

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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Saving Ourselves from a Healthcare System That's Killing Us

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A protester shouts out as she is taken away by police after being arrested for a sit-in inside of One Liberty Plaza recently in New York. Advocates for Medicare for All in New York engaged in an act of civil disobedience at WellPoint.

DON EMMERT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

AMERICA AT THE FORK IN THE ROAD

EDITORIAL

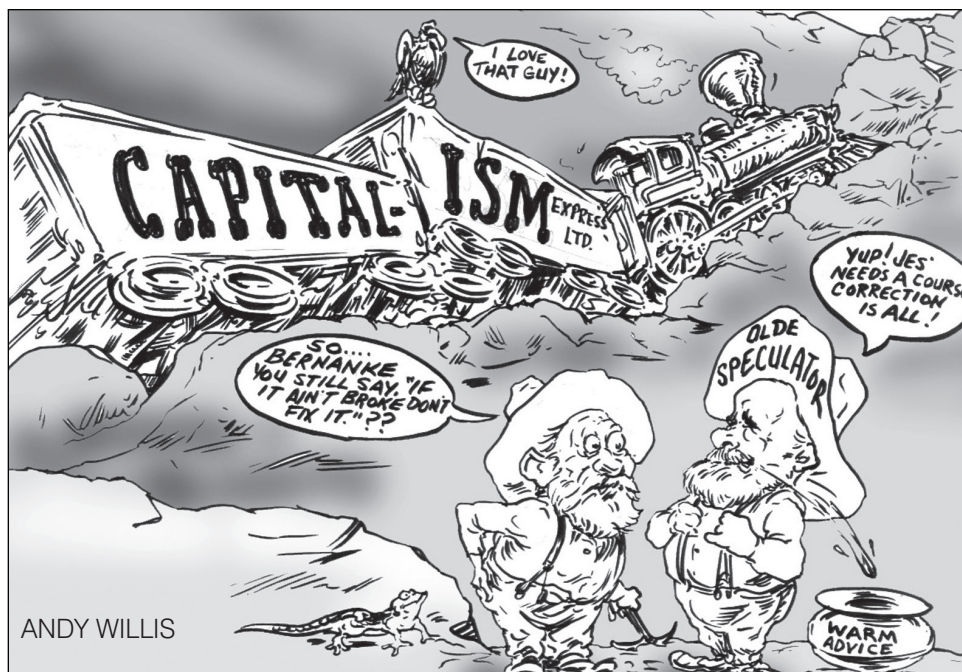
Politics is the faithful handmaiden of the economy. This often quoted and more often ignored statement was never more true than today. The entire political structure of the United States is scrambling to present the use of the people's money to financially rescue the corporations as a democratic act in the interests of the people.

The ruling class has a long history in this respect. For 300 years, slavery, the pedestal of the economy, was presented to the world as democracy. When President Jackson defied the courts and ordered the Army to remove the Native Americans to Oklahoma, it was presented as in the interests of the Native Americans. The unprovoked invasion of Mexico and the annexation of half of its territory in the 19th century were presented as liberating the Mexican people from a corrupt and brutal government. Even today, the westward expansion of slavery during the 19th century is hailed as the "March of Democracy."

History shows that the basic role of politics is to clear the way for the objective motion of the economy. What does that mean today?

The political form of government depends on the economy. When there is widespread ownership of the economy, democracy is necessary. When there is concentrated, restricted ownership of the economy, political forms hostile to democracy become necessary. America has been known as a democracy, despite slavery and monopoly control of the government, because of the petty ownership by broad strata of the American people. Wage-less, automated production is changing all this, and there is no going back to the previous era.

Globalization and automation began the process of polarization of wealth and poverty in our country. The first step is the destruction of the economic middle. Working class families, who 20 years ago owned homes and dabbled in the stock market, today see



their homes in foreclosure and their savings and retirement wiped out, and face the grim possibility of poverty.

The economy is the foundation of the social order. That economy – the way things are produced and distributed – is fundamentally changing and ripping apart the society that rests upon it. Change means instability and the political structure is moving to protect the economy.

Suddenly government-directed socialization of loss and privatization of profit takes the place of "what governs least, governs best." Trade unions, which long ago chose anti-communist "business unionism," found it good business to place their considerable resources at the disposal of the corporations. Paths for corporations, unions and government, laid out decades ago, have converged. The developing merger of government, corporations and a labor front is not simply pro-business and anti- the people – it is fascism.

During the first half of the 1900s, a number of countries, especially Germany, Italy and Spain, began the transition from monarchy to democracy. This transition was a moment of political instability and popular forces surged forward to claim their country

for the people. In order to protect the domination of the corporations, fascist revolutions overthrew the existing governments and imposed a dictatorship of corporate power in the form of a merger of government, the corporations and a government-sponsored trade union labor front to control the workers.

What happened in Europe and Asia by revolution and the force of arms is happening quite naturally in America. During the 1930s, revolutionaries pointed out that fascism would come to America in the form of democracy. There is a danger of that happening. The growing objective impulse toward nationalization of corporations "too big to fail" will further this fascist impulse unless the people gain control and ownership of the government.

Centuries of history have moved our country to a fork in the road. Which path will we take? Will it be the merger of corporate economic power with the legal force of the government in order to tighten control of the people? Or will it be a government of, by and for the people that makes these indispensable corporate giants public property? Time is short and the future is up to us.

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

The People's Tribune is devoted to the proposition that an economic system that can't or won't feed, clothe and house its people ought to be and will be changed. To that end, this paper is a tribune of the people. It is the voice of millions struggling for survival. It strives to educate politically those millions on the basis of their own experience. It is a tribune to bring them together, to create a vision of a better world, and a strategy to achieve it.

We find ourselves at a historic moment as labor-replacing technology leads us on a path toward the decisive reconstruction of society. Who will win – the capitalists or the growing mass of poor – will depend on winning the hearts and minds of the people to create a society whose fruits benefit all.

We offer our pages as a vehicle for the new ideas rooted in our reality, and to be the voice of those who seek to raise the consciousness of society. Let us gather our collective experience, intelligence and commitment to bring forth a vision that changes America into a society "by the people, of the people, for the people."

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE EDITORIAL POLICY:
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.

Deadlines for articles and art: The deadline for articles, photographs and other art is the first of each month for the issue that comes out at the beginning of the following month. For example, the deadline for the June issue is May 1. Articles should be as short as possible, and no longer than 600 words. We reserve the right to edit articles to conform to space limitations.

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Why Revolutionaries Need A Press

From the Editors

We are sometimes asked "Why do revolutionaries need a press?" The answer has to do with this moment in history. People are struggling just to get the basic necessities of life. Historical forces beyond anyone's control have set the stage for a new society to be built, but from this point on, how things turn out depends on what people think. This means that those of us who are seeking fundamental change are engaged in a battle of ideas, a struggle to win the hearts and minds of the people. If we don't raise the consciousness of the people and unite them around a vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it, then we'll fail in our effort to build a just and free society. To win the battle of ideas, we need a press.

Visit us on the web at www.peopletribune.org

SAVING OURSELVES FROM A HEALTHCARE SYSTEM THAT'S KILLING US

COVER STORY

As we go to press Congress is poised to pass "healthcare reform" legislation under the cynical, Orwellian newspeak title, "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act." A review of our American "healthcare" system is in order.

A September 2009 Harvard study found that more than 45,000 deaths occur annually in the U. S. due to Americans lacking adequate health insurance. This number alone means one death every 12 minutes. More broadly, the total number of people who die in the United States because of the lack of medical care, whether insured or uninsured, was calculated in a 1997 study to be 100,000 per year, as published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Multiply this figure over four years and it alone equals the number of U. S. military casualties suffered during World War II. The difference now however is this number of deaths grows and continues year after year.

Even more significantly, the U. S. investor-owned medical system itself, which includes the insurance industry, has played a larger role in the deaths of Americans. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported in July 2000, "...a total of 225,000 Americans die each year..." as a result of the assembly line, under-staffed, commodity-based, profit-motivated medi-



Sterling Heights Chrysler Rally in Michigan, September, 2009.

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PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

cal treatment they receive. The report states that these deaths result from unnecessary surgery, medication errors and other avoidable errors in hospitals, infections in hospitals and the negative effects of prescribed drugs.

The report concluded that America's healthcare system itself is the *third leading cause of death in the U. S.*, after heart disease and cancer. The situation since the report has only gotten more horrifying. And given the "healthcare reform," legislation close to passage in Washington D. C. the situation is guaranteed to get much worse! The legislation is designed solely to cut the costs of the healthcare system for business and guarantee billions in profit for the privately owned healthcare industry. It will not guarantee access to quality care for everyone.

The capitalist class, through its investor-owned insurance industry, is being guaranteed tens of millions of new customers under the proposed legislation. Many Americans currently un-

insured will be required to buy health insurance (or they will be fined), with some getting taxpayer subsidies and others not. However, this is hundreds of billions of dollars per year in new found cash! And it will be going into the coffers of the health insurance industry and for-profit healthcare providers. This is not healthcare. This is capitalist-care!

Our elected leaders must be held accountable to meet the basic human needs of the people they govern. The highest quality healthcare for all Americans is such a human need and as such is a birthright. Either those who are elected to represent the American people provide it, or they are no longer fit to govern and must be removed as obstacles in the way of human progress. It's that simple.

Nationalization of the entire healthcare industry, under the control of a government genuinely organized in the interests of the people, can guarantee that all of the healthcare needs of the American people are met. The unfet-

tered, constantly improving scientific advancements of quality care can then be unleashed and utilized to provide true healthcare for the American people.

To realize this kind of future from the present requires the growing unification of those healthcare champions and soldiers who by virtue of their mission are already historically moving towards a "healthcare first" nationalization of the U. S. healthcare industry. These groups and individuals are to be found amongst those who are currently engaged in the struggle for a universal, single-payer, governmental system of delivery that eliminates the insurance industry gatekeepers and middlemen.

The first segment of an old proverb rings true for the American people today, "...the people without a vision shall perish..." However, a vision without organization, a strategy and a plan to achieve it always rings hollow. Let's take the next steps to build a future that belongs to us!

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The People's Tribune Needs Your Donations!

The People's Tribune needs your financial help to go on being a voice of the people. We need to raise an additional \$1000 each month. The People's Tribune brings the stories of those who are struggling to move forward in a world where corporate power is threatening to crush them. Along with those stories, we try to offer some strategic perspective to help put the struggle in context and point the way toward victory. Please donate whatever you can. See the subscription/donation form on the right. You can also donate using Pay Pal on our web site, www.peoplestribune.org.

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ST. JOHNS RIVER HOMELESS CAMP UPROOTED

By Bill Simon

We arrived about 7:00 am on Monday, November 16, 2009 at the St. Johns River Homeless Encampment in Visalia, California. Dismantling was to start at 8:00 am, and most of the residents had already left. The operation was underway when we arrived.

The river was as empty as the dreams of the homeless who were being evicted. Sheriff's Department personnel were conducting the operation. We asked a deputy if we could go in to observe. He referred us to Sgt. Knight who informed us that: "This is private property. We are not permitting access to the property. Maybe that will change later." When we asked who owned the property, Sgt. Knight said there were 7 plots and he didn't know all the owners. Could we talk to the Lieutenant in charge? Sgt. Knight left and returned with Undersheriff Cleek.

Undersheriff Cleek said they were not allowing access. For a week they had been inviting reporters onto the property. Now, no entrance was allowed. Undersheriff Cleek explained that deputies had visited with the encampment residents and explained what would happen. Cleek said they were working with the Visalia Rescue Mission and had explained what other resources were available to the residents. He talked about the County's Drug Court and work with veterans and other attempts to help the

homeless. The Department gave receipts and took photos of people with their belongings to make it easier to reclaim things later. The property would be stored for 90 days next to the Sheriff's Department building which made claiming property easy. County Counsel was on site. Unfortunately, since the Sheriff's Department wouldn't give us access, we couldn't verify that what they said was what was actually happening.

There has been a homeless encampment located on one side of the river or the other for perhaps twenty years. Some people have lived there for as long as 7 to 14 years. Originally the camp was south of the river on nicely shaded City property. A few years ago the City made the residents move to the less pleasant north side of the river onto County property. There were really three separate encampments along the riverbank, including one for parolees. Undersheriff Cleek admitted that many of the parolees required registering as sex offenders have simply disappeared recently. At its peak, about 250 people lived in the encampment. Why was the encampment closed? The stated reason was that the residents were trespassing.

South of the river, where the media had gathered, there was a public path where we could get closer to the action. We could see several sites still intact although some were being removed as we watched.

We couldn't see much from the dis-

tance. We saw a few deputies at the far end of the encampment loading up a big army surplus truck with wood, and other 'building' materials. Then they threw some of it back on the ground and drove away. We couldn't tell if they considered this material to be property or garbage.

One man carried some of his belongings across the dry riverbed. He tied his stuff down to the trailer attached to his child size bicycle. He had just enough of his belongings so he could sleep somewhere that night. We talked

for a minute, and then he went back and had a deputy photograph him with his remaining property. That part of the explanation seemed to be working. As we walked back to the road, the man rode up on his bicycle and talked with us for another brief minute. Brief, because he had to get to his job working with a gardening company. And so goes another day in the lives of the working homeless.

Bill Simon is Chair, Fresno Area Chapter ACLU-NC.



St Johns River Encampment, Visalia, California.

PHOTO/BILL SIMON

ANTI-COMMUNISM DISARMS OUR MOVEMENT

By Sandy Perry

As the movement for economic survival grows stronger, it will inevitably be branded "communist" again and again, just as has every other effective American social change movement. This is because the target of anti-communism is not just the communists, or even mainly the communists, but the entire movement. Anti-communism is a weapon of choice for those who seek to discredit anyone who challenges the privilege of the ruling elites.

Anti-communists tend to call everyone who advocates change a communist, regardless of who they really are, what they think, or what their actual affiliation or ideology. They target not only self-proclaimed communists, but also liberals, Democrats, socialists, Christians, Martin Luther King, anarchists, Social Democrats, priests, nuns, unionists, civil rights advocates, service providers, peace activists, Michael Moore, and others. Many even call the President of the United States a communist.

So is our movement really communist? The answer is yes and no, because it depends on what you mean by communism.

The literal dictionary definition of communism is a cooperative economic system based on common ownership, where wealth is distributed on the basis of human need rather than private profit. Most early Western concepts of communism were based on the accounts of how the original Christians lived, and on sixteenth and seventeenth century observations of the lives of Native Americans.

The movements of the dispossessed today are spontaneous, practical movements for the basic necessities of life: food, clothing, health care, and a place to sleep. People are impelled to join these movements because America's economy is broken and no longer offers them any other means to survive.

Over the last three decades, automation and globalization have demolished many cities and eliminated entire industries, leaving for most people only massive unemployment and a smattering of low-wage service jobs. As the financial meltdown, bailouts, and stimulus plans have proven, the economy can no longer function without government intervention. The question is, whom will that government intervention benefit? Will it continue to enrich the wealthiest people in America (as it has so far)? Or will it

help meet the needs of ordinary Americans, whose standard of living has been steadily declining in recent years?

The dispossessed today cannot survive without fighting for government to stop bailing out corporations and start bailing out people in need. In this sense we are all communists, because we seek the political power to redistribute society's wealth on the basis of human needs instead of private ownership. We do this when we fight for jobs, wages, health care, education, and affordable housing.

When anti-communists claim that "communism does not work", the communism they usually refer to is the twentieth century, Soviet-style Marxist communism. The Soviet communist movement never achieved a real communist economy, however, because its industrial-era means of production did not create enough of an abundance to make it possible. Today our electronic means of production are much more advanced.

The twentieth century, Marxist left has splintered and declined, and an ideologically diverse practical movement has arisen in its place. This movement is not communist in the ideological sense,

since it comprises people of all different ways of thinking. But it is being called communist because it objectively confronts the system.

When the anti-communists are done, we are left in the same situation we were already in before: broke, homeless, disorganized, unemployed, with no prospect of work, no health care, not knowing which way to turn, and not even having a safe and legal place to sleep. Clearly anti-communism does not improve our situation and does not answer any of our problems.

Americans should not fear to criticize the failure of capitalism. It is already clear that it can no longer meet the needs of our people. The question is what new system for distributing our wealth will emerge, and will it provide for our basic necessities so we can survive? The important thing is to not let political and ideological differences get in the way of building a practical movement to win the power we need to shape our future.

An Interview with the Author of 'How Lincoln Learned to Read'

By **Lew Rosenbaum**

Editor's note: Lew Rosenbaum recently interviewed Daniel Wolff, a poet, grammy nominated music writer, and the author of "How Lincoln Learned to Read" and other books.

Lew Rosenbaum: "How Lincoln Learned to Read" deals with the history and purpose of American education. What conclusions did you reach about the point of education today?

Daniel Wolff: One of the themes that runs through the book—which goes from Ben Franklin to Elvis Presley—is a kind of schizophrenia when it comes to the goals of American education. On the one hand, there's been a grand democratic vision; as President Obama recently put it: with "the right education" any child of any race and from any class ought to be able to get ahead. On the other hand, there's a strong tradition—since before Horace Mann—of public education as a way to make citizens obedient, to teach them how to line up and obey orders, to "Americanize" them.

I think education today includes both these themes and reflects the economy students are supposed to enter. In the late 19th century, W.E.B. DuBois observed that schools were run for businesses, to turn out the kind of workers they'd need. Part of the confusion about

schooling today comes from the reality that there aren't enough jobs to keep everyone employed. It also isn't clear what kids will need to know for the jobs that might be available. If a large segment of the population is going to be working in the service industry—from flipping burgers to parking cars—why do they need to know geometry? Or how Lincoln learned to read?

LR: You often discuss the different ways people learn, and that much learning takes place outside of school. How does the increased reliance on standardized testing (in school and elsewhere) relate to learning?

DW: No Child Left Behind has shifted the emphasis way over to the "make students obedient" side of the ledger.

Again, it comes back to the point of education. If we're trying to help kids think, it'll be damn hard to measure that through a standardized test. If the point of schooling is to consign a percentage of students to a life of poverty, prison, and neglect—meanwhile pacifying others by promising that what they learn in school will keep them safe and (barely) afloat—there's no better instrument than tests and more tests.

LR: You've written that major corporations invest in charter schools to reap profits through real estate holdings. Why is U.S. Secretary of Educa-

tion Arne Duncan taking the Chicago plan—with a heavy reliance on charter schools—national?

DW: Are charter schools being used to undermine public education? Absolutely. But the positive side of parents opting for alternatives is it makes their dissatisfaction obvious. Charter schools wouldn't exist if folks were okay with regular public schools. They aren't, and I think they're right not to be. That so many parents—many of them low-income and parents of color—have taken a gamble on their kids' future by enrolling them in charter schools indicates an opening and an opportunity.

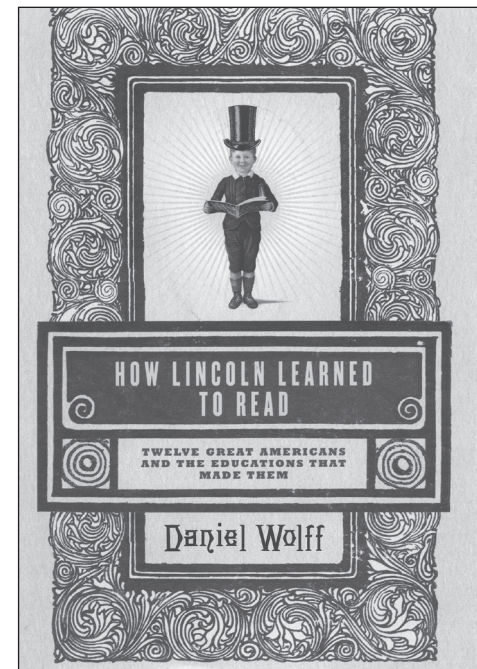
LR: You speak of the need for all to be involved in creating a vision of what education and learning can be like in a new society. What is your vision?

DW: The nationalization of education going on right now is successfully taking the question of what education ought to be out of your hands and mine.

I think parents, teachers, students, and other community members have to hash out their vision on a local level. Ideally, there's then a connection to what we're doing state by state and nationally. People have to buy in to what kids learn because learning doesn't tend to happen unless we understand why it's important. Unless both teacher and student are learning. Unless there's an

urgency: "I got to know about this; how do I find out?"

My vision of learning in a new society is that it grows out of that tedious, exhilarating, messy process where people meet as equals and come to an agreement of what we all—as a community—need to know.



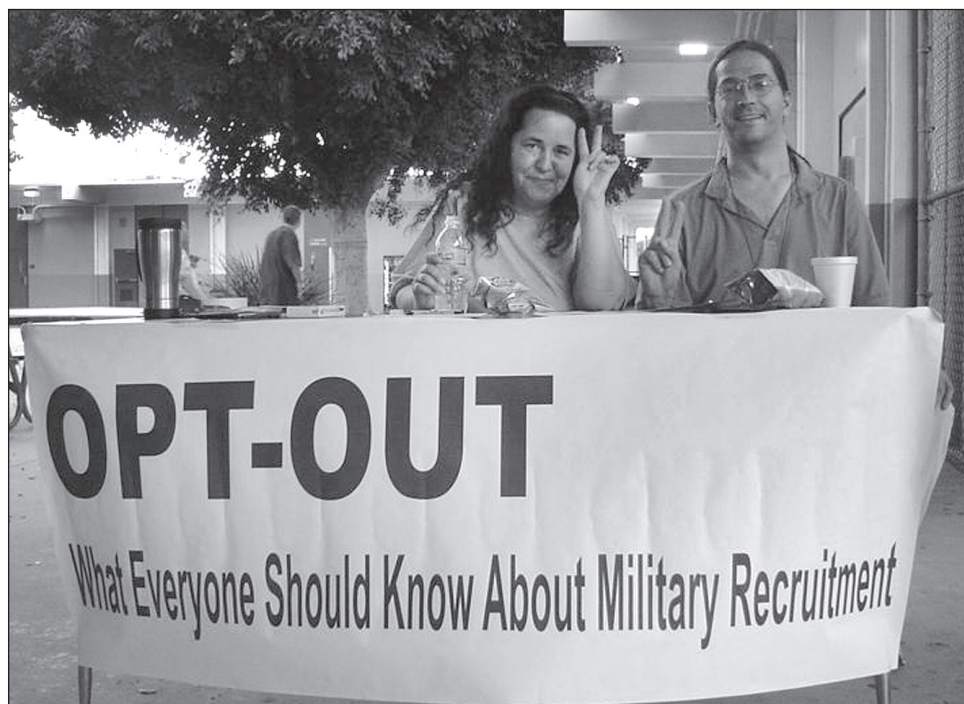
Peace Clubs Protect Young People From Never-Ending War

By **Leonard Baric and Marshall Blesofsky, Long Beach Recruitment Awareness Project**

All over the U.S., peace activists are informing students about military recruitment. For many young people the melt-down of the economy and cuts at community colleges have closed the doors to jobs and a way to support themselves. Military recruiters target schools in poor neighborhoods and especially target high school students on welfare and food stamps. Peace activists call it the poverty draft. This article represents the efforts of the peace movement to protect our young people and end the never-ending wars.

On the first day of Fall, 2009, in a small high school courtyard, four people took action to protect the privacy, and perhaps the very lives, of some of our nation's youth. Those four people, Electra Teodosiadis, Leonard Baric, Marshall Blesofsky and Pat Alviso are all members of the Long Beach Recruitment Awareness Project (LBRAP.) LBRAP is a newly formed counter-recruitment group working to educate and inform students and their families about the realities of military recruitment.

Pat Alviso, a teacher at Tracy High



Electra Teodosiadis and Leonard Baric, members of the Long Beach Recruitment Awareness Project, informing students at a local high school of alternatives to going to war.

PHOTO/MARSHALL BLESOFSKY

School in Cerritos, California, obtained permission from her principal at the school to have a table set up for LBRAP at this year's Back To School Night. Unknown to the parents and students

walking into the courtyard, under the No Child Left Behind Act, military recruiters can obtain the phone numbers and addresses of any high school student in the United States Of America. The

only way to stop this is if a student and/or parent/legal guardian signs an "Opt Out" form, to be given to the school's principal. While Ms. Alviso attended to her duties at Back To School Night, the other LBRAP members greeted parents and students coming into the courtyard, explaining why they were there and offering the parents and students the option to sign the opt out forms.

LBRAP estimates 1 in 5 students present that night were opted out. Most forms were signed by parents or legal guardians. Of note, a student at Tracy began organizing a campus Peace Club. This new club has already had their first meeting. The students plan to network with other peace clubs in the area, to raise money for students to attend peace camp that raises awareness about peace in the school and world. Students also want to collect items to send to our military in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Long Beach Recruitment Awareness Project is under the umbrella of the Long Beach Area Peace Network (LBAPN), in Long Beach, California. This organization has maintained vigils every Friday night in the Belmont Shore section of Long Beach for the past 6 years.

For more info email MarshallBlesofsky@yahoo.com.

Detroit Fights Utility Shut Offs

Interview with Maureen Taylor

By Sandy Reid,
People's Tribune

The People's Tribune interviewed Maureen Taylor, chair of the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization (MWRO). The MWRO, and other groups, are protesting utility cutoffs in the city of Detroit. Although the utility company, DTE Energy, refuses to provide public information on cutoffs, organizers estimate that there is upwards of 27,000 cutoffs in Detroit alone, without lights or without gas.

"The Resurrection march theme has a purpose," says Taylor. "One is to res-

children again, and again, and if those documents aren't provided, the cash assistance, the food stamps and even the Medicaid coverage is cut off. The redundant demands torture hundreds of thousands throughout Michigan, and ends up with families routinely suffering during near zero temperatures year after year."

"What we're seeing is the total collapse of the capitalist system and the taking with it of every single social safety net," says Taylor. "You don't have the right to have heat, water, lights, benefits, and you certainly don't have the right to health care, a house or apart-



Protest outside DTE Energy in Detroit. See the video of the DTE Demonstration at YouTube.com.

PHOTO CREDIT/KENNY SNODGRASS, ACTIVIST AND AUTHOR OF FROM VICTIMIZATION TO EMPOWERMENT

urrect a spirit of activism, and moral indignation and outrage at a corporation that has taken the lives of low income people. They practice torture. Turning off utilities leads to death and nobody is held accountable. It's 14 degrees and there's no heat in your house. It is corporate terrorism."

"Families are using candles at night, and go to bed in the dark, fully dressed, children too. It's everybody suffering together or they leave and go to a relative's home until you get the welfare department to help you," says Taylor. "The Department of Human Services is complicit in these acts of torture too because of the endless Welfare Department shut offs of benefits. For example, if a family doesn't submit in a timely manner a particular document, they close the case. The Welfare Department may request birth certificates for the

ment to live in, any kind of security, no police protection, nothing is available to you when jobs are lost to technology. An individual's life is worthless. Their quality of life is valueless, whether you are Black, Appalachian, Latino, Native American — you are a zero."

Protesters are demanding that DTE immediately restore all the service where low income people live and that everybody who is behind on utility payments receive a letter offering payment arrangements. Taylor encourages everyone to come to the U.S. Social Forum in June, 2010 in Detroit to look at why so many of us across the nation are demanding a new system where the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few.

You can reach the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization at info@mwro.org

VOICES FROM THE RUSTBELT

The crisis in the once heavily industrialized Rust Belt is a harbinger of the future. The struggles unfolding here hold lessons for everyone. Send your story to People's Tribune, PO Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654-3524.

Detroit, We Do Mind Dying

By John Williams

DETROIT—Amidst the poverty, unemployment, foreclosures, school closings and utilities shutoffs, a steadfast beacon of resistance against these atrocities is rising and developing. It is taking the form of demonstrations against utility giants, organizing against school closings and voting down union/corporation proposed contracts that are clearly against workers. Detroit's resistance forms the epicenter of battles throughout the state and the nation. These resistance struggles will come together at the U.S. Social Forum to be held in Detroit from June 22-26, 2010.

The conditions in Detroit also exist in outlying areas, the state and the nation. The common thread that binds them together is the system of capitalism whereby the few (Wall Street and the Corporations) control the means of production through private property at the expense of the majority. The control of all major production, such as oil, autos, steel, food, technology, healthcare, education, etc. are in the hands of the few. When the bailouts were given to Wall Street and the corporations in order to make them profitable, the majority suffered more unemployment, loss of pension and medical benefits.

This common thread binds the majority together but a common vision and understanding of why these conditions exist is lacking. Many Detroiters and the nation view the elections as the means to resolve this crisis. In other words, put a new face in the seat and it will resolve the problem. If there is no understanding of the concept of private property, new electees will try their best to divide up the remaining spoils. This invariably means more cuts for the majority.

It is within this framework that the struggles in Detroit and the nation must struggle for public ownership of the means of production as opposed to private. This means nationalization of healthcare, education and yes, the corporations. This structure will be the path to guaranteeing the majority the basic necessities of life. Therefore, many of the resistance fighters are using the theme "Another world is possible and another U.S. is necessary." It is the beginning of making the phrase "Peace on earth and good will to men and women" a reality.

Crisis in Funding Michigan Education

By Michael Berger

At a recent informational meeting called by the Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT), the DFT presented Detroit School Board's absolutely draconian contract proposal: for all teaching staff, a \$500 per month reduction in pay; increased costs for healthcare and dental insurance; no raise for two years and a 1% raise in the third year. If the economic assault was not sufficient, the contract blows the door open for the opening of additional charter schools in the district. (The union members later approved the contract proposal.)

Concerns raised by members of the union rightly focused on the glaring failures of the bargaining to deal with

the true issue facing public education in the country: funding. The Detroit School District's emergency financial manager, Robert Bobb, has conveyed the message that the options are for the union to become the bank for the District or he will take the School District into bankruptcy.

The crisis in funding education in Michigan has gone from bad to worse. Proposed mid-year cuts from the State capitol amount to an additional \$265 per student, with many districts claiming that this level of reduction will send them into insolvency.

CABRINI GREEN: EYES ON THE PRIZE

By Joseph Peery

Imagine that you live in a city where winter is quickly approaching and temperatures can drop as low as 30 degrees below zero with wind chills of minus 75 degrees.

Now imagine that you are fast asleep in your bed and you are awakened by loud banging on your front door followed by the sound of your front door being knocked down. When you rush to investigate you are met by armed people in uniforms with their guns pointed at your family and hollering “Don’t move, don’t move, this an eviction, you are being evicted today.”

This is precisely what happened to Lenise Forrest, an unemployed grandmother of two on November 10 at Chicago’s Cabrini Green row houses. A technicality in the law prevented the Sheriffs from evicting Lenise at that time, so they served her an eviction notice and said they would be back in a week to carry it out.

The following week, when officers were supposed to return, news media cameras and a blockade of residents and their supporters with signs that read “THE RICH GOT BAILED OUT, WE WON’T BE PUT OUT,” “HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT” and “WE ARE ALL LENISE FORREST,” were there waiting. The protest was organized by the Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign and Coalition To Protect Public Housing. One of the organizers, Willie Flem-



Press Conference about the recent anti-eviction blockade at Cabrini Green in Chicago. Lenise Forrest, a woman facing eviction, is speaking.

ing, addressed the gathering. “Our government has bailed out the banks, they have bailed out the auto industry, but there has been nothing done for the homeless populations in these cities and nothing done to help people with rental assistance, public housing, subsidized housing and Section 8 housing. As we all know, these are trying times in America. Unemployment is almost at an all time high. People are finding it hard to find work in this country. If you cannot find work, you cannot maintain

PHOTO/CHICAGO ANTI-EVICTION CAMPAIGN

an income. If you cannot maintain an income, you cannot pay rent. Should the punishment be homelessness? We don’t think so.”

“So we as residents of the city of Chicago and Cabini Green have come together to say this will be the last eviction, there will be no more evictions. We’re against any eviction of poor people in our city and our country.”

For the moment, Lenise remains in her apartment. She put it best as she addressed the crowd that day say-

ing, “I know there’s a lot of people out here in my neighborhood going through the same things and I just don’t want to move. I just need some understanding from someone and I’m just asking for help to just go on with my life...”

There are now 50 families targeted for eviction in Cabrini Green and most of them are in the row houses. If this is allowed to happen, the community will be emptied out with many having nowhere to go but on to the streets. It will complete a process of transforming public housing into private housing property in this neighborhood. Corporations will line up to bid on billions of dollars in contracts to demolish, rebuild, provide security and manage while others bid for ownership. We are in a depression. If there was ever a time when there was a need for public housing, wouldn’t that be now?

Now, take a moment to set this newspaper down, and if you need to, close your eyes. Imagine not the nightmare described above, but the ideal community. If the image in your mind is of a city without homelessness, unemployment or hunger, where health care and education are free and provided for all, then you’re not alone.

Defending each other from eviction is a first step toward that kind of America most of us want. Keep marching, protesting and blockading, as well as teaching and learning from one another and we’ll get there.

Homelessness Ends With A Home: House Keys Not Handcuffs

By the Western Regional Advocacy Project

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.” - Barack Obama

Where’s our change?

January 20, 2010 marks the one-year anniversary of the Obama Administration. He came to power through a powerful grassroots campaign movement. That movement – driven by hope and change – has foundered on business as usual in DC.

We do know that change can come quick, just look at the +700 billion of taxpayer’s dollars that went to bail out Wall Street. What did those most in need get? \$1.5 billion in Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing funds! The change barometer reads: little to no change.

Organize or Die!

What are the consequences of these priorities? 39.8 million people living below the poverty line (17 million people in “deep poverty”), a 26-year high

unemployment rate, 46.3 million uninsured people, and 49 million people who face food insecurity. Homelessness is up 12 percent in cities across the country.

In response to this growing crisis, many local governments and business improvement districts have created programs that force growing numbers of poor people out of gentrifying or neglected neighborhoods and into jails.

From anti-homeless loitering, sitting, and sleeping laws to immigration checks at health programs and public schools to arrest histories in public housing and employment, we must stop this pattern of oppression and demand our human rights. It’s quite simple: organize or die!

We are the Change!

On January 19 and 20, 2010, communities from up and down the West Coast will converge in San Francisco to demonstrate our immense energy and BE THE CHANGE this administration needs to do what is right. Shoulder to shoulder we will take the necessary steps to win affordable housing and civil rights for everyone! For two days we will organize, dance, and grow the

movement for social justice.

The rhetoric of change will no longer suffice. We demand a people’s bailout, given just as fast as what was given to the banks!

ON HOUSING

Immediately restore All Federal Government affordable housing program funding to comparable 1978 allocation levels. With an emphasis on HUD’s Public Housing and Project-based Sect 8, USDA new unit construction and the National Housing Trust Fund program.

Enact a moratorium on the demolition, conversion or destruction of ANY publicly funded units until federal law guarantees one for one replacement at existing affordability rates.

Ensure adequate funding for operations of public housing to prevent unit loss, high vacancy rates, and substandard living conditions.

ON CIVIL RIGHTS

Stop police and business improvement zone programs that enforce “nui-

sance” or “quality of life” crimes. These programs criminalize and remove homeless, poor, people of color, and disabled members of our communities.

Call for DOJ to respond to Los Angeles community request for investigation of discriminatory police enforcement under the Safer Cities Initiative that targets homeless, poor, people of color and disabled community residents.

Ensure that the more than 914,000 homeless children in our public schools are able to stay at their “home school,” are fully integrated with their housed peers, and are provided the support they need to learn and thrive.

Stop any and all questions regarding a person’s immigration status when they are requesting housing, healthcare, emergency shelter or services.

To join and get more information, contact Western Regional Advocacy Project at:

415-621-2533

wrap@wraphome.org

www.wraphome.org

Should women under 50 get mammograms? One question, two answers

By Issac Wolf

On November 16th, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force released its recommendation that women under the age of 50 should not have regular mammograms or a clinical breast exam. The proposed change provoked a heated debate and confusion, but no clear answer. This is because there are two reasonable answers to the issue.

Answer 1: Definitely YES, women who are 40-years-old should begin to get annual mammograms. Indeed, the screening should be free, universal and aggressively expanded.

In the US, about 39 million mammograms are performed each year as a screen for breast cancer, and the American Cancer Society has credited these tests with saving thousands of lives. According to data from the Centers for Dis-

ease Control and Prevention (see www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast) deaths from breast cancer decreased by 1.8% between 1998 and 2005, which can be attributed to both early detection by mammography and improved treatments. The benefits of early detection are also reflected by the CDC breast cancer survival rates, where, for example, the rate of breast cancer among Non-Hispanic white and Non-Hispanic Black women is about the same 115 cases per 100,000 women, but Black women are more likely to die from the disease, 25/100,000 (white) versus 35/100,000 (Black). This difference reflects the link between getting a mammogram and economic status. Between 2003-2005 the CDC data indicates that about 60% of women aged 40-49 were screened using mammography. However, whether a woman had a mammogram reflected her education levels,

as only 50% of women without a high school diploma were screened, while 70% of women who attended college had mammograms. Based on this data, any suggestion to limit cancer screening coupled with decreasing access to health care can only result in an increase in overall death rate from breast cancer. This is a clear question of survival.

Answer 2: Perhaps NO, the scientific data does suggest that the benefit of screening before the age of 50 may be limited.

The problem is that mammography is an over \$5 billion business and the two sides of the issue have opposing interests. Within the medicine-for-profit system in the US, physicians have been reduced to small business owners who are paid on a fee-for-service basis, i.e. every mammography is money in the bank. These fees pay for salaries, rent,

equipment and supplies — no screening equals no money and no practice. Thus, while the data on mammography is real and objective, the analysis of this data by the members of the American Cancer Society is not — medical scientists are products of their social environments. On the other sides of the debate are the insurance companies who pay for the mammograms. Reduced screening leads to increased profits. Any solution to this question has to balance the benefit for the individual with the benefit to the society as a whole — where best to put our resources. It is not possible to find this solution within a medicine-for-profit system.

Should women under 50 get an annual mammogram? Only a society based upon the collective benefits for all, including free universal health care, can be trusted to make the right decision.

MAD AS HELL DOCTORS TOUR, PART 3

By Joseph Peery

Editor's note: The following are excerpts from an interview with Dr. Mike Huntington, one of the Mad as Hell Doctors who stopped in Chicago while on a nationwide tour to promote single payer universal health care. This is the third of five interviews that will appear in the People's Tribune. Dr. Huntington, now retired, was a radiation oncologist.

People's Tribune: What do you think about the bills being considered by the Congress and President Obama?

Dr. Huntington: The bills that they are considering now, like H. R. 3200, still are based around the private health insurance industry. Even the public option which sounds like a good idea because it will have lower over-head, would be just one part of the 1400 insurance companies and their 17,000 plans. So, because it would be in this chaos of private insurance, the public option wouldn't bring the efficiencies that a single payer system would bring. The problem I see in the H.R. 3200 bill is that anybody who has their insurance through their employer is ineligible to be part of the public option. Imagine if you're an insurance lobbyist and you helped write this bill, and by doing that you exclude the healthiest part of the population. If you're employed, you're likely healthier. That means that the public option will have the poorest and the sickest people and it will struggle for several years and fail. And then the Rush Limbaugh's and the others of the world and our country will say, "... see, government can't do anything..." I

think it would be better for Pres. Obama to sign nothing that is being considered now, than to consider any of the other bills being considered except for H.R. 676, the single payer plan.

PT: What's the biggest message you would like for people to get from your trip?

MH: On our trip we have heard so many stories from people who have suffered because of our healthcare non-system. We have a system that's based on profit instead of health. For hospitals and clinics to stay open, they have to do expensive procedures. As a result they don't spend the time they should helping people avoid getting ill. In my field — cancer — what has happened with the fascination with high-tech. is that we have tripled the cost of treating certain cancers in ten years, and I cannot prove to you we've improved the outcome to match that. As a result, insurance premiums have doubled and as a result of that, people who are barely hanging on to their insurance in 1996, 3 years later dropped off because they could no longer afford their premiums. Three years after they come to our emergency room because they have symptoms of cancer they could not get taken care of because the diagnosis was not made. They could not see their doctors because they couldn't afford it. They get into a crisis, come to the emergency room and then we say, "yes" we can treat you now with hundreds of thousands of dollars of expensive procedures, undue suffering and undue cost, because we have this non-system, this chaotic system. We need the single payer plan that the pub-

lic controls, that can deliver healthcare instead of insurance.

As this article goes to press, the so called "health reform" legislation that is going through committee in the Con-

gress has provisions in it giving insurance companies the power to deny healthcare for even the most critically ill patients.



Mad As Hell Doctors Care-A-Van.

PHOTO /DONATED

MAKE HISTORY! HELP THE PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE GROW: *Internet Help Needed*

The year 2010 promises to be a crucial year. The changing economy is bringing about greater poverty and despair, and, along with it, many new leaders who seek a vision of a new America. The PT disseminates that vision and a strategy for achieving it to the leaders who are stepping forward. We need to get the People's Tribune into their hands. One important step in this direction is to maintain and expand our web presence. Please contact us if you have the skills and can work with the People's Tribune on this important effort. We don't have money to pay. But you will be part of making history! Call us at 800-691-6888 or email info@peopletribune.org.

— The PT Editorial Board

"I Don't Want To Pay For Your Healthcare!"

By John "Hai" Knapp

During my crusading for affordable healthcare I hear a lot of people, including Christians, say, "I don't want to pay for your healthcare!" That sounds incredibly selfish. However, it might be understandable coming from someone who can't provide their own health insurance, who feels he or she has to pay for someone on Medicaid.

The fact of the matter is that all of us already pay for each other's health care. When you pay your electric bill, your heating bill, your telephone service, and your cable TV you are making sure that the supplier can provide healthcare for their employees.

In church, more than once, we went

over the Bible account of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15:11-31, where the older son was so angry at how well the younger child was treated after being found. The older son reminds me of those that say, "I don't want to pay for your healthcare." The father counseled the older son and said, "Everything I have is yours; but today, your brother who was dead is alive, who was lost is found."

It has also occurred to me that, "I don't want to pay for your healthcare, either"; but I really far more don't want to pay for the health insurance companies' abuse of U.S. citizens and misuse of our payments. I don't want to pay them to lobby to keep their con business in place. I don't want to pay them to research how they can legally get away

with denying claims. I don't want to fund bribery by insurance companies to get decisions by the government in their best interests.

Another thing I don't want to pay for is the incarceration of someone who became a criminal because he couldn't find affordable access to psychiatry. My humane side says, "Let's get his mental illness treated so he won't have to go to jail." My taxpayer side says, "I would rather pay for the psychiatric treatment than the incarceration." It costs us taxpayers \$40,000 a year per inmate. I also have to consider the fact it could have been me needing for him to pay the taxes for my psychiatric treatment so I don't have to end up in jail.

By far, passage HR 676, single payer health care, is much less of the two evils. Experts have indicated that through HR 676 it costs less to cover every citizen than our current cutthroat system. I would rather pay for HR 676 via taxes; even though someone making less may be paying less in taxes.

My mom, now retired, use to work for Social Services of Nebraska. She observed tax money spent on denying

Medicaid to some who probably need it, but did not meet the guidelines. Instead of denying people, our taxes could have been spent providing insurance for many more citizens.

Who needs Medicaid? The ones who are between jobs due to the recession need Medicaid insurance every bit as much as the ones whom the state guidelines say "can't work". And they will continue to need it until they find a new job, pass the probation period, and become eligible for work-based insurance, if it is even available.

A-For-Da-Ble Health' will save our economy, It is in the best interest of everybody, If every job moves out of the country, Than (tell me!) whose gonna pay the medical fee?

— Original song by John "Hai" Knapp, The Charger Plant.

John "Hai" Knapp is a folk musician/singer/songwriter and activist for affordable healthcare.

"More Government Help Needed For Teen Drug Addictions"

By Lenette Evans

On December 10 my stepson, Bill, was in a fatal automobile accident when he was the passenger in the backseat of an SUV that two of his friends owned. It slid on Red Arrow Highway near Sawyer, Michigan and collided with a car, hitting the gas tank.

The driver of the SUV got his wife out of the front passenger seat to the roadside and then went to help Bill, who was trapped in the backseat and engulfed with flames that burned all of his hair, his face, eyes, and neck.

The next day Bill had surgery on his broken back. His third vertebra had shattered and it took the doctors ten hours to pick fragments of bone out of his back and to place a metal rod that he will have for the rest of his life. You could not recognize him because his face, neck and his eyes were extremely swollen.

The worst part of all of this is that Bill and his friends are heroin addicts! Can you imagine being a heroin addict, can't move, in chronic pain and going through drug withdrawals at a hospital?

He was given pain medication after pain medication because not only was he in pain but he was going through drug withdrawals and unfortunately our hospitals and medical staff are not equipped or prepared in how to handle drug users/addicts.

Not only was this difficult for him to go through but was a nightmare for the medical staff. This is not to mention the heartache and heartbreak families go through when a family member is addicted to drugs or alcohol.

While he was at the hospital a phone was released to him to make phone calls.

When our hospitals are dealing with drug addicts there are certain rules that need to be addressed.

Berrien County has no real drug/alcohol rehab facilities in our area. If our children and teens in the community have a problem with drugs and alcohol and need help they have to go to places in Kalamazoo or Grand Rapids, or down to South Bend, Indiana or Chicago.

This makes it difficult for the individual or family who has no car. Our government needs to work on having better drug/alcohol rehabilitation centers that are Christian based.

We need powerful impacting programs that will make a difference.

My step son has been in and out of jail and in and out of rehabilitation centers and has left them all and has gotten back on the streets every time. He has only gotten worse.

My step son Bill, as well as others, DO NOT need jail.

They need a christian based rehabilitation program that will be a one year program in a "lock down" type facility where they cannot leave under any circumstances.

Our teens need to be transformed and need programs that work.

The Berrien County court system, judges, lawyers, and probation officers need to work with these teens and the families so we can impact our childrens lives and make a difference where we can see total positive change!



Lenette Evans
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269-876-1848
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@yahoo.com

PHOTO /
BRETT JELINEK

SPEAKERS FOR A NEW AMERICA

Speakers on the front-lines of the struggle for water, healthcare, against homelessness, and more. Speakers address government responsibility to the people, not corporations. Here are a few of our outstanding speakers:



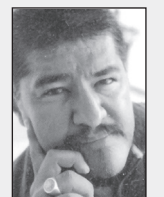
Rev. Edward Pinkney, imprisoned for quoting the Bible; a leader in the struggle for justice



Maureen Taylor, a leader in the struggle for water, utilities and ending poverty



Cheri Honkala, a leader in the struggle of America's poor for economic human rights



Luis Rodriguez, Poet and a leading Latino writer

Call 800-691-6888 for information or email info@speakersforanewamerica.com

DLABRIE INTERVIEWS PARADISE GRAY (X-CLAN) & JASIRI X

By DLabrie

Oakland MC "DLabrie" caught up with original X-Clan Member "Paradise Gray" & political MC "Jasiri X" in Detroit to Discuss Police Brutality, the G-20 Protests & Hip Hop in Pittsburgh, PA aka Steel City.

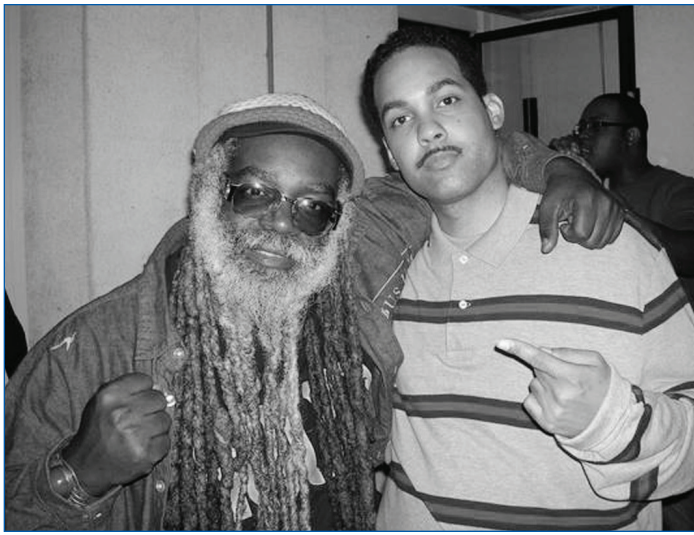
Dlabrie: Tell us about your History as an Artist and Activist?

Paradise Gray (X-Clan): I started off at 11 as a DJ in the South Bronx, mentor was Disco Kid Mario & eventually Afrika Bambaataa. I'm a founding member of X-Clan. My whole career has been about Consciousness Community & Having Fun.

Jasiri X: Started rhyming in the early 90s inspired by Public Enemy, KRS, Rakim and X-Clan. My influences used Hip-Hop to bring knowledge to the masses. At a certain point I was in the streets and my music reflected that lifestyle. In 98-99, I joined the Nation of Islam & began the process of self-improvement, which made my life better & also caused me to be involved in community issues. In 2005 I met Paradise & we along with 4 other brothers started One Hood to use Hip-Hop to help stop a lot of the neighborhood beefs in Pittsburgh.

DL: Where are you from? Are you originally from Pittsburgh, Pa?

PAR: Born in North Carolina, raised in the South Bronx, New York.



Paradise Gray of X-Clan & Jasiri X (Left to Right).

PHOTO /PARADISE GRAY

borhood. My Mom moved us to Pittsburgh in my early teens.

What has been going on politically in Pittsburgh?

PAR: Black people make up 15 percent of the population. It's a democratic city, but political power for Blacks is marginalized. Named America's most livable city by a magazine, the tag line has been promoted heavily by Pittsburgh's young Mayor, Luke Ravenstahl. However the University of Pittsburgh put out a report that told the real story: in the past year the region as a whole has suffered job losses that rival any since the collapse of the steel industry. In the nation's 70 largest cities, African Americans here have the nation's seventh-highest poverty rate, a rate more than twice as high as that of local whites.

JX: It's been interesting. We just had the Mayor's race but it was like everybody had a hangover from last year's presidential race. No one really voted.

DL: What has been the situation with Law Enforcement in Pittsburgh? Can u elaborate on the BEAR paramilitary vehicles and Saturation Patrol?

JX: They are using these military tactics more frequently but what's crazy is even though they say it was a reaction to a couple of crazy specific situations, (a cop shooting & a random multiple shooting, 2 crimes done by white men), the cops choose to use these tactics mostly in the poor Black communities.

DL: What happened with Michael Ellerbe and Jonny Gammage and do you see any relation to those situations and the death of Oscar Grant?

JX: You had an over-aggres-

sive police force with no care for the life of our people. Michael Ellerbe (12 yrs old when he was killed) was very similar because he was also unarmed and shot in the back.

DL: Tell us what went down in August at the G-20 Convention with the protests.

JX: The G-20 is when 20 of the wealthiest "industrialized nations" meet to talk about the global economy. Obama, the Prime minister of England & France, reps from China, Ja-

pan, India and more are there. Of course there were protests. Cops were in full riot gear looking to smash any group even looking like protesters. Students from the University of Pittsburgh were looking outside to see what was going in the streets and cops began shooting rubber bullets, spraying tear gas, and for the first time in America used the sound cannon which is a military weapon. They even went in the dorms, arresting people. Most of the falsely arrested were students and journalists. And what's crazy is most of these students were not protesting in the first place

DL: Tell us about Pittsburgh's Hip Hop/Music (Film) scene? Mainstream and Underground? Do Artists get involved in Community Issues???

JX: Sadly, not that many get really involved in the issues. Most are trying to get on. We have some of the greatest artists and producers on the planet. One thing we lack is managers, lawyers and record labels. We've had a lot of success lately with myself, and Wiz Khalifa repping nationally. It's bubbling.

DL: What do you have coming up?

JX: My album, American History X, drops on December 15th and the DVD will drop in the near future. It will be available for free download at the websites (listed below).

We will also offer autographed copies for sale.

PAR: 2010 is the 20-year anniversary of X-Clan's "To The East Blackwards". (Grand Verbalizer) Brother J

"I grew up on X-Clan and Paradise has been a great influence on me as a leader. I really respect Jasiri X for dropping the political hip hop videos online consistently."

— DLabrie

and I planned a few projects throughout the year including a book and new music together for the first time since "Exodus". We also plan to travel together doing panels, exhibits and tours.

"Even though they are artists, Paradise & Jasiri X are all about community, If there's a police issue or Gang problem they are usually the ones who are there 1st."

— Davey D

JX: I'm originally from South Side, Chicago but I lived in a real bad neigh-



DLabrie.

PHOTO /DAVID SEILER

WEBSITES

MYSFACE.COM/PARADISEGRAY

1HOOD.ORG

REALTALKEXPRESS.COM

YOUTUBE.COM/JASIRIX

TWITTER.COM/JASIRIX

FACEBOOK.COM/JASIRIX



Hip Hop Congress

(HHC) has partnered with the People's Tribune to connect Hip Hop and other cultural movements to practical struggles all over the U.S. For more information on how you can get involved, please visit

www.hiphopcongress.com.



— DLabrie, Page Editor

The Fight For Homes in St. Petersburg, Florida

By Sandy Reid

Rev. Wright is Pastor Director of the Refuge Ministries in St. Petersburg, Florida. He can be reached at bgcwright@aol.com.

People's Tribune: How has the struggle against homelessness changed over the years?

Bruce Wright: Some of the same battles are still being fought, but the numbers have increased. Criminalization has become more commonplace and now we have cities that have created whole sets of ordinances that target people without homes. The value of human life has diminished. In our state, not only do we have some of the meanest cities, we have the highest rate of murder and death among homeless individuals. When people are dehumanized and criminalized, it makes it that much easier to commit acts of violence against them. That violence is not just at the hands of roaming gangs of skinheads. It is the violence of poverty and police brutality.

PT: Are you seeing new faces? How have foreclosures affected the picture?

BW: Class is at the forefront of the struggle today because of the sheer number of whites ending up homeless. They can't make it a race issue anymore. More families are ending up on the street and no small part is due to

the foreclosure rate which is among the highest in the country. Also, within the next couple of years we could have as many as 12,000 Iraqi and Afghanistan veterans in Florida alone. No one talks about this. I've got an Iraqi veteran family with 3 kids on food stamps, living on the base. Already one-third of the homeless are veterans. We have the highest rates because of the VA Hospital here – 2000 veterans are already homeless in the county.

PT: What is the religious community doing?

BW: Unfortunately, most church-based groups are pretty much with the status quo. They follow the particular mentality of charity instead of justice. Some of the largest charities are some of the worst at being more concerned about keeping their funding going and charity than doing justice. Many times this undermines the work of the poor. For example, Catholic



Sacramento homeless "Safe Ground" march and rally

PHOTO /SANDY PERRY

Charities creates expensive government run tent cities that are more like the Japanese internment camps that you had in the U.S. during World War 2. There is no willingness to allow the homeless community to self organize or to be leaders in the movement to end homelessness and poverty. It's an afterthought at best.

PT: What are the blocks to getting city or state to provide homes?

BW: The biggest block is the unwillingness to let go of vacant buildings and allow people to homestead them. There are hundreds of houses and apartment complexes that are either bank-owned or government-owned. The city is unwilling to put people in these houses which end up being crack houses, rampant with crime. Another problem is the fear of trying to organize. Police are now tools of corporate power to repress organizing. They are attempting to privatize side walks, there's ordinances against bull horns, they've successfully made several anti-homeless ordinances; this is all in the guise of supporting commerce.

PT: What are the demands of the homeless and what is the next step?

BW: The demands are pretty simple –housing for all, healthcare for all, and jobs for all; jobs at a living wage; for any houses that are vacant and owned by government or banks to be turned over to the people and let them redistribute them. The next step is mass housing takeovers, sleep outs, direct action, law suits (there already is one.) We recently started a homeless newspaper – the articles are written by the homeless and advocates; the intent is to mobilize and organize.

Chicago Parents and Students Confront Mayor Over Schools

By Lew Rosenbaum

"We don't have no library, we don't have no school, now what you gonna do?" "Mr. Mayor Can WE USE YOUR INTERNET?" These shouts rang through the corridors of the Chicago City Hall on December 30. Parents and students from Altgeld Gardens on Chicago's far south side were joined by community organizations to demand that Chicago Public Schools place a quality neighborhood public school in their neighborhood.

The Board had replaced Altgeld Gardens' neighborhood school with Carver Military Academy, a selective enrollment school. On December 16 protesters gave the School Board a 38-page proposal for a school to exist alongside the Academy: only 25% of the facility is in use. Protesters called this proposal an emergency: it followed the beating death of an Altgeld Gardens student near their new "neighborhood" school 5 miles away. Petitions with 1300 signatures backed the protest up.

Parents and students from Altgeld Gardens are leading this protest. Parents have been involved for 30 years in the battle against local toxic waste dumping and their consequences. That's why the

new school would be called the Hazel Johnson Environmental Justice School. Instead, the Board approved a charter school opposed by the protesters.

Spokesperson Cheryl Johnson said parents and their supporters had met twice with the Board of Education, but no action had been taken. That is why the parents and students from Altgeld came to City Hall to confront Mayor Daley.

Parents have rejected transfers to other schools. They pointed out the distance may be greater, educational services no better and the safety issue not resolved. Parents have placed an interim proposal in front of the Board until a fully functioning school can be established in the fall of 2010. They want 4 or 5 classrooms to be staffed by certified, union teachers. As Cheryl Johnson reiterated, so far this is just words without action.

At the protest, parents and students again emphasized their desire for a public high school in their community. They opposed the privatized charters that operate without local school councils and are exempt from hiring union teachers. They were at Mayor Daley's office because the Mayor took control of the schools over 10 years ago and now is ultimately responsible. They came to



Chicago school protest.

PHOTO /SOUTHWEST YOUTH COLLABORATIVE

show Daley directly that students do not have a school and do not even have a public library in their community. They cannot even use public access Internet to keep up on their classes during the holiday break. A number of students

spoke to the issue: they are behind in their classes and afraid of flunking. And so in a spirited display, the community residents and their supporters chanted demands to use Daley's Internet access.

Mayor Daley did not come out to meet the protesters Wednesday. His office didn't let them in to use his computer either. The Board is delaying action as long as it can.

This will be a difficult but an important fight to win. The people in the community have showed they want to fight this battle. It is literally a matter of life or death. But it also raises questions about how much the School Board is willing to concede. Will they guarantee a quality education when they have proven how adept they are at dismantling public education? They use "No Child Left Behind" to promote "high stakes testing," school closures, and privatized charter schools. The significance of winning this battle, even this limited one, is that the parents are leading in taking back from private hands a space that once was public. Further battles are expected when the new list of schools scheduled to be closed is announced in January.

VOICES FROM BENTON HARBOR, MI

ANOTHER VICTORY AND ANOTHER DEFEAT

By Attorney Hugh "Buck" Davis

The Berrien County Circuit Court finally acknowledged Reverend Edward Pinkney's victory in the Court of Appeals on his "biblical prophecy" probation violation, but continued draconian conditions of probation amounting to house arrest, even though those conditions were not in the original probation order and no notice or due process hearing had been held on them. As the National Lawyers Guild and the ACLU prepared to appeal those conditions, Judge Butzbaugh "remembered" that they had not been a part of the original probation order and modified them on his own, while maintaining the prohibition against Pinkney coming within 1,000 feet of the courthouse, the judge or his home, as well as prohibiting him from speaking in a "demeaning" manner about the City of Benton Harbor, or its officials. Doug Mulkoff is going to appeal those conditions.

When Kelly Flint, acting as Pinkney's clemency counsel, called the Governor's office recently, she was informed that Governor Granholm had denied Pinkney's clemency petition on July 20, 2009. The Parole Board claimed that Pinkney had been informed. He had not. He was in prison and his wife was always at home. No letter came from the Governor or the Parole Board denying commutation.

Regardless, we are eligible to reapply in April 2010, and Pinkney plans to file again. If Pinkney fails in his pending application to the Supreme Court on the underlying violation and/or subsequent habeas corpus petition, he could renew the clemency process in the form of a request for a pardon.

Pinkney is now free to travel. He will speak in Detroit on January 18, at 12 noon, at the Martin Luther King Day Rally and March for Jobs, Peace and Justice at Central United Methodist Church, 23 East Adams at Woodward (contact 313-702-5558).

INTERVIEW WITH DOROTHY PINKNEY

By Joseph Peery

Joseph Peery: Dorothy, what happens when young people are arrested in Benton Harbor?:

Dorothy Pinkney: They tell them to plead guilty and you'll just be fined. By hearing this they get excited and think "I can do this, I can say I'm guilty and I'll go home." But it doesn't happen like that. It's not set up that way. The powers that be know that the poverty level in the city is so high and there are not many jobs. So when they give these young African American guys their jail sentences, they know they cannot afford to pay their sentence. So what do they do? Go to jail. Then the jail becomes overcrowded. I've seen so many mothers, wives, girlfriends, packed into the Berrien County Jail just to visit their boyfriends, their husbands, their fathers. It was too much to handle. I didn't know it was this extreme.

JP: Many families don't have a bread winner at home. And during winter, there's a lot of homes that don't have water or gas. Can you speak to this.

Dorothy: You're just adding misery to people's lives. It's like you take a nail and hammer and you hit that nail. It's going to pierce the wood, but you keep nailing and hitting and it goes deeper and deeper. There's so much poverty. The city is being drained. The government doesn't care. Why do you keep beating someone down when people are saying "we can't take any more." Instead of helping, you're steady nailing deeper and deeper.

JP: What do you feel people in other cities need to do?

Dorothy: I think we can all come together and unite as one, fight for one particular thing, get that accomplished, and then go to the next thing. It's a slow process but we can do it. It's never too late.

WHIRLPOOL'S RACISM TOWARD EMPLOYEES

By BANCO

It is well known in the African-American community of Benton Harbor that oppressive racism exists at Whirlpool Corporation. One employee says, "Racism is so thick people are afraid to breathe." Whirlpool has been sued many times by employees for workplace racism. In one case white employees sued Whirlpool, saying they were retaliated against for friendship with Blacks, that it was commonplace to hear racist jokes and that the supervisor wouldn't do anything. The Court said such behavior is illegal.

In a recent incident, a supervisor acted out his hostility in writing a racist letter with over 25 points, and placing it on a Black employee's desk. It was reported to management but has not been dealt with although the employee reporting the incident was fired. Below we reprint excerpts from that letter:

"You know you are from Benton Harbor
* When people think you "talk country."
* When you say "Ben Harba" instead of Benton Harbor
* When you say "Don't nobody know where Benton Harbor is."
* When you think Apple B's and Steak-n-Shake are the best sit down restaurants to eat.
* When you watch MTV in the morning "CUZ BET is not on yet!"
* When you ran from the security guards "CUZ you just got caught skippin."
* When you are black you make up random words like I did."



Rev. Edward Pinkney.

PHOTO /BRETT JELINEK

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