerpts from a press conference held in front of the Flint Water Plant days before a Federal Judge gave preliminary approval to the \$600 million settlement. The struggle continues for restorative justice before final approval of the deal sometime this summer.*

FLINT, MI — Good Afternoon. We are a group comprised of concerned Flint area community leaders, ministers, and activists.

Because of the FLINT WATER CRISIS have most of the citizens of Flint received a bone lead test? The answer to this important question is more than likely NO. For this reason, and others which will be enumerated in this brief statement, we are gravely concerned that the proposed allocation of settlement proceeds are egregiously unfair to the vast majority of citizens in Flint and their children – people who need it the most. The access to this testing has been “hoarded” by just two law firms. The ramifications of this lack of access to this critical testing means that many needy and deserving children – and adults – will be deprived of much deserved compensation.

As the settlement is currently configured, the Bone Lead Test requirements guarantee MINIMAL participation in the damage categories of 1, 2, and 3 – for children — which pay greater compensation for two reasons. One, because of the aforementioned lack of availability of the Bone Lead Test, AND two, in the absence of said bone lead test, the oppressive stipulation that children can only qualify for damage categories 2 and 3 by undergoing a full individual evaluation from a team that MUST INCLUDE (1) A BOARD-CERTIFIED PEDIATRICIAN and (2) a neuropsychologist.

These unprecedented hurdles that the plaintiffs have to jump over are harsh. These burdens of proof are not required under any other reasonable setting – it's as if these requirements are designed to PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF THE POWERFUL, and place an oppressive burden of proof UPON THE INNOCENT – THE DEFENSELESS CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS – both of whom were unwittingly subjected to this catastrophic municipal poisoning allowed by neglectful city and state officials...

In addition, the first four damage categories for children, which compensate the most for damages, 'conveniently' EXCLUDES a crucial, salient factor, which is this – whether a Flint home was connected to a LEAD SERVICE LINE. This exclusion guarantees that fewer plaintiffs will qualify for levels of compensation that they SHOULD JUSTLY RECEIVE.

Also, the property damage max of \$1,000 for Flint homeowners is woefully inadequate as this amount does not consider (1) the exorbitant utility rates for unusable water that Flint citizens were expected to pay during the Water Crisis, the tainted water, and (2) the other costs incurred because of the tainted water:



The people of Flint are still struggling for justice.

\*Replacement OF APPLIANCES \* INSTALLATION OF WATER FILTRATION SYSTEMS \* COST OF BOTTLED WATER \* REPLACEMENT OF CLOTHING \*REPLACEMENT OF PIPES \*LOSS OF RENTS FOR LANDLORDS \*Decimation of Property Values \*LOSS of INVESTMENT AND PEOPLE into Flint and surrounding areas.

And of course, the necessity of LIFELONG medical treatment for children of the Water Crisis. To one extent or the other, THE QUALITY OF LIFE for Flint citizens was DESTROYED.

In conclusion, we believe that the proposed settlement, as currently allocated, is just as disrespectful as the water crisis tragedy itself. Please ask yourself this question: How can you justify just 20-30% (if that many) receiving some meager form of redress when 100% of the population was affected? . . .

## Water Webinars are coming to your town via Zoom!

In March, the People's Tribune, water warriors, and grassroots groups engaged in the fight for water as a human right across the country will be launching water webinars.

Topics include: Native Americans, water blessers and the fight for water rights; Lead in the water; Contamination, pollution, infrastructure, financing; Privatization and commodification of water; Water bills being brought to Congress, and more.

Please contact us for more information or to contribute ideas at [info@peopletribune.org](mailto:info@peopletribune.org)



Detroiters fighting to stop immoral water shut-offs prior to the pandemic.

The Black Lives Matter movement has captured the attention of the whole world. Below we bring you a story from a leader of Detroit Will Breathe about the fight to end racism and police terror. — *The Editors*

## The struggle fighting repression and state violence

By [Jordan Weber](#)

DETROIT, MI — Detroit Will Breathe (DWB) is a militant, youth-led organization that formed in the streets of Detroit in the aftermath of the police murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. Despite the brutalization of protesters in an attempt to stop the movement, activists continue to mobilize in defense of Black and Brown lives. Following a summer of police brutality, DWB filed a lawsuit against the city of Detroit and a federal judge has since granted a restraining order against the use of excessive force by the Detroit Police Department (DPD.) Still, the city has filed a counterclaim for civil conspiracy as a way of intimidating us to drop our lawsuit.

As we fight to have this racist and absurd claim dismissed, the Detroit City Council voted to approve additional funding for the DPD counterclaim on January 26: \$200,000 of taxpayer money was sent to the Clark Hill law firm, despite vehement public opposition. Council members hope to prove protesters were outside agitators inciting violence. This argument holds no merit, and that same day, 200+ charges were dismissed against BLM protesters from summer 2020 due to lack of evidence. This council vote is another intimidation tactic and a failure to represent the interests of the people they serve. This theft of taxpayer dollars is driving a racist counterclaim that mirrors counterclaims brought against civil rights activists in the 1960s. Additionally, \$600 million of illegally assessed property taxes have robbed tens of thousands of Detroit homeowners over the past ten years. These illegal tax assessments and evictions are forms of state violence against Black and Brown people. In January 2021, DWB joined Detroit Eviction Defense to support Black women illegally evicted from their residences by abusive landlords with the help of DPD, violating the COVID-19 eviction moratorium. Since our initial rally, several more women have come forward with similar stories. DPD is also asking for a \$40 million increase on its already exorbitant \$330 million budget. Rather than putting additional funding toward police violence and repression, the city council should be allocating resources toward housing, healthcare, and education.

Our struggle also extends into the suburbs. In May 2020, Shelby Township Police Chief Robert Shelide posted violent remarks toward BLM protesters via social media, calling them “wild savages” and “vicious subhumans,” stating he would send them “home in body bags”. After a one-month suspension, Shelide was reinstated. On October 24, DWB



[Jordan Weber](#) (Center L) at a Detroit Will Breathe action.

*Photo / Mark Klockow*

joined joined SHIFT-Suburban Solidarity for Social Justice to demand accountability for the racism in Shelby Township and demand the removal of Shelide. Upon marching, protesters were attacked by five different police departments and were met with SWAT and K-9 units. Five protesters, who would later be known as the Shelby 5, were charged with felonies. On January 25, six additional activists were charged with misdemeanors for their participation in the October action. The new Macomb County Prosecutor Peter Lucido chose to co-sign these egregious Jim Crow-style tactics, setting a double standard of “law and order” as displayed by the way right-wing extremists were treated at the Capitol insurrection. Shelby Township refuses to address its racism and displays its history as a sundown town that will do anything to uphold white supremacy.

Undeniable similarities between Detroit and Shelby Township include intimidation and repressive tactics used to encourage state violence and uphold white supremacy. To fight back, we must continue to organize around these issues. We must continue to challenge officials and politicians who promote police brutality against those who dare to question the system of capitalism and white supremacy. We must continue to focus on housing issues, such as evictions and illegal tax assessments, recognizing them as forms of state violence used to displace Black and Brown people. We must continue to challenge the power of the state and demand the redistribution of resources back into the hands of the working class and the oppressed. We must refuse the hyper-surveillance of Black and Brown bodies and continue to fight for their lives. As we look ahead, we are committed to fighting for justice and liberation for all oppressed people.

*Jordan Weber is an organizer and leader with Detroit Will Breathe.*

## As the people fight for survival, threat of dictatorship looms

Trump is out of the White House, but that doesn't mean Trumpism is gone. The far right could still impose a dictatorship on this country, and we the people should be on guard.

In times of crisis, the rich may masquerade behind populist politicians who claim they will take on the system on behalf of working people. This is what Trumpism is. It represents a violent, racist approach to imposing a corporate dictatorship in an era when the corporate-run economic system is collapsing and the demands for real change threaten the rule of the giant corporations.

The coalition of corporations, billionaires, conservative voters, far-right extremist groups and white supremacists that helped elect Trump was developed over decades by a highly organized national network that still exists. It includes thousands of people in armed militias who threaten violence to impose their views, but the far right potentially poses an even greater threat at the polls in the 2022 midterms and 2024 presidential election. Nearly 7 in 10 Republican voters in a recent Gallup poll said they wanted Trump to remain the leader of the Republican Party going forward.

Most House and Senate Republicans coddled and enabled the fascist movement that arose behind Trump in order to court the votes of Trump supporters, and they may do so again. And these politicians were nowhere to be found when armed militia took over the state capitol in Lansing, Mich., when marauding fascists beat and murdered people in Charlottesville, Virginia, or when people engaged in peaceful Black Lives Matter protests were teargassed, brutalized and arrested in cities like Detroit. Such events set the stage for what was to come.

Massive voter suppression efforts being promoted by Republican state lawmakers across the country could pose one of the biggest threats to democracy in the 2022 and 2024 elections. As the Washington Post reported recently, "33 states have crafted more than 165 bills to restrict voting so far this year — more than four times the number in last year's legislative sessions."

Consider too that the far right already has substantial control of government — the Supreme Court now has a right-wing majority, Trump also appointed hundreds of judges to the lower federal courts, and as Fareed Zakaria wrote recently, the Republican party "narrowly lost control of Congress [in 2020], but it did well in state houses across the country, sometimes with the help of voter suppression and gerrymandering."

What does this all add up to? It could be that by 2024 the far right could control many state governments, both houses of Congress and the White House.

What can we, the people, do? First, we should recognize that the far right is a serious threat and needs to be crushed, at the polls and by government. But we should also see that fascism



*Detroit celebration of Trump's presidential defeat.*

*Photo/Larry Lipton*

does not simply arise based on bigotry and extremism. It has economic roots. The corporations that run the country have to choose between ensuring their profits and meeting our needs in a time of crisis, and if they have to do away with democracy to ensure their power and profits, they will. That means we are going to have to rely on ourselves. We have to continue to organize, take to the streets, guard the right to vote, run progressive candidates for office at every level, and put constant pressure on the government to meet our needs and defend democracy. The next step is to continue our effort to mount a massive unified campaign based in every state to demand that government provide what we need: jobs, income, food, housing, water, health care, a safe environment, democracy, and more. We have a fight on our hands, and we need to steel ourselves for what lies ahead.

—The Editors

### **GIVE TO A REVOLUTIONARY PRESS**

We need your help. We're living in tumultuous times: Times of danger and opportunity. Please help us get out the truth, the voices of grassroots leaders fighting for a democratic society where no human being is killed by police, goes hungry, without health care, water or a home. We're all volunteers; no paid staff.

Please [donate here](#), or mail to People's Tribune, PO Box 577250, Chicago, IL 60657-7331

Thank you!

## Amazon fights to stop union in poorest Alabama town — while profits soar

*Excerpts below are from union organizers who spoke with democracynow.org about the union drive at Amazon's Bessemer, Alabama warehouse. If the union wins, it will be the first time an Amazon warehouse has been unionized in the entire country. The plant is mostly Black, mostly women and the largely Black city of Bessemer is one of the poorest in Alabama. Amazon has hired a Koch brothers linked union buster to break the drive.*

**Jennifer Bates:** We're organizing because . . . of the conditions; long work hours with only two breaks, long walks upstairs and downstairs . . . plenty of elevators . . . , but they're only used for merchandise. . . so there are a lot of health issues . . . [and] with COVID-19, they told us that they would advise us of those who have it or if we work near. . . [but] they haven't done well with that . . . They've put [anti-union] flyers on bathroom stalls. . . and they're coming to our workstations . . . so even some of the younger people are afraid . . . [and they're telling people], "If you vote the union, Amazon will shut down, so there won't be any jobs here."

**Michael Foster:** Amazon is very powerful, one of the most profitable businesses in the U.S. right now. And we, as the union, trying to take on Amazon in a right-to-work state . . . is the perfect image of David and Goliath.



New Yorkers show their solidarity with Amazon workers in Alabama. Support is growing nationally for the workers right to organize.

*Photo / Erik McGregor*

**Jennifer Bates:** [Winning the union] will change history. . . Amazon is choosing a lot of low-income communities. And it's bringing a lot of light . . . you're working in a facility where in the last three months they accumulated \$90-something billion, and none of the employees received anything for this. I like to tell the employees . . . you guys are Amazon. Without you guys, there is no Amazon.

## Covid-19: Nurse decries lack of inmate care at privatized Florida prison

*Cathy Talbott of the People's Tribune interviewed a nurse who wishes to remain anonymous who worked for the Florida Department of Corrections before the Covid-19 pandemic became public news.*

"I worked in the prison system [prior to the government's acknowledgment of the Covid-19 outbreak in this country] which is being privatized, too. And I got sick. Nurses that work for prisons are hired by corporations. Masses of inmates require diabetic and coronary care but they're not making it public how many inmates have Covid. Shouldn't the community know? Nursing homes and prisons are now being mandated to report [the numbers] but we have a Republican government that doesn't really care [this was prior to the Nov. election]. Like Florida, we have Governor DeSantis and Senator Rick Scott who ripped off Medicare funds before becoming governor and now he's a senator. It's always about the money and that's a sad thing."

"In the prison I had to bring in my own PPE. The people in charge of the facility were hiding PPE in their offices. We only had two doctors for an entire prison. Before Covid, we shipped out patients to hospitals but now we have to isolate them for fourteen days. How do you treat 1800 inmates with only two doctors? How do you test them appropriately without the staff

to do it? And if a prisoner is shipped out to a hospital, the corporation isn't making any money on him. It's always about the money!

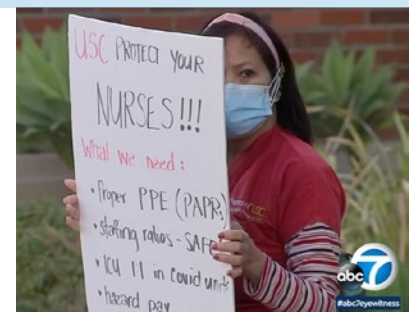
"So we've gone from giving individualized care to throwing pills at them. That's not nursing to me.

I see the frustration in every single nurse I know now. So now we just let them die? That's sad.

"At this point in time, we need help. Bring back our military troops. Get them out of foreign wars and let them rebuild our healthcare infrastructure because we're at war here with Covid. These guys can deal with infrastructure. In Maryland, we had to have the National Guard protect our PPE! We need a strategic defense plan to deal with this crisis. Make it a time of peace.

"We need mandatory masking or it's 'game over'."

"These corporations are taking over everything. Corporations are not 'persons' but are treated as persons with rights under the 14th Amendment. They have billions of dollars. They should be taxed and quality healthcare should be available to all."



Keck Hospital in Los Angeles. Nurses are still protesting unsafe working conditions during pandemic.

*Video Still, KNBC, Los Angeles*



## 'We are not gonna stop fighting,' say strikers for \$15

The following are excerpts from an article by Jake Johnson, published in *Common Dreams* on February 16, 2021, prior to Congress removing the \$15 minimum wage bill from the stimulus bill; plus information from press releases.

Fast food workers and other low-paid frontline employees walked off the job in more than a dozen cities across the U.S. to demand at least \$15 an hour, collective bargaining rights, and better conditions from their ultra-profitable employers—and to throw their support behind the ongoing congressional effort to raise the federal minimum wage after more than a decade of inaction.

"We're on strike to remind our employers that we are the company," Eric Winston, a Cracker Barrel employee, said at a rally outside a McDonald's in Durham, NC. "Us, the workers, we are the engine that runs your businesses. So protect us, respect our voices, and pay us enough, now."

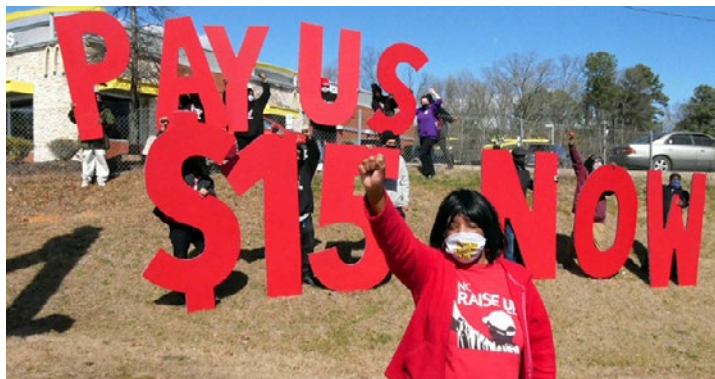
Denise, a home care worker from Kissimmee, Florida, said during a local action that the \$9 an hour she currently makes is not enough income to provide for her family and demanded that Congress take action. "That's why I'm speaking out today to demand \$15 an hour," said Denise. "We are asking members of Congress to support home care and pass a \$15 minimum wage."

## Minimum wage work ethic?

By **Mathew Kerner**

WEST VA — When I came home from the military, I worked in a lumber mill for minimum wage. It was the hardest work I've ever done. [People's] fears are the same unfounded fears that have never materialized any time minimum wage has been raised. If raising minimum wage to a living wage (which \$15 is not) caused consumer prices to rise then at least we would have an honest look at what the true cost of things is. Right now because we don't mandate a living wage we subsidize employers who pay below poverty wages by giving their employees SNAP benefits, Medicaid, and subsidized housing. You pay more than you think you do for your Big Mac now, but only part of what you pay is at the point of sale. The rest you pay to McDonalds through your taxes.

The really crappy part is that we shame and guilt the people who receive those benefits while saying nothing to the employers who exploit them. We try to legislate what they can buy at the grocery store and then post online about the person we saw buying steaks or shrimp with their snap card, but we never degrade their employers. It's funny that the people you are saying have no work ethic are suddenly "Essential Workers" when you want your Big Mac.



Workers in Durham, North Carolina strike to demand a \$15 minimum wage in February — and they aren't going to stop fighting.

Photo: NC Raise Up / Twitter

Democrats need to overrule the Senate parliamentarian and pass the bill, said Rev. Dr. William Barber II, co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign. "We are seeing a robbing of the rights of the poor . . . a clear violation of the . . . Constitution . . . it's catering to the corporate bloc in this country. It's stomping on the hopes and dreams of [those] who kept this economy alive in a pandemic . . . And no parliamentary issue [was] brought up when . . . 84% of the first COVID bill went to banks or corporations . . ." (Democracy, Now!)

The American people need to join this fight — it will impact everyone's future.

Visit **People's Tribune Latest News** for more essential worker stories:

[A love Letter to Chicago Teachers](#)



[Ride-share Companies Try to Strip Workers of Their Rights](#)



## 'When We Said Zero Eviction January, We Meant It'

*(These are excerpts from an article by KC Tenants, reprinted with permission. See <https://www.facebook.com/kctenants> or the complete article.*

KANSAS CITY, MO — On Thursday, January 28, the 16th Circuit Court of Jackson County resumed evictions after a two-week moratorium. The Courts scheduled 152 eviction hearings for the day.

But when we said Zero Eviction January, we meant Zero Eviction January!

KC Tenants stopped 136 of Thursday's evictions through direct action. Around 80 KC Tenants leaders blockaded two sets of doors outside the downtown courthouse, while nine KC Tenants leaders orchestrated a disruption inside, and over 50 allies disrupted online evictions in the morning and afternoon. By 3pm, KC Tenants had intervened in most of the scheduled evictions, delaying them for at least several weeks, and some well into March.

"I'm a certified nursing assistant, working full time, and things are hard right now. Really hard. I don't know where I would go if I was evicted. Today my eviction was delayed till mid-February, thanks to a blockade outside," said Diamond, a tenant facing eviction last Thursday. "I never knew there were people out there that helped you like this. It helps a lot."

KC Tenants declared this month Zero Eviction January, a sustained month of actions to end evictions.



Melissa, a new leader with KC Tenants, speaks out at the January eviction court blockade.

*Photo / Carly Rosin.*

In total, KC Tenants stopped over 911 scheduled eviction hearings in January. KC Tenants successfully delayed over 90% of the eviction hearings scheduled in Jackson County this month.

Along with the tenants, we exercised collective power to confront an inherently violent system. Every single day of January, KC Tenants mucked up a process designed to oppress, buying time for tenants as COVID rates spiked and the weather dropped below freezing.

Our collective is stronger than ever, and ready to struggle forward towards the world we deserve.

Donate to KC Tenants at <https://kctenants.org/donate>

## 'Our community continues to share!' Resistance in the shadows of Las Vegas casinos

By **Andrew Romanelli**

LAS VEGAS, NV — In this past year there have been an unprecedented amount of people awakened to the injustices that our most disenfranchised face on a daily basis.

Each time I step outside my door, I pass the many people tucked into doorways of abandoned buildings like Tetris pieces. I see them wrapped in layers of whatever they have to stay warm, in the winter here in Las Vegas, where the cold in this desert valley has a way of getting into your bones deep in the night. I see new small camps daily as our police conduct early morning sweeps—homelessness now openly punishable by law here. All this, in the shadows of colossal living monuments to capitalism. Inside, the poor get poorer, and outside the cost is sleeping on a piece of cardboard while people with purple oversized drinks step over them.

Growing up in Las Vegas, the first thing you learn is how to lose it all.

Here new shelters are erected, big-money nonprofits launch

careers, and like in many other cities the crisis continues to grow. We cannot wait on an elected official, legislation, a cop with a heart, or a hero from the neighborhood who swears they haven't forgotten their roots. It is up to us. We have been asked all our lives to wait, to rely on our government and its institutions while our people are dying. Then we are met with resistance for doing the work of our community, work that others are paid to do but don't.

Here in Las Vegas our community has come together to build Conestoga huts for our houseless, even after our city ignored CDC guidelines by dispersing homeless camps, and bulldozed a camp of 26 huts.

Our community continues to share, prepare and serve food without preconditions. It pooled money together to purchase tents after a day of severe winds recently destroyed many. While the city and the police continue to attempt to inhibit these efforts, our numbers swell, and people become more aware. This is where we ourselves can achieve actual change.

I am with you, wherever you are.

## 'I choose to follow the Revolutionary Jesus' Reverend Bruce Wright, In Memoriam

The People's Tribune mourns the loss of street minister and revolutionary organizer Rev. Bruce Wright, a frequent contributor to its pages from the front lines of the fight for economic and racial justice he gave his life to, right up until its end. Bruce put into action his spiritual understanding: to shelter and feed the homeless and hungry, and also help build the movement to do away with homelessness and hunger and racism, toward a transformed world.

He was tireless in his works of direct service, as he was in spreading this vision through organizing, writing, his radio show, and in everything he did, often against impossible odds. In addition to his inspirational work and the demands it put on his life, he never complained. He made time to also be an exceptionally loving and devoted husband and father. Every day he focused first on his wife, Barbara, doting on her, to be sure her needs were met, as she is disabled. He would be excited any time he could spend time with his daughter Christina, whom he also doted on, or with his son Michael.

He always made time for his grandchildren, especially the oldest, Stephen, in whom he was starting to see a heart for the work his Grandpa Bruce did.

His mission will live on in the hearts and actions of those he uplifted and inspired: family, comrades and beyond. He was a bright light and inspiration in his central work with the Tampa Bay Refuge Ministries, the Poor People's Army, as host of the Revolutionary Radio Show, and others; and to all who knew him.

In his own words, from an article he wrote for the People's Tribune: "For me I choose to follow the Revolutionary Jesus who seeks to unite the oppressed . . . CHOOSE THIS DAY WHOM YOU WILL SERVE."



Bruce and Barbara Wright

## Freedom Ride for Housing in Los Angeles: Make Some Noise!

*LOS ANGELES — In January, the Services Not Sweeps Coalition and other groups held a car caravan of 200 vehicles to gentrifying developments in Los Angeles County and to three large encampments in MacArthur Park, Echo Park Lake and Hollywood. The caravan of painted and postered cars demanding housing as a human right was well-received throughout the city. Below are words from some of the testimonies from the morning rally.*

**Craig Roberts:** "The reason I got involved in the Freedom Ride for housing is that evictions and criminalization are spreading all across the city. There are four people a day dying because of the conditions of the homeless as well as the pandemic. Because City Hall is controlled by the developers, L.A. is the most corrupt city in the whole country. Tents have spread over the entire city. In Los Angeles County we have over 60,000 people sleeping on the street and over 40,000 in the city."

**Pancake:** "I'm a community organizer of LA CAN, it is about house keys not handcuffs, decriminalize. We see the problem as the lack of housing in the city. We have the largest community of unhoused people in this nation. We are hearing the mayor saying there's a state of emergency, but where is the money? You see the military industrial complex, the privatization, the building of more prisons. You need to reach the spirit of the people, they've been disenfranchised. If you can just reach one, it's worth it."

**General Dogon:** "We're freedom riding for housing. We're freedom riding to end the dirty divide in the city of Los Angeles. When you look around the city you can see the public



A participant in the freedom ride for housing in Los Angeles where people are dying daily due to a lack of housing and the pandemic.

infrastructure for healthcare is cracked. When you look at the amount of money being put into enforcement and sweeps and when you look at the money allocated for services it looks like a little midget next to the Empire State building. We're going to defund the police and add that money to services and housing. All power to the people! Are you all ready to ride for housing, are you ready to ride down on the mayor, down on the chief? Then make some noise!"

Groups active in this coalition can be contacted at:

[servicesnotsweeps.com](http://servicesnotsweeps.com)

[congress.org](http://congress.org)

[mlkcoalitionforjobsjusticeandpeace.org](http://mlkcoalitionforjobsjusticeandpeace.org)

# Texas: Bitter Cold, No Heat, No Water - WHY?

By Karel Riley

AUSTIN, TX — In the 1930's, Texas designed its own electric grid to avoid federal regulations. It's cut off from the rest of the US power grid, so it can't borrow power from other states as all other states can. It is run by an entity called ERCOT. Five of its directors don't even live in Texas, and all five have now resigned.

The oil and gas industry runs this state and controls the GOP that holds most of the political power, including the Railroad Commission that nowadays has jurisdiction over the oil and natural gas pipelines. The energy market is unregulated. The Public Utility Commission allows for-profit energy providers to raise rates when demand goes up. Scott Willoughby, a 36-year-old Army veteran living on Social Security told the *New York Times*, "My savings is gone," after receiving an electric bill for \$16,752.

The water infrastructure problems were revealed in a report from 10 years ago in Austin. It exposed the lack of maintenance that causes numerous water main breaks throughout the year, wasting a tremendous amount of water in a state that regularly experiences drought. These problems were never corrected.

Into this situation came an unusual, but not totally unexpected, period of below freezing weather with ice and snow. Natural gas-powered plants ran out of fuel when the gas pipelines froze due to lack of maintenance because the industry didn't want to spend the money, and they didn't have to conform to the federal regulations.

## Frigid Texas Prisons: Broken Toilets, Disgusting Food, Few Blankets

*Below are excerpts from an article by Keri Blakinger, published by The Marshall Project.*

"Prisoners are defecating in paper bags and overflowing toilets, there aren't enough extra blankets to go around, and mess hall kitchens are churning out half-rations of unidentifiable cold food.

"As a once-in-a-generation snowstorm walloped the Lone Star State this week and led to widespread power outages, prisoners and corrections officers agree: Already-dire conditions inside Texas prisons somehow got even worse.

"Officials said 33 prisons lost power and 20 had water shortages after the state's electrical grid failed for several days during single-digit temperatures. Though the Texas Department of Criminal Justice said generators kept electricity on, staff, prisoners and their families reported frigid—and increasingly horrific—conditions around the system.



Food line in Austin, Texas, after the storm.

*Photo / Video Still, WSJ*

Millions of people lost power for days. Many businesses, including grocery stores, shut down. The cold spell caused even more water mains to break around the state, leaving millions with no water. Some pipes in people's homes burst, leading to a lot of expensive damage. The damage estimates from this crisis are expected to exceed those of Hurricane Harvey that devastated Houston.

We the people must seize this opportunity to organize and go on the offensive against the power structure, including the GOP-dominated state legislature. We must demand they respond to our needs and allocate the funds to do it. It will be a huge battle, but we can't allow politics as usual to continue.

*The above is excerpted from a longer article that can be found on the [People's Tribune Latest News website](http://People's Tribune Latest News website).*

At the Polunsky Unit in Livingston, Texas, prisoners gathered snow into buckets to flush toilets.

*Photo: Bob Owen / Houston Chronicle, via Associated Press*



"The heaters aren't working, there's no showers, everybody's locked in the cell," said one prisoner, who asked not to be identified for fear of retaliation. Between buildings, he added, "They're dumping table salt on the ice to thaw it out, trying to make the walkways passable."

"At other units, prisoners with contraband phones sent pictures of their increasingly pitiful meals, including one that was nothing but a small piece of cornbread, a half a piece of cheese, a handful of raisins and a hot dog with no bun or ketchup."

*The full article can be found at [themarshallproject.org](http://themarshallproject.org).*

## How a campaign by indigenous women turned into a just transition model

By **Cherri Foytlin**

INDIAN BAYOU, LA — It began along the bank of the Mississippi River, among the crawfish ponds of Southwest Louisiana, and in the sweltering swamps of the Atchafalaya Basin. Water protectors came to L'eau Est La Vie (Water is Life) Camp from near and far to protect land and water from Energy Transfer Partners' destructive project — the Bayou Bridge Pipeline.

To some, the struggle to stop the tail end of the Dakota Access Pipeline was a failure. Even after hundreds of direct actions, lobbying days, canvassing initiatives, petitions, and banner drops, the pipeline was completed in 2019.

During the campaign however, L'eau Est La Vie, led by indigenous women, set up camp and were able to successfully defend an 11-acre property from encroachment by the pipeline company. Eventually the company was forced to reroute the pipeline, saving the land.

Water protectors then shifted gears, from fighting against the systems that are destroying the Earth, to working to grow and build systems to heal and sustain life.

Ndn Bayou Food Forest resides in that field that once grew only sugarcane, but now grows avocados, sweet potatoes, mulberries, bananas, beans, kale, figs, catfish, okra, watermelon, squash, turmeric, basil, broccoli, cabbage, collards, and traditional indigenous medicines.

Over 400 fruit trees have been propagated and will be cared for until they're ready to be planted later this year. These and a diversity of other fruit, nut and native wetland trees are being gifted to neighbors and gardeners locally, and in neighborhoods throughout New Orleans via a partnership with the Lobelia Commons' food autonomy initiative. These gifts are often accompanied by public demonstrations and skill-shares.



Banana flower processing and harvest at Ndn Bayou Food Forest in South Louisiana.

Ndn Bayou's strategy is to amplify impact by producing and distributing not just food or medicine harvests, but the food and medicine plants themselves, thereby seeding not just one food forest but dozens, eventually hundreds.

Additionally, Ndn Bayou Food Forest has become a hub for organizing mutual aid efforts in the Deep South. During the recent hurricanes in Lake Charles, Louisiana, the property was able to host and serve several mutual aid and support initiatives.

The food forest has become an asset and model to the resiliency of the Deep South environmental justice movement, by example of food sovereignty, just transition, mutual aid support, and direct action. To those engaged in this continued initiative, and thanks to the long term vision of native women, failure was never on the table for L'eau Est La Vie Camp.

*If you would like to learn more about Ndn Bayou Food Forest, check out the [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#) pages.*

## For a world unto itself, free of petty conflicts—just music

By **Elena Herrada**

DETROIT, MI — Good morning. Several years ago, I was driving to work at the cafeteria workers' union. On the radio, I heard music that was so beautiful I had to pull over. When the song ended, there was an interview with the musician, Charles Lloyd. He told the story of how he was touring in Ireland and was invited by local fans to listen to musicians playing Irish music in a small town by the sea. He could not describe the instrument that sounded like a human voice. He urged the musicos to share it with him, but they were very protective of their traditional musical instruments. In the morning, he found the instrument outside his door of the place he was staying.

At lunchtime that day, I went to the music store in Southfield. I think it was Street Corner? Something like that. I asked about it and they immediately provided the new CD by Charles Lloyd.

Today, sorting out Jesse's CDs, I came across this same CD. He had burned it from an original. I am learning that music heals in ways I had not paid attention to in before times. Listening to the pauses, the spontaneous sounds of instruments joining in so perfectly—the harmony of each contribution—searching out liner notes to see who that was and where it was recorded, what label, all of it, a world unto itself, free of petty conflicts—just music. And I am grateful.

## Take action: Stop the reopening of immigrant child detention center!

The Biden administration recently announced that it plans to reopen a detention center for migrant children in Homestead, Florida—essentially imprisoning children who have come to the U.S. seeking refuge. Many are fleeing violence and poverty and seeking asylum in the United States.

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is among those groups rallying opposition to reopening the detention center. In an email to activists, Lis-Marie Alvarado of AFSC Florida wrote that AFSC “worked with partners and community members in Florida and across the country to

shut down the detention center in 2019, when it held around 2,000 children under President Trump. Now we’re mobilizing to stop the Biden administration from reopening the center—and urging them to instead prioritize uniting migrant children with family members or sponsors and promote community-based alternatives to detention that are in compliance with the rights of children.

“President Biden must keep his promise to reunite children separated from their families and treat immigrants with the respect and dignity we all deserve. Reopening Homestead—or any child detention center—places young people in greater danger, especially in this pandemic. Detention centers are places where social distancing is impossible, health care is inadequate, and abuses are rampant. And studies have shown that detaining children causes lasting trauma. The cost of that to children, families, and our communities is incalculable.

“Environmental conditions at this detention center also pose potentially serious health and safety threats to the children who would be housed there, including possible exposure to toxic chemicals from a neighboring Superfund site.

“We need your voice today. Please join us in pushing to keep families and communities together and say no to locking up migrant children. Tell President Biden: Keep Homestead detention center closed—and end the detention of migrant children today!”



*Photo / American Friends Service Committee*

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## Shouldn't vaccines be publicly owned?

We the people paid a lot of the up-front development costs for the vaccines, but the drug companies own them and get all the profits, and we can't even all get vaccinated. This in the wake of the horrifying number of deaths in the United States — 500,000.

As we go to print, President Biden has said the United States will have enough COVID-19 vaccine for 300 million people by the end of May. We hope this is the case as some of the vaccine producers have said in the recent past that they are not going to meet their production targets. Supply is still limited.

Meanwhile, as of December, the U.S. government has obligated nearly \$14 billion in public money for vaccine development and manufacturing. The contracts that the U.S. and other governments around the world signed with the vaccine makers are secret, but some details have leaked out. The New York Times reported that “drug companies demanded and received flexible [vaccine] delivery schedules, patent protection and immunity from liability if anything goes wrong. In some instances, countries are prohibited from donating or reselling doses, a ban that could hamper efforts to get vaccines to poor countries.”

Shouldn't the COVID-19 vaccine — and all vaccines — be publicly owned?

—*The Editors*

tender for  
the slender boy

wiping pizza crumbs  
from the outdoor table

— *Sarah Menefee*