

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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March 4 Public Education Protests in Los Angeles, CA.

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STATE BUDGET CRISES: TAX THE RICH!

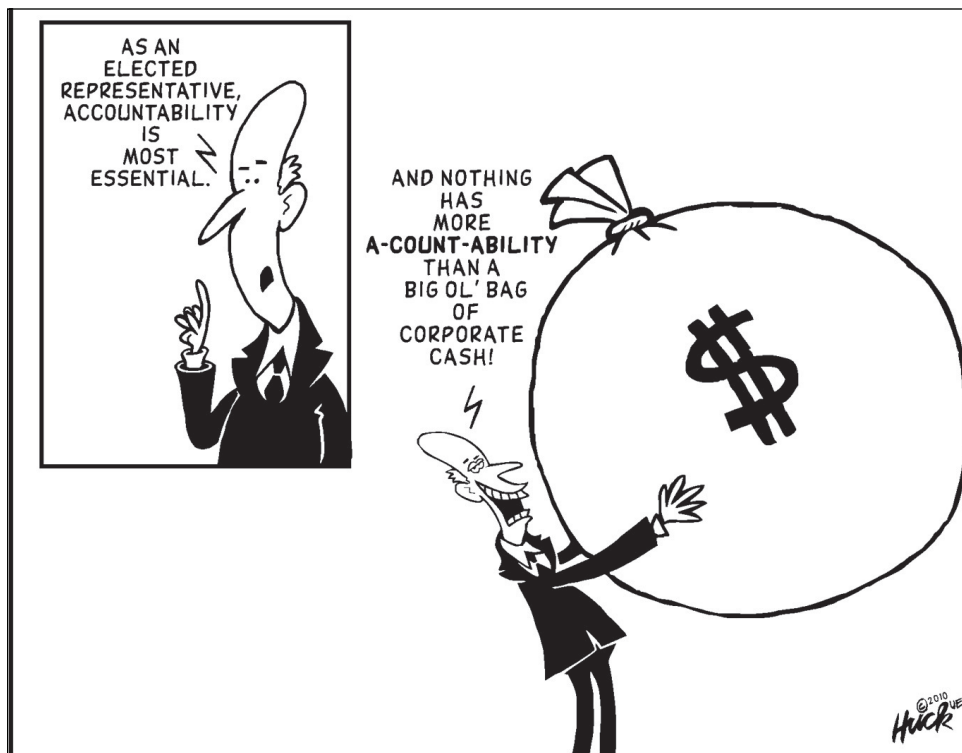
EDITORIAL

The state budget shortfalls show no signs of abating. On the chopping block are education, health care, help for the poor and disabled, mental institutions, libraries, city services, fire departments, and more. Already, the pain and suffering of millions of people is escalating. Kids can't afford to go to college. High schools and grade schools are closing down. The elderly are cutting back on their medications. And, as remaining services such as schools, toll ways and water, are privatized, (part of the game plan) costs are skyrocketing.

What is the meaning of this new stage of social destruction—and what can we do about it?

The crisis in the state budgets has come about as the result of a convergence of factors. On the one hand is the outright theft of the public coffers by financial speculators, energy and other corporations. On the other hand, the ongoing real estate crisis, along with the permanent unemployment due to automation and plant closures, means that state reserves cannot be replenished. More people are forced into poverty, putting tremendous pressure on Medicaid and other Federal programs that deal with poverty. The government's answer is to push this burden onto the states, further intensifying the crisis. Meanwhile, the billionaires—the 1 percent of Americans who now own over 70 percent of all financial assets—continue to wallow in their wealth while paying little or no tax proportionate to their income.

As a result, we are witnessing the pending collapse of the state structures. Forty-eight states face shortfalls in their budgets for fiscal year 2010, totaling \$196 billion or 29 percent of state budgets—"the largest gaps on record," according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. And, it's



not getting better. There is a combined gap of \$375 billion for 2010 and 2011.

Most states are legally prohibited from running a deficit or from borrowing money to cover their operating expenses. Thus, they can 1) use their available reserves, 2) cut spending, or 3) raise taxes.

As far as the first option, most states have already used up their reserves. Therefore, most states are slashing spending. To back this up, there is a propagated viewpoint that budget cuts, regardless of the pain and suffering they may cause, are "a necessary evil." The money has to come from "somewhere," so the saying goes.

This is all well and good, but who is doing the suffering and who is basking in million dollar homes with servants, state of the art gyms and golf courses and not a worry in the world?

We, the people, must take matters into our own hands. There is no way out of this without raising taxes. But

we are not talking about raising taxes on the working class. We have to respond with a clarion call that: "Cuts are unacceptable—the rich must be taxed."

A small town in Oregon is pointing the way. Faced with severe cuts, two ballot measures were introduced that would raise taxes on wealthy residents and businesses to help pay for services. The tax increase would affect less than 3 percent of the population.

The bottom line is that you can't have a just society in an unjust economy. The essentials of freedom are food, clothing, healthcare, housing and education. If we don't control these things, we are going to continue to live in an unequal, unjust society. If we get our hands on these corporations we can create a society where everyone has what they need to lead a healthy, happy, cultured life.

A first step toward the kind of society that we need is to again raise the battle cry of the people: TAX THE RICH!

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.

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PUBLIC EDUCATION IS A RIGHT

COVER STORY

On March 4, perhaps a million people across the country demonstrated in support of quality public education as a right. Those who protested no doubt speak for millions of others who are saying, implicitly or explicitly, that education is a human right that must be guaranteed by the government. The money is there—we have to demand that the government spend it on the people's needs, not lining the pockets of the rich.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 36 states have cut education or proposed such cuts. Some 46 percent of all state general fund expenditures are devoted to elementary, secondary, and higher education. Nearly all states are legally required to balance their general fund budgets, and the state governments claim the economic crisis is “forcing” them to cut education and a lot of other public needs. Public universities and local school districts are taking or contemplating drastic actions in response to the cuts.

There is plenty of money to solve the “budget crisis.” Billions of dollars of state and federal money nationwide are being squandered to line the pock-



Rally sponsored by the Southern California Public Education Coalition, a coalition of public education labor unions.

PHOTO/M. COREY WHITTED

ets of the wealthy through tax loopholes and giveaways. The top one percent of families owns 34 percent of the country's net worth, while the bottom 40 percent of families owns two tenths of one percent. Billions more are being spent on prisons. From 1987 to 1995, state government expenditures on prisons increased by 30 percent while spending on higher education fell by 18 percent. California is spending 10 percent of its general fund on prisons and 7 percent on higher education.

Added to this, the corporations that control this country don't want to spend money educating workers they don't need. Labor-replacing electronic technology is permanently eliminating millions of jobs, and creating a new class of people who are permanently unemployed or underemployed. As soon as electronics came on the scene, we began to see the decline of public education. For the corporations, education is part of the cost of production, and they're not going to do anything to add to the cost of

production. From their perspective it's a waste of money to educate most working class children – their labor is no longer needed. So this is a problem of the system itself; the attack on public education is the corporate agenda and not simply an agenda of this or that politician.

Another problem from the corporate viewpoint is that an educated worker who is permanently unemployed is a threat to the system. That person is going to be making demands on the system that the system can't meet, and they're going to be envisioning a different kind of America—one without corporate rule.

Education is a human right that must be guaranteed to all. All our lives we have been told that a good education is all about getting a good job. Now a robot-driven system doesn't offer jobs at all to millions of people. So we need a greater vision for the purpose of an education. Instead of defining education as something that serves a corporation, let's re-define the purpose as the fullest development of every individual's hu-

man potential. Fixing education cannot mean defending the status quo. Governments at all levels must be forced to fund education that really can provide every individual with a productive future.

Education must be a public right guaranteed by government. The first step is to tax the wealthy and the corporations to end the “budget crisis.” And to guarantee the right to free, quality public education for everyone, all the way through college, the next big step is to nationalize education. This would ensure public control of the system, and ensure that every school was properly funded. Of course this means that we, the people, need to get control of the government. We are in a war with the corporations to build a society that is truly of, by and for the people.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

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In Memory of Bessie Lou Cornett, A Tireless Revolutionary and Fighter For The Working Class

By Chuck Parker

Born June 1, 1948
Pikeville, Kentucky
Died February 17, 2010
Los Angeles, CA

First of all, let me say that Bessie was an exceptionally dedicated and gifted revolutionary. She grew up poor in the Kentucky coalfields and she learned many hard lessons about what it means to be working class in North America. And she was one of the few people I have known who consciously lived according to her working class principles. She hated inequality and she was fearless in fighting it and did what she could to correct it. For example, she told the story of how upset she was when she managed to buy a coat for her son, Steve, but the neighbor boy didn't have one. She didn't rest until that boy got a coat. And this was when she was a young woman of 19 or 20 before her involvement in the Brookside coal strike.

The second point is that she was a great example of the truth of the saying that a worker that is exposed to Marxism can assimilate it into their thinking and their everyday practice much more rapidly and solidly than those whose backgrounds are more privileged. Bessie studied on her own. She never forgot anything and she integrated her educa-



Bessie Lou Cornett is on the left, sitting on the hood of the car, holding a stick. During the Brookside coal strike of 1974, they blocked the Kentucky highway with the car, and turned the scabs back. It was a great victory. Bessie almost single-handedly conceived of the tactics and organized the large turn-out.

PHOTO/DONATED

tion into the fiber of her thinking and doing. Bessie never allowed any personal ambition or motives to interfere with her life.

The third point is that Bessie was self sacrificing and courageous in the extreme. She became involved in the Brookside coal strike because she saw it as an opportunity to fight the whole oppressive system of capitalism – not merely to get union representation for

the miners. She was a tireless worker and organizer and she was fearless against the threats and attacks against her. She had to struggle also against the extreme male supremacy of her first husband and his family who tried to prevent her from playing a leading role in that struggle. She survived an attempt to kill her by her husband, physical assaults by the scabs and police and jailings. She was divorced and lost custody of her only

son.

She never wavered or allowed herself to be intimidated. And later her commitment to building the Communist Labor Party was just as solid as her dedication to building the working class movement.

She was oppressed and opposed in her struggles because she was a woman but her commitment to fighting for equality for women never stopped. She was often underestimated because she was poor and uneducated. She had left school in the 9th grade and later got a high school G.E.D. and was trained as a dental assistant.

In her later years, Bessie was very ill. She moved to the California desert in 1981 from the coalfields of West Virginia where the warm dry climate and hot pools helped to relieve the pain of her arthritis. There for ten years she was able to be active raising her two daughters and participating in local political activities from anti-KKK organizing to anti-discrimination against Black kids in the local schools to farmworker organizing, and anti-INS highspeed chases of suspected "illegal" immigrants.

Even when she was at her sickest, laying in a hospital bed, she was talking to the nurses and custodians, encouraging them to struggle for justice. She was an inspiration to everyone who met her.

ORCHARD MALL SUES OVERFLOW CHURCH, BENTON HARBOR, MICHIGAN

By Lenette Evans

Pastor Brian Bennett and his wife Cindy Bennett of the Overflow Church, in Benton Harbor are being sued by the Orchard Mall. Can you imagine someone suing a church?

The Orchard Mall management feels that the Overflow Church is going to ruin businesses. In the 1970's, when the Orchard Mall was built and the once thriving mall which used to be packed on any given evening, especially the weekends, has lost business for over 20 years and it has slowly been declining.

Here in 2010 the Orchard Mall is like a ghost town. Many retail stores in the mall like Spencer's, Man Alive, Lemon Tree, Casual Corners and others have closed over the many years as well as the many others who have come and gone.

What killed business at the Orchard Mall was when places like Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Lowes, Meijers and restaurants outside the mall area took busi-

ness from the mall as well as our economy.

The past few years Overflow Church came to the Orchard Mall and when Sears went out of business they donated their building to Overflow Church. Since the church has been in the old Sears building which is adjacent to the mall they have been a terrific blessing to the mall and to our entire community.

Pastor Brian & Cindy Bennett have a wonderful outreach ministry working with the youth and children, bus ministry, bible study, children's ministry, small life groups, bible study, praise and worship, as well as Sunday church services.

The Orchard Mall management was very aware of this. Now they are saying there was a mistake. Their was no mistake! They fully understood what the churches intentions were.

Many times Pastor Brian Bennett is taking people into the food court area for bible study and fellowship. People are buying food, soft drinks, coffee, etc.

Many of the church people he is bringing shop throughout the mall, visiting many of the retail stores.

Across the USA there are over 500 malls that have churches in them. The Overflow Church is doing awesome things for our community and reaching our youth and changing lives through God's word, praise and worship, prayer and fellowship.

God is trying to bring transformation to the Benton Harbor community and to restore this great town that has been so lost for too long. At the mall many seniors are meeting friends and mall walking. We never know when one of the seniors or some teenager walking around the mall is hurting and needs prayer and what a better place to be than to be in a mall to have someone to be there for you, to give you hope and encouragement.

The problem with our world today is that we all need more of JESUS CHRIST and quit putting him on the back burner.

Its not about money and corruption its about people coming together and making a difference.

On April 6, 2010 at 5:30p.m. at Benton Township City Hall on Crystal and Territorial Ave there will be another meeting. As a community, we need to come together to support Overflow Church and Pastor Brian Bennett and his wife Cindy. May God bring an overflow to our community and prosper the church.



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PHOTO/
BRETT JELINEK

NATIONWIDE VACANT PROPERTY TAKEOVERS - MAY 2010

By Eric Sheptock

Forty people from across the country met in New York City on January 28-29, to organize a nationwide takeover of vacant properties during the month of May. The meeting was organized by Take Back the Land, an organization successful in acquiring vacant property for homeless people and also preventing evictions in Miami, FL. Other organizers included people from Picture the Homeless of New York City, the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI) and the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (NLCHP).

We began our meeting discussing the work from our respective locales. The conversation quickly turned into an exchange of philosophies and paradigms, including a discussion on styles and approaches — radical vs. diplomatic. There was a diverse mix of people in the room. We decided all ideas, styles and approaches were pertinent, each one having its proper time, place and usage. Our differences didn't divide us. They made us stronger.

Ongoing actions of this coalition are intended to antagonize, aggravate and speak truth to the powers that be, while agitating the masses and calling them to action. Take Back the Land, based in Miami has lent its name to this national effort. However, they do no local organizing outside of Miami. Local organizers in other cities need to organize themselves to know local laws, politics and problems and to plan accordingly.

The approaches we discussed can be categorized in 3 ways: legal, illegal and political.

Legal: Organizations like NLCHP and NESRI continue to draft legislation, whose aim is to make housing a human right. Other legal efforts include making people aware of their legal rights to receive or remain in housing, legal defense services for those arrested during housing takeovers and

providing legal observers during takeover actions.

Illegal (only by definition of private property law): We discussed the basics of vacant property takeovers: how to find vacant properties, surveying the property, gaining entry, having people occupy large numbers of vacant apartments, condos and houses and drawing media attention to a select number of takeover properties.

Throughout the meeting people emphasized that, "No positive change has ever been brought about without people willing to take risks." However, those who choose to break unjust laws should bear in mind that in spite of the apparent morality of their actions, they can still go to jail for them. Total unity of commitment and action is a necessity.

Political: It is the illegal actions — not diplomacy — that draw media attention. This helps shine a national spotlight on these kinds of noble efforts to usher in the desired systemic changes. Television images of people being arrested for seeking to meet their basic human needs garners the moral and political support of others for the cause. Such support can eventually translate into large numbers of concerned citizens joining the effort, which is the short-term goal of our struggle to increase the number of people who are politically conscious and willing to take a stand.

Finally, no direct political action is complete without a "general line" — a rallying war cry. For Take Back the Land, it is that housing should be treated as a necessity — guaranteed to everyone — not a commodity that goes to the highest bidder. In lieu of recent housing market woes, this is a cause that all except those who profit from the commodification of housing can appreciate. This article is a call to action for all people of conscience to join this fight. There is something for everyone to do. What will you do?

Bullet Wounds

for Brisenia Flores, murdered by anti-immigrant vigilantes in Arivaca, Arizona and ali Kanani, murdered by Blackwater mercenaries at the Nisour Square Massacre, Iraq

nine year old ali kanani died from a bullet
bite to the head
in the nisour square massacre
meanwhile the sun went red/ red/ red
and the mercenaries
unfurled their fists with tenderness
or drew/ sweet/ three-legged cows/ for their children
or a little gasp or bird/ flew from ali's little mouth like a bullet
fired at death/ that lovely lady
oh little bird that flew and ate and gouged little ali!
oh little bird that drank/ flew away/ little ali!
and this happens everyday
it happens like that
the blood of children falls
like blood of children

nine year old brisenia flores died
from a vigilante's kiss to the forehead
and her smile went red red red
blood smiles from brisenia's bullet wounds
and this happens everyday
the sun goes red red red
the warmth of children smiles/ spills/ evaporates brisenia
your bullet wounds or little suns glow red red red
in your tender skull ali

blood of children glows/ red red red
little brisenia goes red/ evaporates/ falls
is swept away/ by brooms or sand
and this happens everyday
this happens everyday
it happens like that

the bullet bites/ kisses the skull
splinters the children's sleep/ and nothing will come from there
no nothing/ no little bird
no poetry or three legged cows
and this happens everyday
it happens like that

— Lauro Vasquez

U. S. Social Forum vs. Tea Party Movement

By James Bish

As June 2010 fast approaches, the importance of the U. S. Social Forum, which will be held in Detroit, Mich. from June 22-28, is becoming clear. The editorial entitled "American Politics Begins To Polarize" (October 2009 issue of People's Tribune) is certainly right on time.

The two poles are well represented by the U.S. Social Forum, which has as its theme, "Another World is Possible, Another U.S. is necessary," and the "Tea Party" movement, which held its first convention the weekend of February 5-7, railing against big government,

taxes, government health care, immigrants, etc., all said to be the causes of the economic and social hardships facing the working class.

The Tea Party movement rank and file is made up mostly of working class folks who have not yet identified the real "elephant in the room" as being capitalism. The movement and convention are being bankrolled by the capitalists. You can rest assured there will be no discussion about the role of capitalism and capitalists in creating the economic disaster facing us. Such a discussion would lead to a discussion of maintaining private property for the benefit of the capitalist elite vs. public ownership



Opening march at US Social Forum in Atlanta, GA, June 27, 2007

PHOTO /USSF

for the benefit of everyone else—us—the working class. Perish the thought.

The U.S. Social Forum, on the other hand, will bring thousands of progres-

sive and revolutionary activists together from across the country and from around the globe who understand the real elephant in the room is capitalism. The theme insures there will be wide ranging discussions and debate of the role of capitalism in creating the myriad of economic and social issues facing us. Herein lies the importance of the U.S. Social Forum. It permits the beginning of a national discussion around the issue of "defining" the central problem and what to do about it. I want to be involved in that discussion.

Education is a Right

Students, Workers and Community Unite to Save Public Education

By Kimberly R. King

On March 4th, 2010, tens of thousands of students, professors, teachers, other education workers, and community members, took to the streets and the campuses to demand that the government fully fund quality and accessible public education, kindergarten through Ph.D. They said, “No more!” to the budget cuts—and took it up a notch—with some declaring, “Education is a human right!” and “No more cuts, no more fees, education must be free!” The call for the March 4th Strike and Day of Action to Defend Public Education originated in California in response to the extreme budget cuts, fee increases, and furloughs at our public universities and massive layoffs in K-12 schools—but it spread to 32 other states. Altogether, people participated in at least 100 protests around the country that day.

In the LA area, the day began with teachers throughout the city leafleting parents as they brought their children to school. Later, protest actions were held at Cal State Northridge, a high school in Long Beach, at UCLA and in downtown LA. Student walkouts were reported at six Los Angeles public schools, involving about 540 students. The demonstrations were largely organized by coalitions of students and teachers/professors and their unions from all levels of public

education coming together—elementary schools through high schools, community colleges, Cal States and UCs—uniting for a day that they hoped would galvanize public support and send a clear message to government leaders: fully fund public education now!

We at Cal State LA participated in the march and rally held in downtown LA. We marched to the Reagan State Building. Busloads of demonstrators arrived from schools across the region. About 3000 people came together for a spirited yet serious demonstration of mostly students and public education union workers. Students and teachers were united in their fight to save their education and their jobs. They directed their message at the Governor as well as the state legislature, republicans and democrats, suggesting that rather than cutting essential state services, they should raise taxes on oil and other wealthy corporations who can afford to pay. And although education is primarily funded at the state level, many in the crowd drew attention to the billions of dollars the federal government is spending on war and corporate bailouts, while our K-12 schools are allowed to crumble and our colleges turned into downsized and privatized institutions that price out students of color and other working class Californians. The sign, “President Obama, Save Our Education” summed up the call for the

national government to intervene. At UCLA, students and professors walked out of classes for a lunchtime protest and later, several hundred students, faculty and union members held a sit-in outside the Chancellor’s office. The largest demonstration was held at San Francisco’s Civic Center, where 10,000 students, teachers, professors, and other education workers converged from all over the Bay Area.

March 4th was a historic and hopeful day for public education! It was the first time that all sectors of public education—K-12, Community Colleges, CSU, and UC—came together, students, teachers, professors, and other educa-



March 4 Public Education Protests in Los Angeles, CA.

PHOTO/PABLO SERRANO WWW.PABLOSERRANO.ORG.

tion staff and workers. Our goal was to pressure our government to fund education—to keep it high quality and accessible to all who want to attend. Will the governor and state legislature listen, and even President Obama? If not, the protests will certainly continue!

The author is a California State, L.A., professor who is active in her union.

Like eternal teenage sagas
we are addicted to drama
the state decided
to depend on problems

Their solutions would rob the businesses
We invested in
of endless cheap labor

Prisons are our LOCAL
lucrative industry
The likes not seen since
slave days and slave wages
extreme term- yes



PHOTO DONATED

For carnivorous
education policy

save money on overhead
turn neighborhoods into accomplice

Neglect the schools
of families
of working
poor
So they stay
Working
n watchin TV
The opiate of all classes
Racing to feel wealthy
Keep minds numb
crumb chasing with guns
hungry enough to jump
Onto bear traps
Then work for prison pennies
In California valleys
Where few family
Can visit

But what’s important
is companies stay here
and that their products say
made in the US

Instead of sent all the way
Around the world
to be made in China

Plenty of local nonwhite and poorwhite
labor
At cutthroat unbeatable prices
Just invest in police men to catch em
selling
knockoff nikes, fake IDs
The math is easy
almost free labor equals major profits
which is what we base our idea of success on
right?

So prisons are priority
Good schools our enemy
If we define state success
As profit.

Dichotomies drawn by headlines
As if from four horses

Two painful choices were presented
By the pundits
Cut education spending
or cut from programs for the elders.

“What do these people want us to send
Their grandparents to the streets!”

Fake outlines wont take
The color from my heart
One billion dollars is spent
every 2 days
On war

This is a crisis of priorities.

There IS money for banks
and billions for bombs?
Divert money to public schools
or face the wrath
of our children
us students
us teachers
dads and moms.

— SOMOS JUAN DIEGO
Julio Magaña-Saludado Mar. 8, 2010

Julio Magaña is a hiphop and spoken-word artist who goes by the name of SomosOne.

A Million Marched Forth on March 4

By Jack Gerson
and Steve Miller

Up to a million Americans participated in the March 4 Strike and Day of Action to defend public education. Demonstrations, in various forms, occurred in at least 32 states. Sympathy demonstrations occurred in Japan, Mexico, Brazil, France, Scotland, Algeria and Russia.

The core of the March 4 actions were in California, where this movement erupted onto the world stage last September 24 when thousands of students, staff, and faculty struck and demonstrated at several campuses of the University of California (UC). The UC organizers realized that their fight was part of a broader struggle to push back against the devastating budget cuts, tuition hikes, layoffs and privatization that are laying waste to public education, other vital services and, indeed, the well being of all working and poor people. So they actively sought allies at all levels of public education, in the community, and among militant trade unionists. This ultimately led to a call for a statewide strike and day of action on March 4, which grew rapidly and mushroomed into a nationwide day of action. Oakland (where both of us live and work) probably was the site of the most spirited, powerful and racially diverse actions.

Make no mistake: a new mass movement is under way, one with strong participation from working class and poor, workers and students, black, brown, yellow and white. And an emerging

layer of young leaders is propelling this movement. The Oakland marches and rally were successful because of young workers and students who took the lead in building it: making dozens of presentations to high school classes; reaching out into the community; building ties between the high schools, community colleges, and universities.

Marching to defend public education went viral for good reasons. The capitalist economy is in crisis, and Wall Street and the federal government are trying to solve the crisis at the expense of poor and working people. Hence the budget cuts. Hence the layoffs. And there's a reason why education is being particularly hard hit. Fifty years ago, corporations still needed people to produce. Eventually, computers and robots will take over the production of the necessities of life. Corporations do not intend to pay for the education of people that they will not employ. Hence public education is under attack in almost every country. The United States was the first country to guarantee free, universal public education; now it threatens to be the first country to end it.

People recognize that public education has a different role. These vast demonstrations – perhaps the largest in human history to defend a human right – are the recognition that education is the key to the future. Public education should be about maximizing every individual's human potential. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation, Charter for Public Education, states the public goal:

“As a community we promise to prepare learners for a socially responsible life in a free and democratic society, to participate in a world which each generation will shape and build. We promise a public education system which provides learners with knowledge and wisdom, protects and nurtures their natural joy of learning, encourages them to become persons of character, strength and integrity, infuses them with hope and with spirit, and guides them to resolute and thoughtful action.”

In this spirit, the banner of March 4th was “No cuts! No fees! Public education must be free!” Now thousands of people across this country are meeting to consider what to do next. How do we counter the corporate attack on public education, now organized and implemented by the government? Do we fall backwards to a defensive vision that just opposes the cuts without clarifying the road ahead? How do we fight forward with a vision of public education that will empower everyone?

We think it's clear: we must fight forward. The priorities of this country are upside down at every level: local, state, and federal. They need to be turned right side up. That's why, in addition to calling for “Fully Funded Quality Public Education for All: kindergarten through uni-

versity and adult education”, we also called for “Defend Immigrants' Rights: No ICE Raids; No Deportations”; “Jobs for All”; “No War, No Prisons”; “Make the Rich Pay”. The road forward for this movement isn't straight, and it isn't clear. But the movement is on the road forward. And we have a fighting chance to win – if we're clear about what's needed and if we fight forward to get it.



Budget Cut Protests in Port Hueneme, California that would hurt local schools.

PHOTO/CARLOS J. LICEA/AMIGOS7805.COM

Chicago Says: Stop Closing Schools!

By Lew Rosenbaum

A firestorm of protest from teachers and the neighborhoods erupted after January 19, when Chicago Public Schools (CPS) announced their plan to close, consolidate or “turn around” 14 schools. CPS uses the “turnaround” model “because of poor academic performance” according to a CPS press release. Led by GEM (Grassroots Education Movement) and CORE (Caucus Of Rank-and-file Educators), thousands of protesters converged on the 20 school board hearings held in the month following the announcement. Parents, teachers and students rebutted CPS claims. The outcry was so great that CPS CEO Ron Huberman tried to mollify the protesters by removing four schools from the closing lists. At the same time he warned Chicagoans about the impending CPS budgetary crisis.

The projected CPS deficit next year is \$900 million. Chicago teachers, parents and students will have to pay the price. The cost? Attacks on the

salaries and pensions of teachers; attacks on the parents and communities by closing and privatizing schools.

School officials mask these attacks with the language of “reform,” part of a national plan pioneered in Chicago by former CPS CEO Arne Duncan. Duncan, together with the Commercial Club of Chicago, developed the current corporate plan to privatize schools, called “Renaissance 2010”. Now that he is Secretary of Education, Duncan, is campaigning for a new “No Child Left Behind” law. The proposed law would focus on helping states and school districts turn around their 5,000 lowest-performing schools in the next five years. From Florida to California this means “turn-arounds,” school closings, mass firings.

Our politicians all recognize that good paying blue collar jobs have disappeared. They can't admit that *all* good paying jobs are decreasing with increased reliance on electronics. It is a smokescreen to say, “If we educate the workers, the jobs will come.” But this is

the lie that Democrats now, and the Republicans before them, are touting. This is what the Chicago plan promises.

Does Chicago's plan really educate children? Not when private corporations get extra money from the CPS while the majority of schools in the school district languish for lack of funding. Not when students spend months of their educational year preparing for mind-numbing tests. Not when privatized schools, with their advantages, do not show significant improvement in those “high stakes” tests. Despite fancy words, the corporations who will not employ our young people have no need to educate them.

CEO Huberman needs a frightened workforce to accept wage and pension cutbacks, school closings and increased class size. Before the crucial union election in May, he is suppressing distribution of union campaign materials. This supports a leadership with whom he hopes to make a deal. It undercuts the Chicago Teachers Union forces opposing “turn-arounds” and concessions. CORE is the

leading contender in the fight to unseat incumbents. Huberman's aim? Force workers to accept the dire economic plight, brought on by diverting taxpayer money to private industry, as an excuse to hurt those already suffering the most.

Parents and students and teachers know they are being short-changed by the educational system. The message they are sending nationally is that privatized education does not work any better than the neighborhood education they have been forced to accept. They are demanding a moratorium on school closings; they recognize that the city of Chicago, which can mobilize billions of dollars in a failed attempt to get the Olympics, and the federal government have the capability and responsibility to provide a world class education in every neighborhood. It is time to stop the drive for “national standards” under the rule of the corporations. It is time to aim for a national education program that guarantees equal and quality education for all.

Opening Salvos on Public Education

By Todd Alan Price

A round of attacks on public education have surfaced and hit even the mainstream media headlines.

First there was the dismissal of the entire teaching staff in Rhode Island's Central Falls High School. Then there was the case of the threatened layoffs across the country. Ron Huberman, Chicago Public Schools CEO, struck fear in the hearts of many in the teachers of CPS, by stating that thousands would be cut. Over all, in Illinois some 17,000 could lose their jobs.

In times past, as one of the students was quick to note, such fear tactics were used to get the public behind the idea of raising revenues for schools, even supporting perhaps a tax increase. The tactic has even worked at times and many teachers have been hired back.

But these times seem different. For many, the economy has not turned around, and many more are concerned that the administration does not much care for experienced, highly qualified teachers, but rather wants to replace such teachers with energetic, highly effective ones.

The distinction is important and speaks volumes as to the intended direction of educational reform in the year ahead. With "Race to the Top," states are expected to compete with one another, in effect embracing the federal government's plans for innovative and creative solutions. For the states that do so, they will be rewarded with funds to implement those innovative and creative solu-

tions; the funds are said to provide a needed incentive.

So let's consider this scenario: states are strapped for funding right now, many borrowing on next year's expected revenue streams. Many states will have a hard time turning down the option, through RTT, of closing their "failing" schools and reopening them as Charters, staffed by the very same energetic and effective teachers the administration wants.

These teachers are likely to be drawn from alternative certification programs, such as Teach for America. Teach for America, though showing mixed results in many studies (among one obvious finding and implication is that many of the graduates stay on average for three years, not very long if the idea is to build sustainable relationships between teacher and students).

Indeed the Department of Education has indicated that they want the alternative education certification teachers to take



Budget Cut Protests in Port Hueneme, California that would hurt local schools.

PHOTO/CARLOS J. LICEA/AMIGOS7805.COM

the jobs away from the unionized veterans. That much is clear, only what is not so clear is whether this will raise the

test scores and keep the students from dropping out.

Unions Fighting Back

Some of the unions are starting to wake up to the realization that workers are in for a long struggle. Both the NEA and the AFT criticized the administration's first foray into reforming the No Child Left Behind law. The plan is to use, like RTT, incentives to largely get the school districts to align with the federal government's edicts. Several education commentators said that the planned reauthorization would make the new law more flexible. Actually, many seem to have missed the point that, namely, although there are more indices of the "multi-assessments" including decreasing the drop out rate and truanancies, the new law will still be underpinned largely by standardized tests. Consider that, given the penchant now among many for the national standards for all, and given the likelihood that many of the textbooks will still come from Texas, we are witnessing a ramping up of the idea that one size fits all. It is almost possible to imagine that everywhere across the country, all the students in all of the public schools could be reading the same history textbook (from Texas, where they just removed Thomas Jefferson's treatise on the importance of the separation of church and state), while being taught by the same type of teacher (young energetic, effective, underpaid and overworked).

INSURANCE INDUSTRY GETS A STRONG BAIL OUT WHILE THE PEOPLE GET A WEAK REFORM

The working class must be independent from the Democratic or Republican Parties

By Sheilah Garland-Olaniran and Rita Valenti

The health care 'reform' bill that passed the US House of Representatives on March 21 was not a healthcare reform bill, but an insurance reform bill. For those thousands of fighters for health care justice, this bill may very well serve to push the fight for health care toward an independent political movement that relies neither on the Republican or Democratic parties.

The main feature of this bill (while there are some weak measures that may help some, millions remain without access to care) is a bail out for the insurance industry which will profit greatly as millions will be mandated to buy insurance with no guarantee of getting the care they need.

Many see the bill as a step in the right direction but let's take a historical look at where we were and where we are

today. Employer provided insurance worked in the past primarily because the economy was expanding. Unions won concessions from employers to provide employer based insurance and that victory was extended to non-union workers. Today, technology replaces many workers which allows corporations to be "lean and mean." They either drop or pass the costs on to employees. As workers have lost their jobs (which happened to tens of millions in the past two years) they are unable to access health care insurance through a job. This bill does not alleviate that problem, it leaves out many and mandates others to buy insurance with tax subsidies from the government, therefore, giving the insurance corporations a huge tax payer bail out.

Prior to 2007, recognition of the demise of employment-based health insurance posed two very different solutions. One was a public national health care system that would cover everyone equally.

Modeled after Medicare and known as Single Payer, this approach offered universal coverage which was not employment based and with mechanisms that controlled costs without rationing care. It would eliminate the private insurance industry. The other option was promoted by the Center for the Transformation of Health Care, a policy institute created by former Georgia Congressman, Newt Gingrich. This option promoted 'health care exchanges', its primary focus is the development of high deductible health savings accounts through the individual purchase of health insurance. (The core of these HDSA's is the investment of the workers money in the stock market.) The primary beneficiary of this policy are the banks and insurance companies.

The need for health care reform was explosive. Grassroots efforts were diverted from a vision of health care for all. The demand for eliminating the private insurance industry was compro-

mised for weak reforms. Health Care for America-Now; Moveon.org; and others sought to reform healthcare with a muddled public option, (competition with insurance companies.) The AFL-CIO never launched an aggressive fight for Singlepayer which they endorsed. In the meantime, the Democratic Party brilliantly confused and abandoned any real or symbolic health care 'reform' in the name of political pragmatism.

Which way forward?

This is not a question of more pressure, a bigger movement, or better elected officials. The fight for quality health care for all is linked to a challenge of capitalism as a sustainable system, which means the working class must function independently from the parties of the ruling class if healthcare reform or any other reforms will be won.

Wall Street Debt Dealers Hit Greece, Spain, U.S.

By Dave Ransom

If a gang of drug dealers was getting people high, then beating them up, stealing their money, and leaving them bleeding in the streets, we'd think they were a menace to society. If the cops were looking the other way, we'd have to find a way to take care of them ourselves.

But all that is small-time compared with the much bigger con game being played by some of the world's largest financial capitalists on the sovereign nation of Greece.

Led by the investment bank Goldman Sachs, they first sold the Greek government under-the-table loans that enabled it to feed its debt habit, keeping the whole thing quiet in return for a promise to hand over future tax revenues.

Then the big banks set up what was effectively an international casino where they could place bets that Greece would go belly up and default on those loans. And they invited their friends to pile on. With huge amounts of money being wagered against Greek

bonds, the interest rate Greece must accept to raise the money to pay the banks back has skyrocketed.

Now big capital's enforcer, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is on the scene, demanding that the Greek government squeeze the pay-back money out of the working class through wage cuts, tax increases, and pension cutbacks.

And the Greek cops, acting as the banks' kneecap breakers, are bloodying protesting workers in the streets.

If this sounds familiar, don't be surprised. It's the same scam Goldman Sachs and the rest of the financial ruling class ran when they

pushed insurance giant AIG into near bankruptcy, took bets against it, and then concocted a government bailout that put billions in their pockets.

Closer to home, it's essentially the same scam the banks have run on mortgage borrowers and credit-card holders, feeding their debt habit so as to ream out their bank accounts, leav-

ing them bloodied and abandoned. Both Greece and Spain have otherwise progressive governments elected by working-class majorities. But big international capital is dictating the harsh terms under which those governments must govern in the global capitalist economy. They must repress big capital's working-class victims while they are being re-



Greek riot police stand guard in front of Citibank during a budget cut protest.

PHOTO/ARIS MESSINIS/STRINGER/GETTY IMAGES

ing them bloodied and abandoned.

As with the mortgage crisis and AIG, the mugging of Greece is having huge aftershocks. Worried bondholders, including big American pension funds, don't know what other hidden loans to European governments are yet to meet the light of day.

Spain looks to be the next in line to get whiplashed by Goldman Sachs and friends. The Spanish government is already planning deep cutbacks in pay, unemployment relief, and pensions—plus a tax increase just to be sure people get the message. But Spanish unions, too, have brought the working class into the streets.

lied of their wealth.

In effect, the working class of Greece and Spain—and of the U.S., as well—are being told to shut up and take what's coming to them or get their heads bloodied and be abandoned in the streets.

Indeed, we are being left with the same choice we'd have if we were overrun by drug dealers—either unite and go on the offensive, driving them from the face of the earth, or end up with our pockets empty and our collective throats cut. Our work is cut out for us.

What's New About What Wall Street Is Doing

By Dave Ransom

There's something new in how the high-fliers on Wall Street are bleeding the rest of us dry.

Of course, it's not new that capitalists—industrial and financial—use the government and the police to gang up on the working class. When this country was industrializing, they did so in every key industry—railroads, coal, steel, auto, textiles, construction. That's how they made their fortunes. And it's why American workers struggled for decades to build strong, effective unions.

What's new is that today the global money men can only make their billions through financial speculation—looting pensions, undermining governments, devaluing currencies, in effect wringing every last dollar out of the working class.

That's because, as computerized and robotized production pushes more and more workers out of the mines, mills, and factories, there is less and less value added from human labor and no reason to invest in such industries.

But uninvested capital is dead capital, so Wall Street must put it to work in speculation, one big bank devouring another and each devouring the working class. It's ultimately a losing game, but for capital it is about the only game in town.

For the world working class, however, it's a game changer. We no longer enjoy a reciprocal relationship with capital—selling our labor to employers and buying back a portion of what we produce, thus keeping body and soul together.

Instead, the relationship between labor and capital is rapidly becoming antagonistic—they don't need us any more, and we don't really need them. But to supply the food, shelter, and clothing for our subsistence, we most decidedly need the productive apparatus they control.

So it boils down to this. If we don't take democratic control of the mines, mills, and factories—the means of production to which they may have title, but which generations of us have built—our people will surely perish.

But if, instead, we take that democratic control of the means of production, we will be able to build a society without exploitation and without want, one in which we will be free to realize our full human potential. And achieving that is not a bad fight to be in.

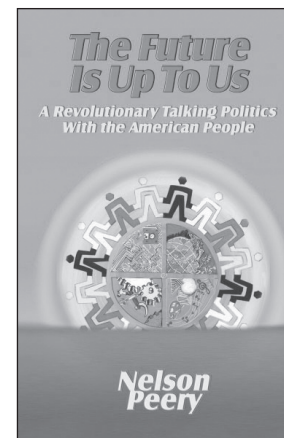
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From April 4th to June, the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign (PPEHRC) will be marching in solidarity with the world's poor and struggling masses. Hip Hop Congress

is an organization that supports and connects artists, organizers, educators and many of the working folks that the march is about. Hip Hop Congress stands in solidarity with PPEHRC and asks that any artist, Hip Hop or not, that is aware of this march or in a location where it will be taking place stand with us. America is at a crossroads.



Shamako Noble.

PHOTO/KIJALUCAS.COM

Will this country support its citizens or the banks? Will our government place its focus in appeasing the needs of the corporations, or on ensuring that each and every one of its citizens are provided the basic necessities in life? One thing is for certain, if the people do not stand up for themselves the decision will be made for us. That's why HHC asks that all artists in general, and all Hip Hop artists in specific stand with the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign. You can find more information at www.economichumanrights.org.

For more information about how you can get involved, please visit www.hiphop-congress.com. — DLabrie, Page Editor, Email: dlabrozia2005@yahoo.com

Broke: A Love Song to PPEHRC

Aye yo, cat's is broke,
You act like that's a joke
Like these cats will not grab the gat and smoke
for like, half a coke and that jacket, loc
Getting the sense you ain't here
but the young g's are really about it and down to clown here
down to move pounds all across the town here
and make moves without fear
we got these, poorly rated makeshift lawmakers fucking up
bankers sinking tankers but the haters still coming up
people losing their homes with no one to blame
except an imaginary market that gets harder to tame
God it's a shame, these credit companies harvest your pain
pillage and plunder and just chalk it up as part of the game
stalking your wage, call you and call you and call you again
you make deals don't even know who you bargaining wit'
They try to act like it's not a threat to their order
But thousands in Detroit still don't have any water
Going after your son or your daughter to sign them up for their own slaughter
Another public housing unit torn up
Police don't even bother with conversations or whatnot
They just speak with a taser or object with a gunshot
They abhor us all in their court of law it is crystal clear
convicting for surviving the traps they have engineered.

Aye yo, folks is starving
The White House is starting to look like JP Morgan
Obama just barged in by a limited margin
because of charm and all of the harm the bush farm did
But I'm a keep it real, cause even though he won
We still got an economic system that is overrun
And we don't understand it, man we are all lost
These corporations, they only want to cut the cost
The hack away at jobs, prices don't level off
playing ball's more expensive, people have less to toss
We've always loved America cause we've been better off
But give a warm goodbye to privilege ya'll cause we just shipped it off
They bail out hella banks, raise the stakes for corporate cronies
We have to choose between bankruptcy and our heart exploding
It thickens up in this piece, they see the plot unfolding
cooped up in a psuedo free market just as it starts imploding.

Yo, folks is pissed,
critical mass what will happen to us after this
it's a conspiracy a theory we can master if we get past our past
look at the math and just smash the shit
For many there's a God for some cash is it
and they'll be glad when fascism crushes activists.
Why are toddlers sleeping on benches
while pundits are sitting on TV addicted to pills and promoting agendas
Ya'll we could affect it all, with our collective thought
but there are sections lost, and there are sections bought
and there are sections that may never want to understand
and there are sections that will gain the upper hand working the numbers man
There are lines drawn you're wrong trying to ride the fence
Strengthen heart and mind and then focus in a timed offense
It won't take one of us, it won't take twenty five
It will take all of us, for all of us to survive.

2009-Shamako Noble-Still the Sword of the West.

Cabrini Green - Interview With Evicted Tenant

By Joseph Peery

Editors note: The following are excerpts from an interview with Steven Ross, a long time resident of Cabrini Green who was evicted in 2008. Steve shares some of his memories of the community which go back fifty years. He is currently homeless.

People's Tribune: Talk about your experiences growing up in Cabrini Green.

Steven Ross: I grew up there when it was considered moderate low income affordable housing for middle class Black folks. We got there in 1959 from the Hyde Park area when the red projects first opened up at 1160 N Sedgwick. It was ultra modern and we felt we were "moving on up." I was fortunate to grow up with people like Curtis Mayfield, Jerry Butler and Major Lance and all those guys who came from that area. We were only four blocks from the super rich on the Gold Coast and as a teenager I used to carry groceries for some of the prominent people such as Hugh Hefner, Adlai Stevenson and George Dunne.

PT: What was the employment situation like at that time?

SR: In the mid 60's and early 70's, the Cabrini Green area, Goose Island,

the Clybourn Corridor, Halsted Street and all up and down Division Street was all industrial parks with manufacturers like Peterson Coal Co., Seeburg Corp., Montgomery Ward, Oscar Mayer and Scala Meat Packing. It was easy to get a job in those days. You could quit one job one day and the next day be hired at another company. Everybody in Cabrini Green worked. When those companies moved out, unemployment increased and crime increased, and they started the gentrification plan.

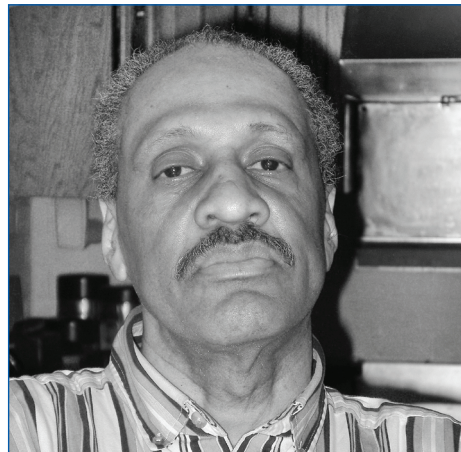
PT: Did the CHA (Chicago Housing Authority) provide services to help people?

SR: Lower North Center helped. Also there were churches and community organizations. They started having building council meetings and CHA started giving out grants to each building to provide activities. Then there was the summer food program for kids. At one time I was a manager for that. As I became more involved, I became president of the Building Council, president of the Tenant Patrol and chairman of the Human Capital Committee. We held meetings, but people lost interest.

PT: Talk about how you were evicted.

SR: After my family moved out in 1969, I moved back in in 1991. I worked

with the LAC (Local Advisory Council) back then. We protested and were able to get CHA to move single men into public housing. Public housing is supposed to help the poor and homeless, but now they turn their back on us.



Steven Ross, long time resident of Cabrini Green. He is now homeless following his eviction.

PHOTO
/JOSEPH PEERY

They are now doing background checks and drug testing and infringing on our civil and human rights. They now have a ONE STRIKE policy where you can be put out of your apartment just for being arrested. Every Black man I know

has been arrested. For them to use that without a conviction to deny you public housing is wrong. In my case, there was a criminal arrest charge on me that happened in 2006. In 2008 when they wanted to tear down my building and relocate everybody, they also wanted to eliminate as many people as possible by any means necessary. So they dug up this case and had me evicted. And now I've been homeless for the past 16 months.

PT: What advice would you give residents?

RS: The advice to those folks in the row houses is to first get that contract that was written and the reason why the row houses were actually built. Then get a lawyer and charge CHA with being slum landlords invading their privacy and their civil and human rights, moving them around like pawns on a chess board. They need to unify, come together as a community, start coming to these LAC community meetings and organize to defend themselves to fight for their housing or they will become homeless.

A People's Vision

By Dominic Moulden

In the Nation's Capitol, there is an alternative voice and vision emerging around community organizing. Its roots germinate from Ella Baker's approach to organizing. She understood that for far too long, those who were directly affected by the issues (poverty, homelessness, racism) were rarely integrated into their own liberation struggle.

Ella Jo Baker perfected the concept of participatory democracy. This concept meant that those who are directly affected by the issues make the campaign or movement building-related decisions, minimize hierarchy within their organization, and utilize direct action as an effective way to leverage the community's power.

Ella Baker's profound contribution to organizing has not been forgotten: Community organizations like Organizing Neighborhood Equity DC (ONE DC) are infusing this concept of organizing and leadership development within our community organizing model.

ONE DC answered DC residents' calls to break away from the advocacy approach to social change and organize long-time residents of color so that we can demand our human right to affordable housing, living wage jobs, and equitable land development.

ONE DC sees a world where those

most affected and directly impacted by socio-economic inequities are the subject and agitators of justice work. The people's vision for change is not a revision of the current system of exploitation and domineering power relations; they seek a more equitable world where material needs are met and the immaterial needs for respect, inclusion, and creativity are met as well.

Resident-led organizing is done by members and the governance of the organization is handled by them as well. The board is comprised of members that live in our communities and are affected



Organizing Neighborhood Equity DC (ONE DC).

PHOTO /DONATED

by the changing urban demographics. Our members are the drivers of ONE DC's vision and the staff supports their implementation of this vision.

At ONE DC, institutional change occurs when policies and values of all social institutions are changed to include low-income, poor and other marginalized communities' demands for equitable and fair redistribution of resources.

ONE DC actualizes institutional change by creating new social and economic structures and leadership practices that respect the life, history, and culture of low income people.

Our campaigns are organized in a human rights context and coordinated by members. These campaigns are called: ONE Right to Housing, Land, Income, and Wellness.

ONE DC addresses our members' experiences with injustice through popular education workshops that include facts and stories about global exploitation. ONE DC members coordinate and teach Leadership Education for Action and Power (LEAP), our community learning program. LEAP facilitators use popular education methods to help deconstruct the US economy and other social issues.

With the international understanding of the problems faced by the oppressed, members can effectively organize their communities and offer comprehensive solutions to decision-makers. Through

venues like LEAP, members also explore the interconnection of issues like capitalism, racism, patriarchy and even the need for personal and communal healing and wellness.

In short, here are some key components of the ONE DC people's vision:

- 1) Resident-led social change
- 2) Membership based leadership development
- 3) Democratic workplace and shared leadership model
- 4) Organizational Learning Model
- 5) Appreciative Inquiry Peer Support Model
- 6) Organizing with People
- 7) Organizing for Consciousness-raising
- 8) Organizing for Movement Building

Organizing for systemic social change is generational work. We are building this 8-step organizing vision with the hope that the ONE DC movement will be carried on through the generations to see the fruit of justice and wellness grow throughout our communities.

ONE DC's vision is rooted in the people's voice and this is not a small voice.

VOICES FROM BENTON HARBOR, MI

HOMELESS TO START COURT WATCHING BERRIEN COUNTY

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

The legal problems that homeless people face everyday are exacerbated by their inability to get to court.

Berrien County, Michigan needs to start a county homeless court program. We need a special superior court session held at local shelters for the homeless defendants to resolve outstanding misdemeanor criminal cases. The homeless court should be created to help solve the criminal justice system problems with homeless people. It should counteract the effects of criminal cases pushing homeless defendants further outside of society.

People experiencing homelessness often receive citations for public nuisance offenses and then fail to appear in court. The homeless defendants fail to appear, not because of a disregard for the court system, but due to their status and condition. The homeless peoples' day is consumed with a search for food, clothing and shelter. Most are not in a position to fight procedural or substantive issues in a legal case.

The homeless are aware that the courts also require a decent appearance and they do not want to make a bad first impression. A homeless person with poor hygiene or without a place to store his belongings may choose not to appear in court at all. Many homeless people are reluctant to attend court because of the uncertainty of court proceeding. The threat of custody and unresolved issues can ultimately preclude homeless people from accessing desperately needed services such as employment, housing, public assistance and treatment.

This is why the NAACP started a homeless court watch four days a week. Homeless people are being trained to court watch. Most courts are corrupt with more than 60 or more court sessions each week. The court watchers will be able to get detailed information about corruption, side-bar deals, and trends in sentencing that are often lost. The court watchers attend court sessions for all cases. We must

record the docket numbers, the names of participants, charges and verdicts. The data is reported to Rev Pinkney for analysis. Rev. Pinkney appreciates the court watcher's personal comments and observations.

Court watchers do not have to be legal experts. Rev. Pinkney is in a position to make suggestions and exchange ideas with other court watchers around the country.

Court watching can be a real eye-opener. There are few experiences that can compete with what occurs in the courts. Court watchers benefit from watching and at the same time are helping the community by working to stop corrupt judges, prosecutors, court-appointed attorneys and police officers.

The court watch program through trained court watchers has one important mission — to improve all aspects of the justice system.

FINANCIAL TAKEOVER OF BENTON HARBOR

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

"If the state could grant us a \$5 million Fiscal Stabilization Bond, it would solve our problems," said Benton Harbor City Manager Ron Carter. "We could do that," said State Treasurer Robert J. Kleine.

The statements were made during a meeting held in Lansing on March 17, 2010. The state was forced to meet after the Benton Harbor City Commission appealed Gov. Granholm's takeover decision. An "emergency manager" would have power to hire, fire, renegotiate labor contracts, and sell property.

After the meeting I found out that the long list that Benton Harbor is in the red for only added up to \$4.1 million. One person jokingly suggested that benefit concerts could take care of that amount.

One might wonder why a governor who offers little or no leadership within the state would suddenly take over a city which has been in deep poverty for many

years because of being only \$4 million in debt?

Ron Carter talked about a 62-point plan to remedy the problems. It seemed obvious that nothing was needed for Benton Harbor but to let him do his job.

Mayor Cooke said that the main question is if a state emergency manager would sell Benton Harbor's most valuable assets, such as its water plant. If the state of Michigan were in this to help, they'd save a lot of money and trouble by simply offering financial aid to the poorest community in Michigan.

Several people I spoke with said that Whirlpool has always orchestrated the chaos, financial and otherwise, which has characterized Benton Harbor city government. Hopefully, this bully corporation will not again have this opportunity.

Benton Harbor has been in financial straits for decades — why does Gov. Granholm choose now to intervene? Could it possibly have anything to do with the new city commission not giving Whirlpool what they want...like water and MORE land?

As we go to press, the state has taken over Benton Harbor. They could have taken measures to avoid this but they are doing what they wanted to do all along. We the people will march on city hall when the financial manager arrives.

COMMUNITY QUOTES:

"The soul is dyed the color of its thoughts, think only on those things that are in line with your principles and can bear the light of day. that is why we must stop the take over of our city. We must show the governor and whirlpool we are willing to fight for the city of Benton Harbor."

— Rev D. Smith

"Everyone is given the key to heaven and the same key open the gates of hell, that is why we must recall Dennis Knowles for misconduct and the misappropriation of Benton Harbor residents money?"

— Marquette Coats



Rev. Edward Pinkney.

PHOTO /BRETT JELINEK

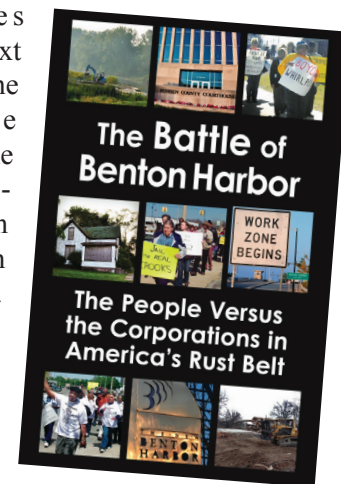
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