

# PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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Detroit protest against utility shut offs by DTE Energy. 80,000 homes are without utilities in Wayne County, with 60,000 in Detroit. National Welfare Rights Organization, the group organizing the protest, says no one has the right to deprive families of utilities for lack of money. See Page 6.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

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## STOP BUDGET CUTS: TAX THE RICH

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# 'Bipartisan' Deficit Reduction: Whose Interest Does the Government Serve?

## EDITORIAL

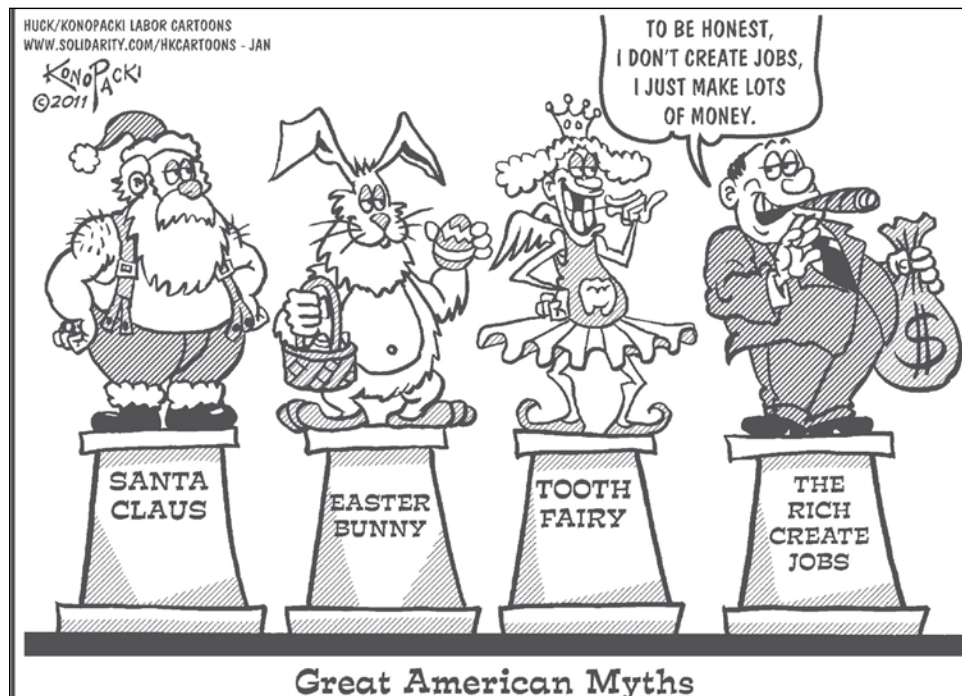
The recent "bipartisan" proposals to cut the federal deficit are a threat to the welfare of the American people. To respond in a way that safeguards the people's interests, we first have to recognize that the people have separate economic and political interests from those of the wealthy and the big corporations that run the country today.

The National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform is a "bipartisan" panel created in February 2010, supposedly to find ways to reduce the mounting federal debt. On Dec. 3, 2010, a plan put forward by the panel's two chairmen won the support of 11 of its 18 members.

The bottom line with the plan is this: it would increase the people's taxes, cut corporate taxes, and make deep cuts in programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid that the people depend on. It would essentially almost eliminate any government responsibility for the well-being of the people.

We should first recognize that in the past, the corporate ruling class of the US plundered many other countries economically and used part of the loot to provide a relatively higher standard of living for the American worker. The government safety net was part of that standard of living. Today, as profit margins have shrunk and the US ruling class is less able to plunder the world as it once did, the money to bribe the US working class into submission is no longer there.

Another factor is that robots and computers are replacing labor and thus creating a class of people who are no longer needed by capitalism. The corporations won't provide benefits for workers they don't need, and the corporations also have to protect their power and privilege from this growing mass of dispossessed people. Indeed, the corporations have to protect private property itself, since



the problem of the growing poverty can only be solved by doing away with private property. The problems of the poor—and all of society—can only be solved by creating a new society where the people control the government and the power of the government is used to guarantee everyone's needs are met.

The corporations, from their view, are forced to create a new kind of state—one that will intervene in society and the economy to protect private property and to restructure the government and the economy to serve the needs of the ruling corporate class as a whole. This is the real meaning of the "bipartisanship" we keep hearing about. It means the main sections of the Democratic and Republican parties coming together to reveal their true nature as the twin parties of American business, as the defenders of private property and corporate power.

We should not be fooled into thinking this is a fight between "left" and "right," or between Democrats and Republicans. This apparent fight is simply a squab-

ble over tactics, or a fight by particular capitalists or groups of corporations to defend their narrow economic interests. The corporate class as a whole is united in its desire to protect private property and its wealth and power, no matter how many workers must die in the process.

Our enemy is clear on their class interests; we must be clear about ours. Will the power of the state be used to serve and protect the property and power of the wealthy, or to serve the interests of the people? The corporations have shown they are willing to partially nationalize the banks and the auto industry in order to stabilize the economy and protect their power. We should demand nationalization in the interests of the people—nationalization of whatever needs to be nationalized to guarantee the well-being of our families. This will point our struggle in the direction it needs to go—toward the fight for a new society where no one is poor, and where everyone has everything they need for a civilized life.

## 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](http://www.peopletribune.org)

# Stop the Cuts – Tax the Rich!

## COVER STORY

As the recession deepens, the ruling class moves to find ways to protect their wealth. To do so they must shift the economic consequences of the recession to the backs of the people. One of the ways of achieving this is through the slashing of state expenditures to avoid raising taxes on the rich, while raising the people's taxes. The political representatives of the rich long ago set up a catch 22 for the people in order to protect themselves in case of recession or depression. That trap is the law that a state cannot run a deficit. Their budget must balance. During hard times, income from taxes declines forcing the states to cut social services.

Forty six states have made crippling cuts in social services, including education, health care, and services to the elderly and disabled. Since the beginning of the recession states have slashed \$425 billion in social services. On the other side of the coin, the recession has greatly increased the need for the very services they are cutting. The situation is serious and getting worse.

At least 31 states have implemented cuts that will restrict low-income children's or families' eligibility for health insurance or reduce their access to

health care services. At least 29 states plus the District of Columbia are cutting medical, rehabilitative, home care, or other services needed by low-income people who are elderly or have disabilities, or are significantly increasing the cost of these services. At least 34 states and the District of Columbia are cutting aid to K-12 schools and various education programs. At least 43 states have cut assistance to public colleges and universities, resulting in reductions in faculty and staff in addition to tuition increases. And at least 44 states and the District of Columbia have made cuts affecting state government employees.

On any given night in America, up to 2 million people are homeless, according to estimates of the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. This is not counting the millions of "couch people" who have moved in with relatives or close friends. Nor is it counting the millions who shift for themselves and do not go to shelters or food kitchens.

The organization "Feeding America" which has over 200 food banks is annually providing food to 37 million Americans, including 14 million children. This is an increase of 46 percent over 2006.

That means one in eight Americans now rely on Feeding America for food and groceries. Feeding America's nationwide network of food banks is feeding 1 million more Americans each week than they did in 2006. Thirty-six percent of the households they serve have at least one person working. More than one-third of client households report having to choose between food and other basic

necessities, such as rent, utilities and medical care. The number of children the Feeding America network serves has increased by 50 percent since 2006.

An estimated 49 million Americans are food insecure. Of those 49 million, almost 17 million are children and 5 million are seniors. Last year, over 37 million people used a Food Bank for emergency food assistance.

We can accept this intolerable situation, or we can do something about it. The first step is to realize there is nothing sacred about this ruling class or the wealth they stole from us and from the workers around the world. There is plenty of money. The rich are simply sitting on it. Tax cuts for the rich don't create jobs. The sky won't fall if you tax them. Stop the state budget cuts and tax the rich!



Caregivers fight against devastating budget cuts, standing up to corporate special interests. This protest is outside a Wells Fargo branch in Tacoma, WA.

PHOTO/GARY BENSON FOR SEIU HEALTHCARE 775NW

### Sister/Brother, can you spare \$20?

The People's Tribune brings clarity to the growing movement. It unites revolutionaries around a vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it. It has no paid staff and gets no corporate grants. The paper is financed solely by our readers. We need your support to continue telling the truth.

One-time donations are welcome. If you can spare \$20 a month or more, you'll be a hero. Please make donations payable to People's Tribune and send to P.O. Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654. You can also donate via Paypal at [www.peoplestribune.org](http://www.peoplestribune.org).

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# VICTORY IN NEW ORLEANS!

Community beats back sheriff, ICE, to free leader of day laborers

By New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice

We are thrilled to announce that Antonio Ocampo walked out of the New Orleans Federal courthouse a free man on November 15, after spending 97 days in illegal custody on an expired immigration detainer. The Chief Federal Judge ordered his immediate release after Antonio filed a writ of habeas corpus from inside Orleans Parish Prison (OPP) Friday.

"Inside, I knew they were violating my rights. I complained to jail officials. I filed five written grievances. But no one listened." Antonio is a member of the Congress of Day Laborers, a project of the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice.

The Orleans Parish Criminal District Court ordered Antonio's release on August 12 based on time he had already served on misdemeanor charges. He should have been set free immediately. Instead, Antonio was held in jail because ICE had placed an immigration detainer on him (commonly known as an ICE hold). That gave ICE 48 hours to investigate, charge, or detain Antonio. ICE never did.

According to law, Sheriff Gusman should have set Antonio free at the end of 48 hours. Instead he continued to hold



Antonio Ocampo is surrounded by supporters who worked for his freedom. He spent 97 days in illegal custody on an expired immigration detainer.

PHOTO/TED QUANT

Antonio illegally for 97 days, in violation of his Fourth, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendment rights. As soon as our Legal Department filed the petition for writ of habeas corpus on Antonio's behalf, the Sheriff attempted to turn him over to ICE — effectively trying to deport the evidence of his own violations of the Constitution. We stopped him.

Then, soon after U.S. Marshals served him with papers ordering him to federal court, Sheriff Gusman attempted

to drag ICE into the courtroom. He announced that he would be asking ICE to attend and testify at the federal hearing. Organized day laborers, clergy, and community members forced him to back down. Sheriff Gusman relented and ordered his lawyers to call ICE off.

Antonio's case makes it clear that ICE detainers led to violations of constitutional rights. Sheriff Gusman effectively suspended the Constitution. If Antonio Ocampo had not filed a writ of

habeas corpus from the jail, his illegal detention would have been indefinite. When advocates and an organized community bring egregious civil rights violations to light and attempt to hold Sheriffs accountable, Sheriffs use even the expired detainers to immediately attempt to deport the evidence. The recent expansion of the federal Secure Communities program into Orleans Parish Prison is likely to make these routine constitutional violations even more pervasive.

What do we want now? First, ICE should allow Sheriff Gusman to decide not to submit to ICE detainers and allow him to opt-out of Secure Communities. Second, Sheriff Gusman should run his jail in line with the Constitution. He should affirmatively decide to end the use of detainers in OPP and throw Secure Communities out of his jail.

"When the Constitution says 'We, the people,' that includes Antonio," said Jose Zelaya, a member of the Congress of Day Laborers. "We, the people includes me. We, the people includes all of the residents of New Orleans and all of the communities in the United States." He's right.

Contact New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice at 217 N. Prieur St., New Orleans, LA 70112, or at [www.nowcrj.org](http://www.nowcrj.org).

## HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT!

By G.W. ROLLE

In the biblical book of Jeremiah, as the Israelites are being carried away to captivity in Babylon, God advises them to seek the Shalom of the country they are being carried off to. I am thinking that in this context, "Shalom" not only means peace — which is its enduring definition — but He is also telling them to seek any good thing that is all-encompassing. Like skill; like generosity; like modes and methods of doing things that were hitherto unknown to the Israelites as a people.

Many people think we can house everyone by throwing rocks, or holding finger-pointing tribunals while talking rudely about folks's mothers. I'm of the school of thought of "Whatever Works". However, I think whatever works must include plausible alternatives to what's currently being presented by the other side of the aisle.

Most revolutionary movements have seats in the legislature as well as people in the street so they can broaden the political system to fit the people's point of view.



Human Rights March in St. Petersburg, Florida. Demonstrators say housing is a human right.

PHOTO/NICK HINCKLEY, NEWROOTSNEWS.ORG

In the sixties and early seventies, mass protests and a small scale guerrilla war was waged in this country in an effort to change the capitalist system of government. There were plenty of rock throwers as I remember, but not enough

philosophers. What did we want the world to look like when we were done tearing it up? At fifteen, I ran away from my Upstate New York home to Harlem to join the Black Panthers. At sixteen I came home semi-disillusioned — hop-

ing we would win, but wondering what we'd win and who would run it.

I think we have the most well-meaning administration in Washington for the hopes and the aspirations of people since Roosevelt. But if you think that Obama even has a clue of what is wrong and how to fix it, you are dreaming. He will only know if you tell him. That's why when I get my five minutes with HUD secretary Shaun Donovan, I'm going to give the guy an earful. I'm going to tell him about the United States and Canada Alliance of Inhabitants, and tell him about the gross inequality in housing in America today. I'm going to tell him how to end homelessness from a housing perspective, and I'm going to tell him about zero eviction concepts.

I encourage everyone to read Scotland's Plan to provide all of its people with housing as a human right. <http://www.law.georgetown.edu/journals/poverty/issues.html>

Now where's ours?

G.W. Rolle is the Social Justice Minister at Missio Dei Church in St. Petersburg, Florida.

# CABRINI GREEN EVICTIONS: The Last Woman Standing, Part 1

By Joseph Peery

CHICAGO. All eyes seemed to be on Cabrini Green as the last family was evicted from 1230 N. Burling on Thursday, December 9, 2010. Local and national news media covered the story, most reminding us of the gangs, drugs, and crime, etc., with descriptions like, “infamous” and “notorious”, and references to the “last building standing.”

Somehow they missed the human story — the one about that same family who escaped death when their westside home burned down and avoided staying homeless when they moved into Cabrini Green in 1989.

The head of the house is a 54-year-old proud mother of 13 (nine boys and four girls) and grandmother of 16. All of her children have received trophies and awards for baseball, basketball, school attendance and scholastic achievement above their grade levels in math and reading, with one of her sons graduating Valedictorian from Schiller School, Class of 2000.

She is Annie Ricks, the LAST WOMAN STANDING, and what follows are excerpts from interviews with her.



Annie Ricks was the last person to be forced out of the Cabrini highrises.

PHOTO/JOSEPH PEERY

**People's Tribune:** Annie, how did you end up being the last person to move out of 1230 N. Burling?

**Annie Ricks:** The reason I was the last one standing out of the building was because the address, 875 Cambridge, that they took me to that Monday wasn't fixed up. It had two broken windows and no child guards/safety railings. The tiles were broken in the bedrooms and besides, some people had gotten evicted

out of there by it being a dope house. Tuesday I went back down to see if they had finished anything, but there was nothing done. That's what made me not take it, and, in the last minute, I found out that the building was supposed to have been closed.

**PT:** Did you ask for somewhere else, somewhere nice, to move to?

**AR:** Yeah. At first they (CHA) had promised me Park Side. They said that I could get in Park Side in the mixed income.

**PT:** What happened with that?

**AR:** Well, they lied. I was telling them I didn't get my voucher, and they said, “Don't worry about it Miss Ricks...If you wanna stay in Park Side permanent, it's yours.” Everybody was telling me I can get Park Side or North Town Village. They even gave me the address which was 1342 N Burling, a 4-bedroom. It was CHA. But they came back to me later and said, “Miss Ricks, 1342 is not a CHA unit.” And I was like, “Come on now, y'all just told me that it was a CHA unit and that I could have it— who's telling the truth and who's not?” They was just pulling my leg the whole time.

So Tuesday morning we went down to court. My lawyer told the judge I felt that 875 N. Cambridge was gonna be a problem, because it was a drug unit. The judge said, “There's drugs all over. As of December 12, the building (1230 N. Burling) was supposed to have been closed.” I didn't leave up out of there like that. I wasn't going like that because so many people had made the promises. Jadine Chou (CHA Director of Asset Management) and Bryce White (Director of Community Outreach) called me Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving and said, “Miss Ricks, we're gonna give you some addresses and... if you don't take 'em somebody else is gonna take them.”

**PT:** So what were they going to do with you if you just stayed in the building?

**AR:** December 11 I think they would have evicted me up out of there anyway.

**PT:** Just put you on the street?

**AR:** Just put me on the street and I would have been homeless again.

*Part 2 of the interview will appear in the February, 2011, edition of the People's Tribune.*

## Politics of Poverty in Washington, D.C.

By Eric Sheptock

Well, Washington, DC has a new mayor — Vincent Gray — who took office on January 2nd, 2011. Various grassroots organizers from labor unions to those concerned with poverty and homelessness spoke out against former mayor Adrian Fenty calling him a “one-term mayor” due to his stance against unions and his cuts to social services. We were right and he's gone.

But before Gray even took office he showed us that he wasn't any different. The city is grappling with a \$188 million budget shortfall for fiscal 2011. Local activists and advocates have asked the city not to balance the budget on the backs of the poor, but to no avail. They've even suggested that taxes be raised on the wealthiest 1% of people to cover the cost of maintaining those programs. Still the council chairman, Mr. Gray and seven councilmembers (8 of 13) voted against raising taxes on the wealthiest Washingtonians and in favor of cutting some social service funding.

They decided to limit TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) recipients to 60 months in the program, after which they'd be left to fend for themselves. And it fails to address the fact that this is being done during an economic downturn — when the safety net is needed the most.

Local advocates are gravely concerned about this and ways the city is trying to save money — like denying homeless services to families (i.e. at

least one child accompanied by at least one adult) that are not from the District. Though the council claims that they will not allow anyone to freeze this winter, the ambiguities in the wording of the proposed bill may lead to confusion, faulty implementation, denial of services to a family in crisis and wrongful death.

In my four and a half years of advocating for DC's homeless, I've seen a shift in how advocates frame their political demands. First we fought to keep Franklin School Shelter open. (It was closed in 2008.) Then we fought to prevent budget cuts to social services. Then we fought to get the cuts reversed (with some success). Now we're fighting to raise taxes on the wealthy so that needed services can be maintained.

There has also been a notable shift in how government responds. In times past, governments sought to pacify the working class with a modest social safety net, thereby allowing capitalism to remain uncontested. But, in this age of computers and robots, labor is becoming irrelevant. Now they seem more willing to just throw us to the wolves. Whereas the nation has come to expect this type of behavior from the Republicans, this is happening in Washington, DC — a traditionally Democratic city. Our fight now is to get government to care about its poor and dispossessed constituents and not to just hang them out to dry.

The social safety net was only guaranteed when a large number of laborers were needed to work for the capitalists.



Housing protest.

PHOTO/CHRIS WAGE

We are slowly but surely entering into the fight of our lives — and FOR our lives.

That said, the political fight of the poor and dispossessed in our nation's capital is taking on a new form. Larger swaths of the population are being adversely affected by the new policies which are being designed by the state to cater to its capitalist bedfellows. It

is not just the homeless who need to worry. Families that previously received assistance as well as the newly dispossessed are just as liable to be neglected by government, in effect swelling the ranks of this new political force. But if and when people learn to self-organize, the dispossessed can become a power to be reckoned with. The end is not yet determined. The future is up to us.

# Next Steps for Safe Ground in Sacramento, CA

By Regina Range

As the season of caring winds to an end, some of us unfortunately are struggling with the devastation of the changes in the system. They have no happy tidings to be singing about, because they are too busy hustling and bustling daily to find their next meal, or a safe place to stay on this cold, chilly night in winter.

I am a representative of Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee (SHOC) here in California. Our board decided to start where the pain is by conducting a Homeless Leadership Training Course for the elders of the Safe Ground movement here in Sacramento. So each week for the next six to eight weeks my group will be guiding the elders of the Safe Ground camp to open up and enrich the world with their own individual style of leadership. We feel this is the

best place to begin where the root of the issues lie.

I went on a tour today hosted by Tracie Rice-Bailey. When we approached the camp and I saw the sign welcoming you to Safe Ground I was in awe. As we walked through the camp, people were washing their dishes, fellowshiping with one another, tending to their pets, working on miscellaneous camping equipment. When I approached one member, "Mom", she was so happy to see me. She said, "Sister, I've been praying you come back since the last time I saw you, when you gave us a ride to McDonalds after a City Hall Meeting." It brought tears to my eyes to know they all thought of me in such a special way. Walking along the path I came across an elder named "Tim". When he looked up and saw me, he said, "Regina is it you, my friend?" We chatted and spoke with

others in the camp as I was introduced.

I drifted off in dream world as I saw my fellow brother and sisters living in Safe Ground. I said I could live like this if I had to, because I am just one footstep away from this.

As we left, I was proud that I made the choice to involve myself in the movement for social justice and our human rights. So here in Sacramento we will continue to teach and lead our Safe Ground Community to stand up and stand firm.



Safe Ground feeds the hungry in Sacramento.

PHOTO /SANDY PERRY

## 80,000 homes in Wayne County, Michigan without Utilities

### Politicians Fiddle While Detroit Burns!!

By Maureen Taylor  
State Chairperson,  
Michigan Welfare  
Rights Organization

Recently, the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization listed a small article in a local paper asking affected persons to contact the office should they need information about how to avoid utility shut offs. The office is receiving more than 50-60 calls per hour, more than 2,000 calls for help a day. These calls are coming from the thousands of Michigan residents who are unemployed, on welfare, or without the funds to pay these rising utility bills.

Last year, 17 men, women, and children died from fires that happened because they used alternative ways to heat or light their homes. Hundreds of homes were damaged or lost due to fires started by desperate parents trying to heat or light their homes after the utility company disconnected service.



Detroit protest against DTE energy shutoffs. DTE reports that at the start of this fall, 80,000 residential homes were without utilities in Wayne County, and that 60,000 of those were in Detroit.

PHOTO /DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

Most memorable was the fire that started on March 2, 2010 in Detroit. Selena Young left her home in search of better space heaters since the local utility company, DTE Energy, had disconnected her gas service for non-payment. Her family of six were receiving welfare benefits of \$550 per month, and they were not able to stretch that budget to include rent, utilities and other household expenses. While she was away, the fire started and the older children were unable to save the three smaller ones who of course, ran and hid in closets.

Travion was just six years old, his sister Fantasia was five, and their sister Selena was four. The funeral drew thousands who came to mourn the loss.

The issue remains clear . . . what rights do working people have when they become separated from work or financial support? Is it alright for our children to die in fires? Is it alright for the water to be disconnected because we can't pay the water bill? Is it alright for families to lose their homes because we can't pay the mortgage costs after we have faithfully paid them for years?

People call Welfare Rights like we are the government. Clearly, we are in harm's way due to the crashing economic times engineered by the most anti-children, anti-earth, anti-humanity group known to mankind — corporate America. We either come together regardless of race, creed or religion to help one another, or we perish. Which side are you on?

## The Latest in Automation and Robotics

By Tony Zaragoza

This column will periodically report on the latest developments in automation and robotics around the world, from nano-robotics to large-scale industrial automation, focusing on the impacts these technologies are having on the economy and society, such as labor replacement, war, and how society operates.

Owners of corporations are clear about reasons for installing the latest automation and robotics technologies in their firms. One report on robots.com gives five reasons to automate: 1) Combat Off-shoring, 2) Prepare for Skilled Worker Shortage, 3) Compete locally

and globally, 4) Take Advantage of Tax Incentives, and 5) Strengthen the Country.

Another report by Dick Johnson entitled "Can Automation Save our Manufacturing," offers five more reasons: 1) Increased Productivity, 2) Ability to perform secondary operations, 3) Improved Ergonomics, 4) Increased Quality, and 5) Eliminate Fixtures. Johnson tells his readers, "You must automate to produce more on your existing assets, improve your quality, and increase your competitiveness."

There are a wide variety of reasons for capitalists to automate. For capitalists to compete and increase profit, they must implement the latest technologies

to have an advantage over the competition. If they don't, they get left behind and other capitalists who do AUTOMATE succeed in making profit. Automation is offered as the solution to save U.S. manufacturing jobs, but it won't save U.S. (or any country's) jobs. Manufacturing jobs are disappearing for good, and other segments of the economy are also using the latest technologies to produce more goods, services, and information using fewer people.

Despite their clarity on reasons and their concrete needs to introduce new technologies, what the corporations and ruling class are not talking about is who will buy the products, when fewer and fewer human beings are working for a

wage? They are not talking about how these technologies fully and totally change the very nature of the economic system we have known for centuries. As the economy is transformed, everything that has supported that economic system must change too.

The system needs new laws and new forms of government to protect private property, while fewer and fewer people are working. To make people accept this, corporations are resorting to the brutal force of law to protect the increasing inequality. If we don't begin to organize to use the new technologies to benefit all of humanity, we will be left out of the economy entirely.

## Shadow of Persecution, Legacy of Struggle

# HONORING DR. KING MEANS SUPPORT FOR TODAY'S LABOR, PEACE ACTIVISTS

By Anthony D. Prince

January 15, 2011 marks the 82nd anniversary of the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Though many speeches will be made, few will address the troubling parallels between the role played by the FBI then and its current campaign to intimidate, smear and even imprison those who continue to hold aloft Dr. King's banner. Today, as federal agents continue to serve grand jury subpoenas and raid the homes of labor and peace activists in Illinois and Minnesota, some 19 people including local union officers and stewards from AFSCME, SEIU, Teamsters and other segments of organized labor find themselves in the crosshairs.

The government persecution echoes that perpetrated against Dr. King by J. Edgar Hoover's FBI which used wiretaps, tails, the planting of false stories in the press, blackmail and other sordid tactics. The harassment intensified after King publicly condemned the war in Vietnam, denouncing the U.S. involvement as irreconcilable with economic and social justice for America's poor. "There is but one way out for you," threatened the FBI in an anonymous letter suggesting suicide. Undeterred, King's last days were spent supporting the striking sanitation workers of Mem-



Protest in Minneapolis against FBI raids on peace activists.

PHOTO/ALAN WILFAHRT

phis. His assassination came on the heels of an internal FBI report that labeled King a "direct threat to American security." Today, that same false pretext — now termed "America's war on terror" — is being used to justify the recent FBI raids. Yet, a close examination of the items demanded from the targeted activists unmasks the government's true intent.

Included in the documents seized by federal agents, for example, are private letters to and from persons in various foreign countries, including Colombia, a South American nation where over

3,000 union leaders have been assassinated since the mid 1980's. Many of those served with the subpoenas such as Minneapolis Teamster Mick Kelley, belong to unions with a history of solidarity with the embattled labor movement in Colombia. In 2002, the Teamsters, which represents thousands of Coca-Cola workers in the U.S., picketed Coke's annual stockholders meeting to protest the multinational's links to death squads responsible for the plant gate assassination of Isidro Gil, chief negotiator for Coca-Cola workers in Colombia. As recently as August of last year, 500 Teamster-represented Coke workers in Seattle went on strike, resisting widespread surveillance and intimidation in their fight for a just contract. The Teamsters is just one of dozens of US trade-unions that have hosted tours of persecuted Colombian workers. Aware of the company's brutal policies south of the border, the Teamsters had no intention of letting that war come home.

One can only imagine the volume of correspondence that has facilitated the

solidarity movement between American unions and their embattled comrades in Colombia and other countries where repressive regimes permit U.S. multinationals to operate with impunity. Now, as a result of the recent grand jury subpoenas and FBI raids, that correspondence is now in the hands of the federal government. Lurking behind the "anti-terrorist" justification is the government's real mission: to stifle the growing international union, solidarity and peace movements of which Martin Luther King was a martyred architect.

Those who draft search warrants to silence opponents of US military policy have no right to speak of a man who worked "to see the fervor of the civil rights movement imbued into the peace movement." Those who empanel grand juries to investigate critics of Haliburton, Blackwater and other war profiteers ignore King's indictment of "racism, poverty, militarism and materialism" and his demand for "the reconstruction of society, itself."

On this day, we best honor King by supporting those who continue his long march to justice.

*Editor's Note: Join the National Day of Action, Jan. 25 to show solidarity with the victims of the FBI raid. Go to [www.stopFBI.net](http://www.stopFBI.net) to learn more.*

## LA HOUSING AUTHORITY CEO CALLED FOR RETALIATORY EVICTION PRACTICES

The following are excerpts from a press release from People Organized for Westside Renewal (POWER).

Los Angeles City Council people Janice Hahn and Richard Alarcón addressed the media to denounce retaliatory evictions issued by the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) prior to an expected appearance by HACLA CEO Rudy Montiel in front of City Council in November, 2010. Several dozen public housing resident leaders joined the council people, many clad in the signature orange of the Los Angeles Human Right to Housing Coalition (LAHRHC).

A council motion called on Mr. Montiel to appear before City Council to address eviction notices served on November 1 to eight families living in public housing in Pacoima and San Pedro, which the motion says "appear to be contradictory to the core values and freedoms of this Country." The notices give the families 30 days to leave or face eviction proceedings and were issued in connection with a public protest in front of Montiel's Rancho Cucamonga home.

In September over 100 public housing resident leaders from People Organized for Westside Renewal (POWER), a community-organizing group and LAHRHC member, traveled to Rancho Cucamonga to protest HACLA's 2011

Agency Plan prior to its passage by HACLA's Board of Commissioners.

The Agency Plan lists all of LA's 15 public housing projects for "disposition," and describes a plan to privatize the city's public housing stock and convert it into Section 8 housing. LAHRHC, who oppose the plan, say disposition could increase rents for immigrants and those who earn enough to pay maximum rents, could strip tenants of their rights to organize through federally-mandated Advisory Councils, and would endanger the long-term affordability of public housing projects, which serve LA's lowest-income residents.

"Residents should not have to fear that they will lose their homes out of retaliation if they choose to participate in a protest and assert their first amendment right to free speech," said Councilmember Alarcón. "We're asking HACLA to come before the Council to explain these evictions and, if they are indeed retaliatory, rescind them and allow the residents to continue to live in their homes."

Residents say the evictions are the latest incidents demonstrating a lack of accountability by HACLA. At an August public hearing and the September HACLA Commission vote on the Agency Plan, HACLA did not give adequate public notice and prevented

residents from entering the meetings and giving public testimony. Resident groups have filed two legal complaints saying HACLA violated the Brown Act, a California state law mandating public participation in government meetings.

LAHRHC has organized since February to change HACLA's agency plan, but resident leaders have not been able to meet face-to-face with Rudy Montiel. Organizers pointed to his \$500,000 per year salary and benefits package, saying he earns enough to meet with residents. After several meetings with HACLA staff and the mayor's office, leaders say they felt they were not making headway, and decided to protest in front of Montiel's home in a last-ditch effort to win changes to the Agency Plan.

Mr. Montiel retaliated the next morning by threatening to file a restraining order against LAHRHC member orga-



Press conference in front of the L.A. City Hall to denounce retaliatory evictions by the Housing Authority of Los Angeles.

PHOTO/POWER

nization LA CAN, who was not at the protest, and attempted to remove LA CAN members from the September hearing due to the supposed restraining order, which was never filed. HACLA then filed eviction notices in September and again in November that LAHRHC calls retaliatory.

LAHRHC members have initiated numerous legal responses to the intimidation and improper proceedings by HACLA, including a lawsuit to prohibit the evictions of the eight families who exercised their First Amendment rights.

# “Stop Bombing and Killing Our People — We Are Human Beings Like You”

By Joan Wile, author, **“Grandmothers Against the War: Getting Off Our Fannies and Standing Up for Peace” (Citadel Press, May ‘08)**

A remarkable Skype conference was held Nov. 9, at which three New York City peace grannies and a California highschool peace class spoke at length with seven members of the Afghan Youth Peace Conference (AYPC) in a mutual desire to end the war in Afghanistan. The conference meant so much to the Afghan kids that they came from distant valleys and stayed overnight in a mud-house in order to participate.

For over an hour, the grannies, the U.S. students and Afghan youthful peacemakers all exchanged ideas and expressions of solidarity and affection in what they hope will be a step toward ending the unjustified hostilities in that

of Cindy Sheehan, and aunt of Casey Sheen who was killed in Iraq in 2004, suggested organizing for a Peace Summit through Skype between the Afghan kids and U.S. highschool peace groups. She arranged for the peace club of Tracy High School in Cerritos, led by teacher and Military Families Speak Out member, Pat Alviso, to join in the dialogue.

One Afghan kid made the startling statement, “Please tell them (the U.S. government) to stop sending money to our country” in answer to a California student’s question, “What should our governments do to bring about peace?” The Afghan boy explained that he had heard of widespread corruption and the result that money never reaches its target, the people in need, but instead is gobbled up by the powerful and rich.

He urged instead that we reach out with their message of peace. The children never asked for any material aid,



Tracy High School Peace Club during Skype conference with Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers.

PHOTO/MARSHALL BLESOFSKY

besieged country. The seven Afghan kids spoke over and over of their desire for Americans to recognize that they are human beings just like us; they spoke of the losses they have suffered because of the war and their fervent wish for it to end. “Tell your government to stop bombing and killing our people,” pleaded one of the boys.

The grandmothers were extremely impressed with the intelligence and grasp of issues demonstrated by the youngsters. Two of the grannies, Miriam Poser and Barbara Walker, told the kids they would like to visit them in their small village in the Bamiyam province 100 miles NW of Kabul, and are now making plans to go in April of 2011 “with bags of healthy treats and all kinds of school supplies.”

A member of New York City’s Grandmothers Against the War conceived the idea of “adopting” the Afghan youths. She contacted as many peace associates as she could find and got an overwhelmingly positive response of support. Dede Miller, sister

partly because they are skeptical about their postal service, but mostly out of the purity and urgency of their desire to stop the conflict raging around them. The grandmothers promised to reach out in every way possible, and one of the California students said “We’ll do our best to open the eyes of America.”

Their admirable leader, Hakim, a young doctor from Singapore who has been mentoring the Afghan group for several years and acted as interpreter for the Skype meeting, stated that they don’t believe either government is listening to the people’s voices and we must change that. We grannies and our Tracy High School compatriots ardently hope that we can in some small measure be an effective part of that change.

As one boy said, quoting an Afghan proverb, “Mountains can’t reach mountains, but man can reach man.”

(If you are interested in lending your support to this project, even if only to endorse it, please contact me at joanwile@grandmothersagainstthewar.org)

## Imposing Democracy

When you have to  
Terrify your own  
People into giving  
Their freedoms away,  
We say it’s  
Guaranteeing security.

When you invade  
Another country  
To steal their wealth  
And establish your own regime,  
We call it  
Setting people free.

When you bomb  
A tiny village  
While all its people  
Are fast asleep,  
That is known as  
Collateral damage.

And when you rob  
From the poor  
To subsidize  
Your rich friends’ wallets,  
Well, I’d say that’s graft,  
But maybe you’d call it  
Paying homage.

When there are  
Police at every corner  
No, that’s not repression,  
It’s maintaining order.

When all the news  
Tells you to follow  
The government line,  
They say that freedom  
Of the press is doing  
Just fine.

When you’re not  
Capable of an  
Independent thought,  
Then you’ve received  
A good education.

And when your health  
Care runs out,  
That’s just the benefits  
Of privatization.

When we hide our  
Sweat shops in China  
We say that slavery  
Is abolished.

And when your vote  
Isn’t even being counted,  
There are people who  
Would call that  
Universal suffrage

When a baby is shot  
By a stray bullet  
Maybe it’s officially  
An accident,  
But just try telling that  
To the mother

And when the ice caps are melted  
And the air is polluted,  
No, that has not a thing  
To do with your profits.

When you say  
We’re at war,  
I ask you  
When haven’t we been?  
That’s their version  
Of peace without end.

Why is it that  
The rules suddenly change  
When you’re on  
The wrong side  
Of a color?

And while you’re at it,  
Can you explain to me  
How life in prison  
Without a trial  
Could ever be  
“For their own protection?”

And when you get to choose,  
Who has the right to live,  
Is that what is meant by  
“Having God on your side?”

When judges are allowed  
To hand out the jobs  
Is that thanks to having  
Free and open elections?

I don’t know  
What you think  
About all this going on,  
But if that’s democracy  
Then something is  
Very, very wrong.

— Mark Lipman

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Education Protests in Los Angeles.

PHOTO/PABLO SERRANO  
WWW.PABLOSERRANO.ORG



# Campaign to Forgive the Second Chancers Juvenile Lifers

By Aaron Smith

My name is Aaron Smith and I am 29. I am a Juvenile lifer. I was locked up at 17, back in 1998. I am one of hundreds of juvenile lifers with no possibility of parole. I am in the Pennsylvania State Prison Of S.C.I — Huntington. I am like many of the other juvenile lifers. I am asking for people to support us with the Juvenile Justice Accountability and Improvement Act.

I was locked up over a serious robbery which turned into a robbery homicide murder. I learned that it only takes one second to make one bad choice in your life and that it can take you a life time to fix. Sometimes people leave this earth without having that chance. That is sad! I refuse to be one of those people.

Teenagers don't realize the big picture of their future. They live in the moment. They react from emotions. Teenagers are trying to find their place

in this world. Teenagers are constantly looking for people to accept them. They will sometimes attempt the unthinkable just to fit in and be a part of someone's affection. At that point kids becomes vulnerable.

I grew up in an unstable house. My mother, Esther Ortiz, raised four children on welfare. My father was never around. My mother put clothes on our back, food on the table, and a roof over us. At 29, my mother was diagnosed with a skin disease that led to her developing lupus. Can you imagine our health care needs? Poverty and bad situations happened to our family like clockwork. I took care of my sick mother and my little sisters. My two problems came from trying to find out how to be a man. My second problem came from wanting to make money for my family. I looked to the streets. I am not saying all this for pity. I am just giving you a piece of my heart so you can understand our back-

ground.

Here I am with a couple guys about to destroy my life and I am saying, what am I doing? Now I'm locked up in this horrible place and I can't wake up from this nightmare. I came in as a young

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**Teenagers don't realize the big picture of their future . . . they react from emotions . . . Teenagers are trying to find their place in this world.**

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minded child. I had to quickly learn how to become a man. The main thing that hurts me is not being able to be with my family. But the worst thing is that a couple years ago I lost my best friend, my mother, who passed away on August 29, 2008. Losing my mother while in this

place was the worst pain of my life. At times I felt like giving up. But then I hear my mother saying , "Don't give up"! Never give up son"! So I keep fighting and praying, hoping and believing that one day she will smile from heaven because her son is back home again.

All I ask is for a second chance. I pray that God touches your hearts to support us. A wise man told me that without forgiveness life would be meaningless. I'm so sorry for the past and I am begging for mercy. I am simply a young man who made a bad choice in life and it cost me and the people I love most a lot. But I'm going to never give up. I want to thank you all for taking the time to hear my heart out. Please support us on forgiving the second chancers juvenile lifers. God bless you and your families. If you are interested in joining the campaign, please email lean-nacedeno.neoaccphilly@gmail or call 215- 634-3350.

## CLOSE L.A. COUNTY JAIL!

By Charles William Wright III

I'm Charles William Wright III, a Chicago native. On September 7, 2010 I was thrown in what Los Angeles County Sherriffs called a "cell". There was no toilet in the room (Century Regional Detention Facility, 11703 Alameda on Mona Blvd., side). I was handcuffed and not arrested (not read my Rights) for not paying \$1.50 train fare instead of receiving a citation.

Sgt. Mario Rodarte waited until I was handcuffed in the car to pull out a TAZER and sparked it trying to intimidate me. I responded by cursing and ended up at Century Regional an hour later (near 8:30pm). The scene was 7th & Metro (Figueroa side) but I was taken over ten train stops away and thrown behind bars although I remained silent never showing ID.

I was booked under the fake name "Charles White" (booking#2469541) on September 7 although I hadn't been asked to fingerprint (idiots book without prints). The next night (September 8) I was asked to print and exercised my right to refuse. Two men (uniformed) forced my prints while others videotaped. After the illegal printing I was taken to Men's Central Jail .

I spent September 8-9 on a bench handcuffed as if I was Hannibal Lecter (Silence of the Lambs). I was in excruciating pain. I was tossed in 172B Pod-12 on the 7th floor of TTCF (Twin Towers Correctional Facility) but never knew which tower and no one answered my questions. My right arm was cuffed outside the Pod through a food drawer and attached to the door handle with my body inside.



**Charles William Wright, III was jailed for not paying a \$1.50 train ticket for 61 days without charges.**

PHOTO /ROBERT ANITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

On September 10 or 11 (hard to remember) three plain-clothed Hispanic men came up to the pod and yanked the chain with cuffs attached causing me to be cut and bloody in the middle of the night. I refused medical treatment and asked to be released because no charges were pending against me. I was laughed at and demanded a phone call. I was denied. I asked the nurse and psychiatrist (LACSD called me a mental patient) to get me a phone call to ACLU. It never happened.

I remained under "handcuffed observation" until September 20 and went to court (210 W. Temple Street "CCB") barefooted and handcuffed behind my back in court. I remained silent and was thrown back into 172B Pod12 (no cuffs) until October 1 upon which time Sgt. Geary (white female) came up to the pod with a court order to release me be-

cause Judge Craig Richman knew there were no charges against me.

The Jail/Sherrifs ignored the order, put me on a bus, and I was forced into court. I remained silent and was thrown back into the Pod. On October 22 the Sheriff's got a hearing for me to appear (1150 San Fernando Rd.) for a "Mental Competence Hearing". I was deemed competent.

On November 5 Commissioner Kristi Lousteau gave me time served for 422 P.C. which my Public Defender (Brandon J. Henderson) said was a misdemeanor. They overlooked the fact that the complaint was unsigned by the alleged victim and committing magistrate. On November 9 I went to get a copy of the case file (BA375709) from

the Clerks office and some employee forged the victims signature. Fortunately I had already obtained the original file from Henderson.

I was in jail for 61 days with no charges, no shower, no phone, no brushing teeth, , etc.. Sheriffs turned water off in the pod for 20 days and I was naked in the pod until November 5 after court. If you would like to help me sue and/or close the jail call 213.784.5135. Mailto:close.la\_countyjail@yahoo.com.

### LA County Jail Statistics

By Charles William Wright III

**October 2010: One supposed "suicide" each day. October 2-5: Three "suicides" in four days.**

**August 2009: Two supposed "suicides". A mental patient murders a transient who was in jail for vandalism (why is a mental patient in population?)**

**2009: 8 supposed "suicides"**

**2000-2007: 10 of top 50 counties for inmate deaths in California. 17% of inmate deaths for top 50 counties in southern California**

**Note: they are not all suicides. An attempt was made on my life and it was set up to be a phony "suicide". I know a Black family whose female relative was murdered in her single cell. The body was held from the family for thirty days and the autopsy was held longer. Cause of death was "inconclusive".**

On the Two-year Anniversary of the Murder of Oscar Grant by BART Cop Johannes Mehserle (1/1/2011)

# Hip Hop Congress Speaks to Key Artists, Activists and Educators About the Oscar Grant Trial, Verdict and Sentencing!!

By RDV Promo

KEV CHOICE — MC, MUSICIAN - OAKLAND/ATLANTA

“The Oscar Grant killing was a senseless execution that was racially instigated, and a result of police tactics that make excessive force, brutality, and even murder a common occurrence when police deal with young Black men and other men of color.” <http://www.twitter.com/kevchoice>

LIVIEWIRE — MC (BRUCE WILIS AND QUEEN LATIFAH PRODUCED FILM THE HIP HOP PROJECT) BROOKLYN, NY

“We have to put a stop to how they deal with us. I feel like it starts with us to stand together to bring about some kind of change This was murder. Period. Cold blooded. And this can’t be tolerated.” <http://www.facebook.com/ima-reallivewire>

SAM COOK — DIRECTOR (THE DREAMING FESTIVAL, KISSMY-BLAKARTS ) AUSTRALIA.

“The murder of Oscar Grant is in the sights of the world’s people. His murder is of global concern and of global relevance because in every country in the world you will find countless Oscar Grants.” <http://twitter.com/KISSmy-BLAKarts>

JR (P.O.C.C) OAKLAND, CA

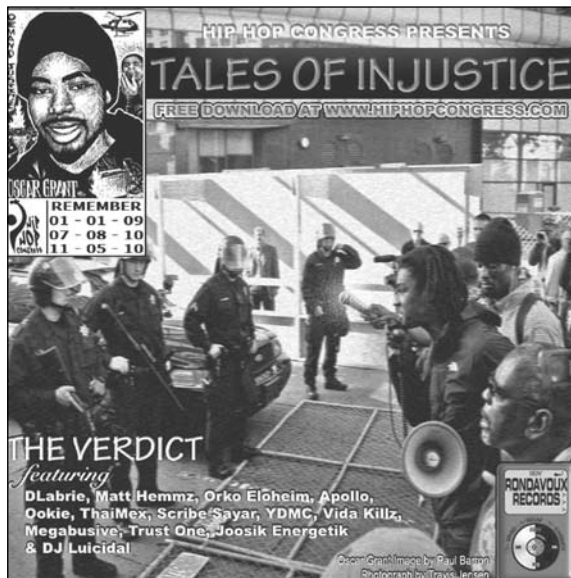
“The people should continue to mobilize around police terrorism and expand the issue to include other forms of government terrorism, like the lack of low income housing, the foreclosures, financial aid being cut to pay for wars, lack of public healthcare, etc.”

<http://www.blockreportradio.com>  
<http://www.sfbayview.com>

ADRIENNE MAREE BROWN — ORGANIZATIONAL HEALER, DETROIT/OAKLAND

“I believe our justice system is a failure, and this whole case is evidence. . . A huge amount of work happened, from a lot of dedicated people, and I sit

loaded, everything is so well documented. Yet no justice. There are countless examples of everything. Many people I meet think we make up these scenarios we face everyday. You would think it’s a Chapelle spoof or SNL.” <http://www.dlabrie.com>



Download the song at [www.hiphopcongress.com/page/3/](http://www.hiphopcongress.com/page/3/) and [www.dlabrie.com](http://www.dlabrie.com).

in awe of how tirelessly folks held this struggle.” <http://www.twitter.com/adriennemaree>

AGERMAN — MC (3X KRAZY) OAKLAND.CA

“Unjust and cowardice, I think Oakland needs Jesus. It was racism ,verdict was unfair. He should have gotten first degree murder and 50 years to life.” <http://www.twitter.com/agerman1>

DLABRIE — MC (RDV, HIP HOP CONGRESS) - OAKLAND, CA

“There’s been so much more to this trial than the shooting itself. It’s definitely the digital age, Rodney King re-

KNOBODY — MC (HI-EROGLYPHICS IMPERIUM) OAKLAND, CA

“I think the minute they announced that they were moving the trial to L.A., we kind of knew what was coming (though we still tried to be optimistic).”

<http://twitter.com/hieroknobody>

LEE MAJORS — MC (AFFILIATE MOB FIGAZ) OAKLAND, CA

“It was Rodney King all over again, even worse that a young man lost his life for no reason and the cop that did it almost got away scott free with barely any jail time.” <http://twitter.com/THAREALEEM-AJORS>

DESIREE — PROMOTER, SOCIALITE (HIP HOP CONGRESS) DENVER, CO

“I wish there were more resources available to help communities get direct and immediate change through legitimate due process.”

<http://twitter.com/ladimuzikluva>

MYKILL MIERS — ARTIST/PRODUCER/ACTIVIST CEO OF FLOC MENTORING AND ABNORMAL MEDIA GROUP - L.A.

“The verdict was unjust and bogus

in my opinion. Giving someone manslaughter for a brutal murder is a slap in the face to the family and community of the victim.” <http://twitter.com/mykillmiers>

YDMC — MC (RDV, HIP HOP CONGRESS) ATLANTA /SAN JOSE CA

“The people are outraged . . . It’s obvious that the system is against the people so what were they supposed to do? Lie down and take it again? It (Rioting) was not the best thing to do, but it was definitely felt.” <http://www.twitter.com/ydmc>

DOT GOODIE — MC (BLOCK MONSTA MUZIK/DG PROMOS C.E.O) OAKLAND, CA

“... It happened in Detroit, It happened in Chicago, and now it has happened AGAIN in Oakland.” <http://www.twitter.com/dotgoodie>

RAS CEYLON — MC, YOUTH ADVOCATE, OAKLAND, CA

“It’s hard two find a youngster out here who doesn’t have a family member/friend/loved one/themselves who hasn’t been harassed or brutalized by police.” <http://twitter.com/RasCeylon>

•••••  
• **R.I.P. Derrick Jones** •  
• **(unarmed Killed by** •  
• **Oakland Police day af-** •  
• **ter Oscar Grant Verdict)** •  
•••••

For more information,  
email Shamako Noble at  
Email:[shamako@hiphopcongress.com](mailto:shamako@hiphopcongress.com)

## “WE CAN ALL HELP THE HOMELESS – THE GOVERNMENT INCLUDED”

By Lenette Evans



Here in Nashville, Tennessee, there are so many homeless and many are from other parts of the U.S. When I was at the Bridge Ministry run by Candy Christmas, I met a man who had a lucrative law business, but because of the economy, his law business folded up and he ended up homeless living on the streets.

On Thanksgiving I went to the McDonalds on Broadway/I-94 where many of the homeless hang out because they are chased away from practically every place in town. Imagine if you were homeless and no warm bed to sleep and

you were extremely tired and starving? Can you imagine?You can’t unless you have lived a homeless life or you work with the homeless.

I have a street ministry working with the homeless, reaching out to their needs with clothes, food and giving them hope with prayer and letting them know that I care about them and Jesus Christ loves them too. People that live on the street need to know they are cared about and loved. Yes they may look a little dirty and worn out and some have mental issues. You would too if you lived on the street.

It never ceases to amaze me how people put more time and effort into Christmas shopping but NEVER reach out to a homeless person to buy them a gift for Christmas or a hot meal. This holiday season is about Jesus Christ and his

birth and celebrating him. But wherever Jesus went he sat with the homeless, he loved them and kissed and hugged them because he had compassion for them. He fed and clothed them.... he prayed and healed the sick..... He prayed for those who needed a closer walk with Jesus Christ.

Hey our stinking government could care less but there is a whole lot of people in the communities that can reach out to someone in need. A lot of us have no idea when our last paycheck is and we too can have our home foreclosed and become homeless. When we give we are planting a seed and blessing someone else by our giving.

On Thanksgiving I fed four homeless kids that recently came from broken families and ended up on the streets. Parents I can tell you that no matter

what your children go through these kids need you and they need to know that you care.

There is no reason why we have homelessness in the USA and especially young kids on the streets. Our government is not caring for our people — they give our money to the banks and the rich. But we as individuals can ALL do something to help! We can start holding the government responsible. The government can stop foreclosures. The government can provide homes. We can educate people and band together to force the government to allocate funds and houses to those in need. Let this Christmas season be about giving and helping those in desperate need!

Lenette Evans, Saving Souls Ministry St. Joseph, MI, 269-876-1848, [Savingsouls1@yahoo.com](mailto:Savingsouls1@yahoo.com).

# Katrina Victims Can't Get Home . . . Federal Road Home Program Spends on Contractors, Not on People

By **Viola Washington,**  
Executive Director,  
Welfare Rights Organization

NEW ORLEANS

We had hurricane Katrina in 2005. And since that time we have been trying to bring people home, but people can't get home and houses are still boarded up. The original grant from the Federal Road Home Program given to the state of Louisiana for Hurricane Katrina victims was \$13.4 Billion. But people are not getting their money. I have people calling all the time to my TV show (Reality Check) saying they didn't get their monies and can't get home. Actually, some people are getting their money and others are not. People are getting money in the white areas. A lawsuit was filed by the Fair Housing Committee and the Judge found that there was discrimination in the way that they awarded grants to the community. They devalued the property in the Black neighborhood. They gave before storm value and after storm value to others.

The Federal Road Home Program started in October of 2006. RCF Interna-



**Viola Washington (right), a leader in the fight to bring Katrina victims home, with friend Chicago.**

PHOTO/SANDY REID

tional out of Fairfax, VA was supposed to run it. We have been trying to get information on the company, but can't get it. First, they had a Board of Directors. We thought they were in charge. After three years, there were so many complaints. Then we had a whistle blower

saying the company was spending so much money on contracts, but not on people. She sent letters to Jesse Jackson, the Governor — everybody — and she still has not gotten any justice. We decided to push this from the community.

We did more research. We found out that they got rid of RCF and then hired HGI. Well RCF and HGI are the same people! Then they brought in the Shaw Company, which are still the same people. This is Dick Cheney's company. We found out that the Shaw Company's president is our ex-governor's husband. HGI and Shaw are now the two contractors in charge. They created 38 subcontractors. Only a few of them are in New Orleans. Most are out of state. A lot of them are duplications, not even real. And they get millions of dollars to do nothing. So now we have

a Road Home Program where thousands of families still have not received their money.

James Perry filed a lawsuit so that people could get their money. He tried to put a freeze on the dollars being spent on contractors. Now we want to put a freeze on all of the money until we can create a new formula. The state of Louisiana created a formula that was not to the benefit the people of Louisiana. It was created by outsiders who are not sensitive to the needs of the people in Louisiana.

We still have people living in Texas and other places trying to get home. We still have people living in tents. Each time people complain, the company finds ways to get around it. They are supposed to do all kinds of things to assist people, but they are doing nothing. There is so much duplication and so much money spent on contractors and not on people. We got all this information from the whistle blower.

Two public hearings have been scheduled by this research team and by the community at large.

## BLACK FARMERS LAWSUIT IS SETTLED!

By **Simuel Ramey, Jr.**  
and **Sell-it-Syl**

After the feeding of the homeless on November 20, 2010, (see photo) good news followed two weeks later that the long-awaited lawsuit of the Black farmers' class action suit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture has been settled. THANK GOD!!! The suit claimed that the agency had discriminated against Black farmers on the basis of race and failed to investigate or properly respond to complaints from 1983 – 1997.

The following organizations would like to salute the Black farmers, especially in Arkansas, for standing fast and staying unified, when others stood astray from the cause. We here in McAlmont, Arkansas, share the same sentiments — that the wealthiest country in the world produces the most poverty and hunger. RIGHT-ON!!!

Below are quotes from the Black Farmers about the suit in the McAlmont, Arkansas area. The quotes were made before the settlement:

Karoma Smith, President of the "H.E.A.T. FOUNDATION, INC.," a non-profit organization from the McAlmont area, shares a deep sentiment of the "plight" of our (Black) farmers in Arkansas, because of his deep ancestral farming history stemming from his

grandfather, Brother Leroy Smith:

"It's National Farmers Week. But, with the Black farmer's lawsuit at a standstill, it is a shameful situation. The lawsuit was supposed to have been settled before the Senate's August recess, but the bickering from both parties has it in a gridlock. Now that the Senate is tied up with mid-term elections, it is not a good sign for the Black Farmers Association. These Black farmers have been waiting patiently for a resolution to this ongoing problem. So, I ask myself, 'Do the Black farmers really have anything to celebrate for National Farmers week?'"

Joseph Taylor, a small local farmer and long-time community leader of the small-unincorporated community of McAlmont, tells of an incident of discrimination that he experienced with the U.S.D.A.

"I never applied for any loans from the U.S.D.A. Nor did I sign up for the Pigford I lawsuit. But, several years ago, I assisted my son in applying for a \$5,000 "Special Youth loan" — designed for youth engaged in agriculture — while he was in high school. After the on-site inspection of the farm, he was denied the loan because his residence was in McAlmont, which was considered to be in the city limits of North Little Rock, Arkansas. But, the actual farm that was inspected is located in a rural area, just north of McAlmont, near

Jacksonville. (Mind you, these loans are restricted to rural areas only, and not municipalities.) OK, he was denied because he resided in a municipality. Notwithstanding, the actual farm is located approximately eight to ten miles north of McAlmont, just on the edge of the city of Jacksonville. Then, after much letter writings, phone correspondence, and arguments, the loan was finally approved, and has since been repaid. Any on-site inspection should have revealed that the farm was not located in either municipality, but in a rural area as the guidelines of the loan application stipulate. The problem that I have with this whole mess is that the U.S.D.A. needs to streamline the overall "process" of having to go through four banks to get loan denial notifications to submit with your loan application. In conclusion, I would like to see this case brought to closure, giving all farmers (Black) that were discriminated against during that period of time, their just due, the right remedy, and put this mess behind us; because all it is is a big mess... in this election year."

The special -interest non-profit groups below are still in need of support.

If an organization wants to put on a benefit to support any of these groups, please contact Sell-it-Syl at 501.612.4213 or sellitsyl358@hotmail.com.



**Simuel Ramey shares copies of the People's Tribune at feeding of the homeless in McAlmont, Arkansas.**

PHOTO/DONATED

GRANT WRITERS NEEDED!!! H.E.A.T. Foundation, Inc., an acronym for, "Helping Each Achieve Together." Director: Karoma Smith/ 501.960.3415, arkansasheat5473@yahoo.com, or <http://www.mcalmontday.org>

To support C&J Entertainment contact C.E.O. Pastor Joseph Hollis: 501.672.0366 fax:501.778.8405. Myspace. [www.myspace.com/cjrecordsentertainment](http://www.myspace.com/cjrecordsentertainment) e-mail: [cj\\_recordsandentertainment@yahoo.com](mailto:cj_recordsandentertainment@yahoo.com)

McAlmont Seminoles Youth Football Program/c/o Chris Martin, 901 Campus Street. N.L.R., AR. 72117 Chris Martin/501.960.7846, [martinoles@yahoo.com](mailto:martinoles@yahoo.com).

# VOICES FROM BENTON HARBOR, MI

## Whirlpool Claims The Homeless Will Scare Away Tourists

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

Homelessness is a major problem in the United States and throughout the world. It is estimated that 100 million people are homeless worldwide. How can a person survive day by day not knowing if they will have something to eat or a place to sleep that night? People

rule is that you have to be there at a certain time to be allowed in. Many who are homeless actually work, but with their low paying jobs, still cannot afford housing.

I believe the homeless should be given special consideration in Section 8 Housing. The people, community and



Protest against Whirlpool's land grab.

PHOTO CREDIT/BRETT JELINEK (LEFT) AND DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM (RIGHT)

become homeless for many reasons including job loss, losing a spouse or divorce. Today, with the elimination of jobs due to electronic production and runaway shops, more and more people are becoming homeless permanently.

I met Candy about two years ago. Candy is not her real name. She had become homeless by no fault of her own. She is severely disabled. She has a college education and actually had a career teaching Latin. Candy has a terminal illness and she can no longer work. It took her two years to get her disability and during that time she lived in homeless shelters and third rate hotels. Many of the homeless are disabled veterans and cannot work as well. Jail is not the answer.

There are not enough beds to provide for the homeless and the general

country should reach out to the homeless. Candy is still homeless. She finally received her disability check. It is still not enough to pay rent, gas and lights.

It will take a long time to solve the homelessness problem. Their needs to be a better system — a system that will stop the greedy corporations, starting with Whirlpool in the City of Benton Harbor. Benton Harbor was once a prosperous industrial-based city with good wages. Then Whirlpool began shifting its production to lower wage countries to reap more profit. Now, with Whirlpool's Harbor Shores Project, they feel having homeless people around will ruin the Harbor Shores project, which is designed for the rich only. Whirlpool claims the homeless will scare away tourists.

The greedy corporations say, "We will always hide our objective but carry out our plan. We will control all aspects of your lives and tell you what to think and how to think. Our agenda is to get you to support the continuation of our private property system, even though it is killing you."

The greedy corporations will use any method to control us. Their goal will be accomplished one drop at a time so as to never bring suspicion upon themselves. This prevents people from seeing the changes as they occur.

You better keep your mind on the future and your future on your mind.

## Foreclosures and Homeless Crisis are One Fight

From the Editors

Almost seven million people are behind on their mortgages or are already in foreclosure. The banks have seized the homes of over six million more families. Added to these dire statistics are the thousands of homeless people who walk the streets every night without a place to lay their head.

Why is this happening in the richest country in the world?

Ever since WWII, home ownership has been part of the American Dream. Now the labor market is global and electronic production is eliminating millions of jobs and driving wages into the ground. Poverty is spreading into parts of the country that have up to now been relatively immune from hardship. With computers and robots replacing the jobs, the capitalists no longer have use for our labor. The corporations are reclaiming the property and throwing millions more Americans into the streets.

A confrontation is developing between the corporations and the people. We have to unite our forces regardless of our diverse backgrounds. Today growing numbers are suffering the pangs of hunger and the fear of homelessness.

Just as we cannot make a living in the same old way, we cannot fight for justice in the old way. We have to begin organizing ourselves politically — in the courts, the streets, and the legislatures — and we need to reach out to all those impacted by poverty and oppression. We have to aim our fire at the same target: the system which gives billions of our tax dollars to the rich and nothing to the poor. Nationalize the corporations in the interests of the people.

Excerpts from this article appeared in our sister publication, the *Tribuno del Pueblo*. See [tribunodelpueblo.org](http://tribunodelpueblo.org).

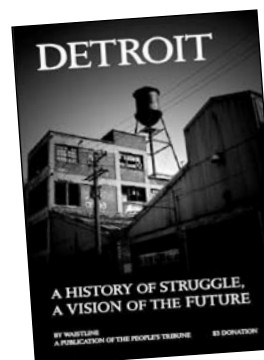
## DONATE TO KEEP REVEREND PINKNEY OUT OF PRISON

Rev. Pinkney must pay \$5,000 in court costs and fines, the consequence of a year long illegal prison term. Without paying he will be returned to prison, something Whirlpool and the courts would like nothing more. Rev. Pinkney stood up for us. It is in our interests to support this cause. Any size donation would be appreciated. BANCO is a 501C-3 and tax deductible. Send to BANCO, 1940 Union St., Benton Harbor, MI 49022. Thanking you in advance.

— Pastor Mary Gault

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