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Demonstrators take to the streets of Benton Harbor, Michigan to protest the Emergency Financial Manager (EMF) takeover which stripped power from local elected officials, putting governor-appointed EMF Joe Harris in absolute control of Benton Harbor's government.

PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK

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Michigan: *Ground zero for assault on democracy*

State governments across the country are simultaneously carrying out a frontal attack on the working class of America. The epicenter of this coordinated attack is the Rust Belt region, those states of America's once thriving industrial heartland, now decimated with shutdown plants and boarded-up homes. The state governments of Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio

and Michigan have moved in unison to eliminate public employee collective bargaining rights, destroy public employee unions and cut human service programs. Ground zero for organized worker resistance has been in Wisconsin. Ground zero for the most far reaching attack by corporate government on American democracy has been in Michigan.

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BATTLING THE CORPORATE TAKEOVER OF AMERICA IN THE STATES

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

EDITORIAL

Over the last several decades we've seen a developing merger of the corporations and the federal government, a process that has leaped forward with the recent financial crisis. Now we are seeing that process of corporate takeover of the government repeated at the state level as the corporations take advantage of the state budget "crises" to carry out their political agenda.

Since the 1970s, a revolution in production has taken place that is eliminating labor from production and creating a section of the working class that has no connection to the economy. Their struggle for food, clothing, shelter and the other necessities of life brings them directly up against the government. Their problems can only be solved by making corporate private property public and creating a cooperative society. The corporations are moving to defend themselves against this threat to their property by imposing a form of fascism — the merging of the government and the corporations, which means the naked domination of the corporations and their interests over society.

We have seen this merger manifested at the federal level with the bailout of the banks and other corporations and the funneling of trillions of dollars of public money into the coffers of the corporations. We have also seen executives and former executives of such corporations as Goldman Sachs, GE and JPMorgan Chase appointed to the executive branch of government.

Now the state budget "crises" are being used in a similar manner. The fiscal 2012 budgets released by 48 states show how most of the states are shifting the total burden of the economic crisis onto the backs of the people with proposed cuts in core public services such as pre-kindergarten, K-12 and higher education, Medicaid and other health care services. Seven governors are combining the cuts with increased income and sales taxes. On top of this, seven governors are also proposing large tax cuts for corporations. At least 15 states have proposed layoffs and specific cuts in pay and/or benefits for state workers. Addi-

tionally, legislative proposals have been introduced in a dozen states to revoke public employees' collective bargaining rights, nullify workplace representation by unions, and restrict unions from organizing workers or negotiating contracts. Along with all of this we see the privatization of the most basic necessities of life, such as health care, utilities and water, which is taking things held in common for the common good and putting them under corporate control.

But the most important dimension of the attack is the political attack. The

way for the billionaires to keep their wealth and power amid a growing threat to the capitalist system.

To shore up the collapsing system, the government is taking over and nationalizing key sections of the economy in the interests of the ruling class. The people must demand that the rich and the corporations be taxed to solve the state and federal budget deficits, and that nationalization be done in the interest of the people. It's in this fight over taxation and nationalization that we, the working class, will begin to see that



CARTOON BY ANDY WILLIS

worst example of the attack on democracy and the emergence of fascism at the state level is in Michigan, where a recently passed law expanded the power of the state to appoint "emergency financial managers" with dictatorial powers to replace local elected officials (see the cover story).

Taken together, these state laws and proposals represent a political assault on the working class designed to facilitate the development of fascism and pave

we have independent interests from the corporations, and that our problems can only finally be solved by winning political power for our class and building a cooperative society where everyone's basic needs are guaranteed.

Modern technology means we can have a democratic society where no one lives in poverty, but we need political power to do it. The alternative is mass poverty under corporate fascism. The choice is up to us.

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.peoplestribune.org

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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Michigan: Ground zero in the assault on democracy

(Continued from the front page)

In March, martial law was enacted in Michigan with the passage of the Local Government and School District Financial Responsibility Act. This law gives the governor of Michigan absolute power to suspend or remove elected officials and school boards from city and town governments and replace them with an appointed Emergency Financial Manager (EFM), if he determines a municipality and/or a school district faces financial difficulties. Once in place, the EFM (which can be a corporation) has the authority to fire elected municipal government officials, terminate contracts — including union contracts — dissolve school districts, sell assets, privatize public functions and services and disincorporate towns and cities.

What has happened in Michigan is a harbinger of what is to come across the country. Our working class needs a program and strategy that represents its common interests.

The first application of this new law happened in Benton Harbor, Michigan on April 14, 2011, when Emergency Financial Manager Joseph Harris essentially fired all elected officials when he ordered the removal of all decision making powers from Benton Harbor's elected officials. In part the order reads, "...Absent prior express written authorization and approval by the Emergency Manager, no City Board, Commission or Authority shall take any action for or on behalf of the City whatsoever..." (see full text of the order on this page). This attack on the people of Benton Harbor is significant, because a struggle against corporate control has gone on there for years. (The EFM law is also at work in Detroit, where the EFM of the Detroit Public Schools recently used his authority to fire all 5,466 members of the Detroit Federation of

Teachers as part of a plan to modify their contract with the school district.)

People across Michigan have responded to the new EFM law with protests and demonstrations.

This new law advances a corporate dictatorship and provides a legal framework for fascism in America. It codifies the actual merger of corporations and government, while it provides a vehicle for testing new methods to control the people.

The current attacks on our working class began nearly 40 years ago. In the 1970s, different capitalists began using robots and computers to replace workers and thus eliminate wages. This digital revolution birthed the fully integrated, capitalist global economy we have today. The exponential growth in the quality and application of digital technology to production (and communication) is creating and growing an unemployed and underemployed section of the working class around the world. This section of the working class is a threat to the capitalist system itself, and democracy is under attack to contain this threat.

The current attacks are not temporary. What has happened in Michigan is a harbinger of what is to come across the country. Our working class needs a program and strategy that represents its common interests. Our public domain is being nationalized in the interests of the corporations. We need to nationalize the corporations in the interests of the working class. The first step along that road is the demand that the corporations and the rich be taxed to pay for the crisis.

Our battle cry for now must be "Tax the Rich" and "Tax the Corporations."



People from communities across Michigan rally in Benton Harbor, Michigan against the takeover of the city by an Emergency Financial Manager (read dictatorship).

PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK

THE BENTON HARBOR EMERGENCY MANAGER'S ORDER

Emergency Manager City of Benton Harbor, Berrien County Michigan
Order no.: 11-C5
Order Prohibiting all Action by all City Boards, Commissions and authorities, except as authorized by the Emergency Manager

I, Joseph L. Harris, the duly appointed Emergency Manager for the City of Benton Harbor, Michigan (the "City"), pursuant to the power and authority granted by Act 4 of the Public Acts of Michigan of 2011, being MCL 141.1501 et seq (the "Act"), do hereby resolve and order as follows:

WHEREAS, Section 19(ee) provides that the Emergency Manager may exercise any power or authority of any office, employee, department, board, commission or similar entity of the City, whether elected or appointed;

WHEREAS, the power of the Emergency Manager as set forth in Section 19(ee) of the Act is superior to and supersedes any such officer or entity; and WHEREAS, now, no City Board, Commission or Authority has authority or power to act on behalf of the City as provided in the Act.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. Absent prior express written authorization and approval by the Emergency Manager, no City Board, Commission or Authority shall take any action for or on behalf of the City whatsoever other than:
 - i) Call a meeting to order.
 - ii) Approve of meeting minutes.
 - iii) Adjourn a meeting.
2. That all prior resolutions, or acts of any kind of the City in conflict herewith are and the same shall be, to the extent of such conflict, rescinded.
3. This order shall be effective immediately.

City of Benton Harbor; April 14, 2011; Emergency Manager

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VISION OF A BETTER WORLD

By Sheridan Talbott

Walden: "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them." These words were written by Henry David Thoreau. Well clearly Thoreau wasn't just a dreamer. He knew hopes and dreams and visions of a better world, of a just world, were possible and could be made real. This fact set the direction of his life and guided his practical activity until his death in 1862.

He was a determined abolitionist and an avid critic of the Mexican American War as a land grab on the part of the US. He had environmental concerns and was a critic of certain types of development. He believed in civil disobedience when justified and the right of people to resist and change an unjust government. No, Thoreau didn't just dream of a better world, he worked towards it. His feet were very much on the ground.

If he could have envisioned a world without any material want at all, no doubt he would have doggedly worked to make that world real as well. But he was a man of his times and during the first half of the 19th century the US industrial capacities were limited and just beginning to come into their own, and that at tremendous human toil and costs. Of necessity, those limits fettered his thinking and limited his visions.

Such is not the case today. In the 150 years or so since Thoreau's death, developments in science and technology have continuously revolutionized and advanced our instruments of production, greatly enhancing our ability to produce the material necessities of life. Today, with the advent of robotics in production on a global scale, we truly have the ability and material where with all to finally put an end to human want,

need and degradation, without the slavery of human toil. The like has never been seen in history before.

Today, we have the ability to be the stewards of our earth and its resources and turn our world into a garden for each of us and for all of humanity. Because robotics offers us magnificent and seemingly unlimited productive capacities, we have the ability to finally unleash our creativity and humanity as a species. This is not pie in the sky. Material conditions exist to make it real.

But we're yet to produce products to meet human need. Because of (corporate) private property, because our industries are privately owned, commodities are produced to sell for profit. Those few who own our industries care about nothing else. And they have no mercy. If you haven't the price of a loaf of bread, you go hungry. And there's a lot of people hungry in our world and their number grows daily. Ironic, isn't it? Such want in the midst of such abundance.

Well, there's a better world to be had if we put our feet on the ground and take it and make it. It is our right, even duty, to seize what is historically, socially, and morally ours, seize it from the very few and very rich who presently control it. Turn production away from profit towards meeting human need and we transform the world into that garden. It's more than possible. History demands it and a suffering humanity screams out for it.

Imagine a world without want, a world where human beings are valued and treasured, a world where humanity is honored rather than exploited to the hilt. The rants of a dreamer you say? Perhaps. But for once and finally, such a world is possible. And we shall have our better world.

Visionaries of Yesteryear

Societal change cannot occur until the American people achieve a vision of the kind of new society that is possible and that they want to have. In America vision has played a greater role than perhaps in any other country. As we struggle to formulate our vision of a new cooperative America, let us stand on the shoulders of the visionaries of yesteryear. Below we reprint some of their quotes.

"It is a position not to be controverted...that the earth, in its natural uncultivated state, was and ever would have continued to be the COMMON PROPERTY OF THE HUMAN RACE.

— Thomas Paine

"Human slavery is wrong, insecure, and demoralizing. On mechanical slavery, on the slavery of the machine, the future of the world depends."

— Oscar Wilde



Children on the playground at Friend's School in Detroit.

PHOTO/JIM WEST

Concern Over FBI Witch-Hunt Reaches Into U.S. Congress

By Chris Mahin

CHICAGO — Opposition to the FBI's harassment of anti-war and international solidarity activists has now grown to the point that members of the U.S. Congress have felt compelled to speak out.

Three members of the U.S. House of Representatives have contacted the Obama administration to express their concern.

In September 2010, the FBI raided the homes and one office used by anti-war and international solidarity activists in Minnesota, Chicago, and Michigan. The FBI claimed that this was part of an investigation related to "material support for terrorism." In December, nine additional activists were informed by the FBI that they were being subpoenaed.

Congressman Keith Ellison from Minnesota wrote a letter to U.S. Attorney General Holder in November 2010. Congressman Danny K. Davis from the Chicago area wrote to President Obama in March. Most recently, Congressman David Price wrote a letter to Holder in April. (Price represents the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area of North Carolina.)

All three represent areas where the FBI raids took place. These members of Congress were responding to requests from their constituents that they speak out — urgent calls which came from anti-war activists, students, union members, and other concerned people.

Congressman Davis, a veteran political leader in Chicago, wrote to Obama that his constituents "are deeply concerned that these investigations into individuals and organizations engaged in

First Amendment protected speech and association activities are a continuation of FBI investigations of peace and justice organizations criticized in a recent Department of Justice Inspector General report." (Davis was referring to a 209-page report issued on Sept. 20, 2010 which sharply criticized the FBI for abuses in connection with surveillance of anti-war and other political advocacy groups.)

Congressman Price also referred to the report of the Inspector General's office. Price — the ranking Democrat on the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee — highlighted the lack of openness of the Department of Justice and the FBI in the investigation and urged Attorney General Holder to "resolve this matter in a timely and transparent manner."

"We urge activists to contact their

Congressional representatives now about writing similar letters to President Obama and Attorney General Holder," said Tom Burke, a coordinator of legislative work with the national Committee to Stop FBI Repression. "Congressman David Price's letter is just the latest example of the growing movement to stop the grand jury and FBI repression of the anti-war and solidarity movements."

Further information about legislative work around the September 24 FBI raids can be found at StopFBI.net. Concerned individuals who want to help obtain similar letters from their Congressional representatives should contact Richard Berg at berg.richard77@rcn.com or Lucia Wilkes at luciaws@usi-wireless.com

Grandmother of “Special Needs” Child says “You Have to Fight”

By Sandy Reid
People's Tribune

Melissa Hentley, now 26 years old, was born with down syndrome. Lucille Jones, her grandmother, raised her from birth. Things went pretty well for years. Melissa was getting the care that she needed at home and at school. Trouble began around the time of the Michigan state budget cuts.

“Melissa’s regular social worker resigned from the Department of Human Services and a new worker came out for a home visit. She didn’t spend 10 minutes but, we received a letter stating, ‘Dear Melissa, Following a review from the Home Health Service, it has been determined that the amount of your payments will be reduced.’ The reason was that Melissa had been proved to ‘care for herself,’” said Lucille.

The family immediately got in touch with Marian Kramer of the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization who asked for a hearing. “When we arrived at the scheduled time, they said the meeting was cancelled.” Marian asked, “If we cancelled, why would be here?” They asked to speak to the supervisor. “I told the supervisor that I’m concerned that the Department is saying that Melissa is able to take care for herself. She lives with me. Certain things she can do on her own, but I have to assist her. Her doctor wrote a statement saying she is not able to take care of herself 24/7. I don’t even allow her to shower by herself because she’ll turn off the cold water first. She can dress herself but sometimes she doesn’t do that appropriately,” said Lucille.

As a result of an ongoing battle with the Department of Human Services,

Melissa’s application for adult services was finally approved. Lucille says, “If your readers ever receive a letter like I did — you must continue to challenge these things. How can a new worker come into the home for 10 minutes and then I receive a letter like this? Melissa has not improved. That is for the doctor to diagnose.”

“Now we have a fight on our hands on what they are going to do with special needs children at school. Some schools are on the list for closing. I even heard that they are going to close the school for the deaf children. It is really terrible. By law, these special needs children have rights. All the special needs children go to one school. We recently had to fight for the principal to remain there and not get laid off. She is excellent. She shows compassion. She knows all of the children’s names. What’s going to

happen now, I don’t know. I’m an advocate for these special needs children — for all children. However, some of the parents won’t fight for even the regular children. My advice is, don’t go by what they say. We have laws and everybody has rights. “

“We need to fight like they are in Wisconsin and other places. They don’t care about the poor, and they show it. They gave our water away. We fought with them not to raise our water rates; they did it anyway. We don’t have any leaders here. The politicians, not all, but many are our enemies. They are tied into the corporations. People need to keep up with what is going on. They are doing a number on us all over the United States,” says Lucille.

People's Tribune Speaking Tour in Northern California

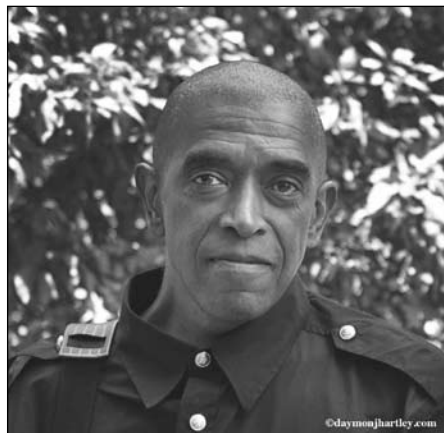
“No government can serve the interest of different economic and social classes with different interests and be fair. Whose interest is our political system serving at this time? When the free market economy - private corporations, can no longer provide jobs and wages for enough people to sustain economic growth, the system has to be changed plain and simple.” — Brother Waistline

In March, the Speakers for a New America and the People’s Tribune sponsored a public forum for Darryl Mitchell (“brother Waistline”) in Oakland, California as part of a tour to the Bay Area. A study and speaking engagement sponsored by the Berkeley Industrial Workers of the World (IWW); an educational session with DeBug in San Jose, and a “People Tribune” forum in Oakland was held. The DeBug gathering brought students and senior activists together who are excited about the fight of workers in Madison, Wisconsin. The Oakland session discussed past history and the budget crisis in California and how to solve it. The IWW forum focused on the history of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in Detroit and the last great industrial strike wave of the late 1960’s and 1970’s.

People of all ages came to hear testimony of the experience of

working class struggles in the past and lessons of these struggles relevant to today. Using the book, “Detroit, I Do Mind Dying” and the pamphlet “Detroit: A History of Struggle, A Vision of the Future” the issue of how race and class combined to open the union and city political structures to all citizens in Detroit was outlined. How the old League fought and was able to build a flexible organization of propagandists around real issues was also discussed.

To bring Brother Waistline to your city, call Speakers for a New America today at 800-691-6888 or email info@speakersforanewamerica.com.



Brother Waistline.

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THE PEOPLE VERSUS THE CORPORATIONS IN THE RUST BELT

By General Baker

The eruption we are facing in the Midwest, and in the Rust Belt in particular, is proving to not be about a budget deficit or trying to balance a budget. It is a struggle to reconstruct the state apparatus to suit the needs of the capitalist class in crisis. We are seeing a transformation where more and more of government is being placed under corporate control. We are being reduced from the status of citizen to that of a customer with no democratic rights and where we live at the whim of a rising or falling marketplace. We have seen mass movements erupt in Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan and Indiana. These are defensive battles, fighting back against proposed bills that restrict or change our economic relations. It is good to see these upheavals. Historically, some are the largest mobilizations in these states, ever. We understand that the changing economic conditions would create some type of social response. In that sense, the fight back against collective bargaining around public employees, the fights around taxing and cutting pensions, and the bills that address the questions of restricting benefits like healthcare, mark a new stage in the development of the attack on the working

class. However, the most draconian bill of all is the one that we face here in Michigan – House Bill 4214. It establishes the Emergency Financial Managers (EFM). It clearly steps out of the realm of trying to balance the budget or eliminate a deficit. It is designed to replace all the elected representatives



Rally in Benton Harbor, Michigan against the takeover by the Emergency Financial Manager.

PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK

in any municipality or school district in the state of Michigan. Since the bill passed, we have witnessed the following events. In Pontiac, Michigan, which was already under a financial manager, the Police Department actually decertified its union and stepped back to try to defend its pension and healthcare rather than seeing that the EFM is taking away their rights. Robert Bobb, the EFM of the Detroit Public School District, that was already under state control, issued layoff slips for all 5,700 Detroit teachers. Robert Harris, EFM in Benton Harbor, issued his decree that limited the task of elected officials to merely calling a meeting, reading minutes, and adjourning.

Meanwhile a fight back from this round of the EFM law in Michigan has barely gotten off the ground, but forces are coming together to prepare. They are trying to develop a recall of the governor, Rick Snyder, but that can't start until July 1. Immediate action is needed. Jesse Jackson came into Benton Harbor and issued a statement that we need to sue to overturn the law. That seems to be the only real fight back that is being talked about in relationship to the EFM. In other states – there have been immediate calls to action. In Ohio they are trying to repeal Senate Bill No. 5 that

restricts collective bargaining rights of public workers. With that activity you don't have to wait. As soon as the bill becomes law, you can immediately start the process of repealing.

Here's what we're up against. The strategy of the corporate forces in Michigan have been to divide and conquer. The House Bill 4214 is designed to pit one city or one school district against the other. Each school district or city says, "We are not going to be affected because we don't have an emergency." Part of our struggle has to be to let people know this could happen to you. We have to unite our class forces so we can mount a campaign against the corporate takeover. Clearly in Benton Harbor, the city will be turned over to Whirlpool and we can see the same thing happening in each city and school district as they expand this EFM bill. So we have 2 tasks: 1) to strengthen working class unity against these attacks and 2) to begin to forge our fight against the corporate takeovers. We need a government that serves the people not the corporations.

General Baker is a retired autoworker and internationally and nationally known labor leader from Detroit, MI. He is available to speak. Call Speakers for a New America at 800-691-6888.

Hundreds Rally Against Dictatorship in Benton Harbor, MI

By Sandy Reid

Hundreds of people from communities across Michigan gathered in Benton Harbor, Michigan on April 27 to rally against the takeover of the city by a Emergency Financial Manager (read dictatorship). The broad response shows the growing outrage developing against the moves by the state government and the corporations to eliminate democracy. People understand that Benton Harbor may be first. But democracy in Michigan and indeed, the entire nation is at stake. Protesters held signs saying, "Fascism reborn in Michigan," "Is this America," "Tax the Rich," "Recall [Gov.] Snyder," "Say No to Rick-tatorship," "Keep Your

Greedy Corporate Hands Off My Medicare," "Outsource Rick," and more.

Plans are underway to oust the governor, Rick Snyder, the Emergency Financial Manager, Joe Harris, and Al Pscholka, the State Representative for the 79th District. Many of the people that the People's Tribune interviewed agreed that the next step is to strengthen our unity as a working class as we forge our fight against the corporate takeovers. This is the path to creating a government by, for and of the people.

For more information on the recalls, contact BANCO at 269-925-0001.

This is what participants at the rally had to say:



"I am angry. They are doing this for themselves, for the corporations. It is sad. The people are already oppressed. We have to fight and take a stand before it is too late. This is our country. We have to take a stand for the men and the women and the children. The people are dying." — Marquette Coates, Homeless Benton Harbor resident

"Let people know that we are for real. We can't play the game anymore. Now we have a dictator and we are under martial law. You have no say as elected officials and the people have no say."

— Rev. Edward Pinkney



As a teacher we face severe cuts for K-12 schools, teacher layoffs, increased health insurance costs. And the EFM is taking over not

only schools, but entire cities. It's a fight for the middle class -- for everybody. — Sharon Rhines, Grand Rapids, teacher;

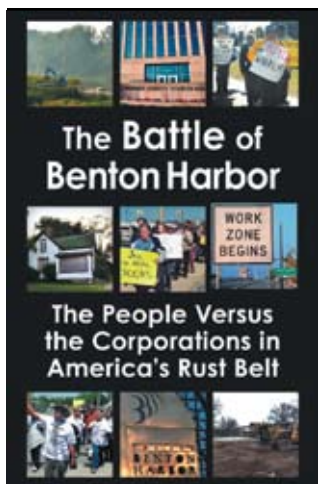
"My concern is, does the end justify the means? I don't think it does. There will be consequences. Unless there is obvious corruption, this is uncalled for." — Douglas Clark, Filmmaker.

"We need to wake up the young people in the colleges so that they realize they are losing the foundation of democracy. The heart of the issue is right here in the streets. They need to join us."

— Jack Prince, school teacher



It won't be the last. The next step is for people in every community to unite." — Craig Rice, Grand Rapids, MI, industrial worker



Order Booklet on: "The Battle of Benton Harbor"

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Photos in this article by Sandy Reid

Crisis in Detroit Public Schools:

EMERGENCY MANAGER HAS TOTAL CONTROL

By David Smokler

I was on Detroit's far east side, driving down a neighborhood street to interview Elizabeth Williams, my former student at Osborn High School and noticed all the abandoned and burnt out homes as well as furniture and belongings strewn on vacant lots as if a tornado had hit the neighborhood. It didn't seem this bad four or five years ago when I taught at Osborn. The Osborn community has a young working class population with 38.7% of the population under the age of 18 and 35.7% of those youth living in poverty. With the introduction of the computer chip and semiconductors into production, robots and computers are replacing Detroit's workers. The once thriving neighborhoods and its renowned school system have fallen into shambles. There is no need to educate workers who the corporations will no longer employ.

Elizabeth had been captain and I had been the coach of the 2007 Osborn High championship debate team. She won a debate scholarship to Wayne State University. We won every trophy that the Detroit Public Schools Urban Debate League had to offer. I remember our principal, Mr. Dixon proudly saying that "No one would believe that these trophies could come to Seven Mile Rd. and Hoover. They thought they would go to one of Detroit's elite schools." He valued them more than the athletic ones

we had captured.

Elizabeth and I went to a local Coney Island serving the Coney Island hot dog, a Michigan specialty of a grilled hot dog, topped with thick chili, yellow

mustard and chopped white onions. We sat in a booth and talked. We discussed her April 15 arrest for protesting the planned closure of the Catherine Ferguson Academy (CFA) by Robert Bobb, the Emergency Manager (EM) who now has total control over the Detroit Public Schools (DPS). This school is for pregnant girls and teen mothers and provides child care for infants and early education for toddlers. It has a graduation rate of over 90% with most of the girls going on to college. CFA has an urban farm and won the Breakthrough High School award in 2004 for outstanding achieve-

ment among schools with high poverty rates. It was the subject of a 2010 award-winning Dutch documentary, "Grown in Detroit."

Elizabeth said, "The action was to



Young people are arrested for a peaceful sit-in to save from closure Catherine Ferguson Academy, a Detroit public school for pregnant girls and teen mothers.

PHOTO/VOICEOFDETROIT.NET/ EMEAC GREEN SCREEN

ment among schools with high poverty rates. It was the subject of a 2010 award-winning Dutch documentary, "Grown in Detroit."

Elizabeth said, "The action was to protest all school closings. They privatize public schools to turn a profit. The people who own charters own corporations. This is unjust and clearly an attack on Detroit. They want to do to Detroit what they did to New Orleans where almost all the schools are charters." The Renaissance Plan 2012, announced March 12 aims to turn 41 of DPS's 142 schools into charter schools affecting some 16,000 students. Since profit can no longer be made off the backs of workers, the powers that be are privatizing everything they can get their hands on to regain their lost profits.

Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT) President Keith Johnson stated that, "The proposed closing of CFA has the potential of ruining two generations, the student-mothers as well as their children. Not only does CFA provide the opportunity for a quality education but the students learn how to properly and effectively parent their children." Johnson said that "this law is an unwarranted and unprecedented attack with the apparent intention of disenfranchising African Americans and compromising *Brown vs. Board of Education* which declared 'separate equal inherently unequal.' It creates two educational tracks: the elite schools (like Cass and Renaissance) and the other public schools soon to become charters that educate students for less skilled or unskilled jobs." Elizabeth concurred. "Students have a right to an education and should not be forced into a trade."

We better take over these corporations before they take us over. We should nationalize education so that the kids from the Osborn community and all the nations' children can get a quality, public education. While we're at it let's fix up these neighborhoods, too. There are a million things not getting done and they will only get worse unless we have systemic change in this country.

Elizabeth's not in college right now but intends to return. I hope to get together with her, again, soon.

Thousands of Ohioans Sign Petitions Against Anti-Labor Bill

By Harold Mitchell

Editor's Note: Ohio has an official unemployment rate of around 9%. According to the Ohio AFL-CIO, Executive PayWatch, "Ohio-based chief executive officers like Michael Jeffries, CEO of the New Albany-based Abercrombie & Fitch, received a total compensation of \$36.3 million in 2009, up from \$23.3 million in 2008. That's 719 times more than what the average elementary school teacher made in 2009."

The campaign to repeal Ohio's anti-labor Senate Bill 5 has been stepped up with the first petitions circulated on Saturday, April 23rd in several cities around the state. Thousands of Ohioans have been eagerly awaiting the petitions. Training sessions are being held in various Ohio cities. A training held in the Youngstown area had 500 in attendance. Each organization has its goals with an expectation of obtaining 500,000 signatures. Voter registration is also a part of the effort. The mobilization includes faith-based organizations, many of which played an important role during the Statehouse rallies and are an integral part of the anti-SB5 coalition. Everything now is geared towards signature gathering. Local unions are being mobilized to gather signatures in the workplace. There are many, many people involved in this effort with June 30 as the deadline for all petitions to be in.

Harold Mitchell is First Vice President, AF-SCME, Ohio Council 8



PHOTO/HAROLD MITCHELL

LABOR AND BUDGET CUT PROTESTS IN CALIFORNIA



Top right photo, San Francisco/ Photo/ Sarah Menefee; center and bottom, Los Angeles/Kimberly King.



CORRECTION

The photo on the left is by Frank Hammer. It is of a Lansing, MI protest at the state capital. We inadvertently attributed it to the wrong photographer in our April, 2011 edition.

HOW TO ABOLISH HOMELESSNESS

By **Sandy Perry**

Over 100 students and community members gathered on April 9 at UC Merced at a forum called “Abolishing Homelessness”, organized by UC faculty and leaders of the California Central Valley Journey for Justice.

The highlight of the day was the honoring of Bernice Gonzalez and Joseph Edwards. The two were sleeping under a bridge by Merced’s Bear Creek last December 17, when a car carrying four college students careened off the road and into the water. Bernice and Joseph saved the lives of all four of them by diving repeatedly into the icy water until all were pulled to safety.

Other highlights included a powerful presentation, with a host of photographs by Community Alliance journalist Mike Rhodes on the homelessness crisis in Fresno. Among the numerous other panelists, break-out sessions and testimonies, the presence of Tenants Together leaders was especially notable. They are currently organizing foreclosed tenants in Merced to understand and demand their rights. They accurately pointed out

that defending tenants against eviction is the first line of defense against homelessness.

The importance of the event was signified by the fact that noted former Bush

administration homelessness consultant Philip F. Mangano appeared. He apparently felt it was necessary to attempt to defend his dubious record of “Ten Year Plans” to end homelessness. As leaders

from Fresno, Sacramento, and San Jose all pointed out at the forum, the problem with the Ten Year Plans was that invariably the cities that adopted them experience not an end to homelessness, but an INCREASE with every passing year.

Using clever innuendo, Mangano was highly critical of most of the people in the room, blaming them for “haranguing” and “lambasting” government and for wasting their time

expressing moral outrage against homelessness. Falsifying the history of the abolitionists, suffragists, and civil rights leaders, Mangano claimed that the lessons of these movements teach us that the way to get results is by “cooperating with government”.

The problem is that the government has been captured by corporations and is itself creating homelessness, and more and more of it every day. Our increasingly automated economy requires fewer and fewer workers, so corporations now refuse to pay taxes for housing and the other necessities we need to survive. Who can believe Mangano when there are FEWER JOBS and FEWER HOMES now than when he started “ending homelessness” in 2002?

The answer is not to cooperate with Wall Street-dominated government, but to organize to REPLACE it with a real, legitimate one – of the people, by the people, and for the people. It has been done before, it can be done again. The people need jobs and housing NOW!



Joseph Edwards and Bernice Gonzalez, a homeless couple who rescued four people from drowning in Bear Creek of Merced. They were honored with a birthday cake for Joseph’s birthday on April 9th, the day of the UC Merced Forum on homelessness.

PHOTO/SAL SANDOVAL

While Cabrini Evicts, Hundreds Of Thousands Of Chicagoans Need Affordable Housing

By **Joseph Peery**

Last year the CHA (Chicago Housing Authority) reopened its waiting list for the first time since 1999. On the first day, 60,000 people applied. By the third day, the number had reached more than 125,000, and it continued to climb. CHA spokeswoman Kellie O’Connell-Miller stated in the Chicago Tribune, “I don’t think this surprised us. It speaks to the need of affordable housing in the city.” The application process went on for less than a month. No more statistics were given on the numbers of people who applied. They hired an outside firm to conduct a lottery to remove applicants from the list until it was down to 40,000. However, 5,000 people who had applied before 1999 were moved to the top, displacing 5,000 from the lottery list. And so, in real numbers, we have 35,000 spots on a list for untold hundreds of thousands of people who applied for affordable housing, most of which hasn’t even been built yet.

The need for affordable housing in the city doesn’t just apply to the names on that list. On July 7, 2010, the Chicago Rehab Network described the situation like this: “A terrible and startling fact of the past decade is the number of households who are cost burdened in the city — paying more than 30% of their income for housing — which as of 2008 exceeded half of all Chicago households. Thirty percent of renters pay more than



Erica Flowers and her daughter, Zatterica, waited 12 years to get into CHA, only to be denied entry because of a credit issue that has since been resolved.

PHOTO/JOSEPH PEERY

half of their monthly income for housing. Fully 70% of all households in Chicago are eligible for housing assistance based on their income.”

Let us now move from cold hard facts to warm blooded human beings. What follows are excerpts from interviews with Erica Flowers, a part time teaching assistant and single mother who is still waiting for housing.

People’s Tribune: You’ve been trying to move into CHA, tell us about

that.

Erica Flowers: I was trying to move in since about 1999. I was offered Altgeld Gardens out in Riverdale, however I didn’t take it. It’s too far and it wasn’t one of my choices on my application. Because of the commute, my daughter’s school and where I work, I wanted a place as close to my area as possible which is Cabrini Green because I don’t have a vehicle. I got offered Savoy and Trumbull Park, so I decided to go with

Savoy. I went in and gave my information, and then the lady wrote me a letter telling me I had something on my credit that prevented me from moving into one of her units. On my credit there was an eviction due to me struggling being a single mother, bills got caught up, I wasn’t able to pay market rent. . . that’s why I need affordable housing. I went back down to housing and gave them copies of the fact that I paid that debt off. I talked to the manager at Savoy and she said she’d get back to me. That was 3 months ago. I filed for a mediation hearing with housing and I haven’t heard anything.

PT: What do you think CHA should do?

EF: I think they need to be reaching out to me and let me know if they are going to give me a unit. I need to know.

PT: What else do you want people to know about your case?

EF: They’re treating us as if we don’t have rights. We’re less of their standards because we need public housing. We’re human. . . there’s no way I should wait 12 years just to be denied. I don’t have a criminal background, I’ve worked all my life.

PT: Are you in danger of becoming homeless?

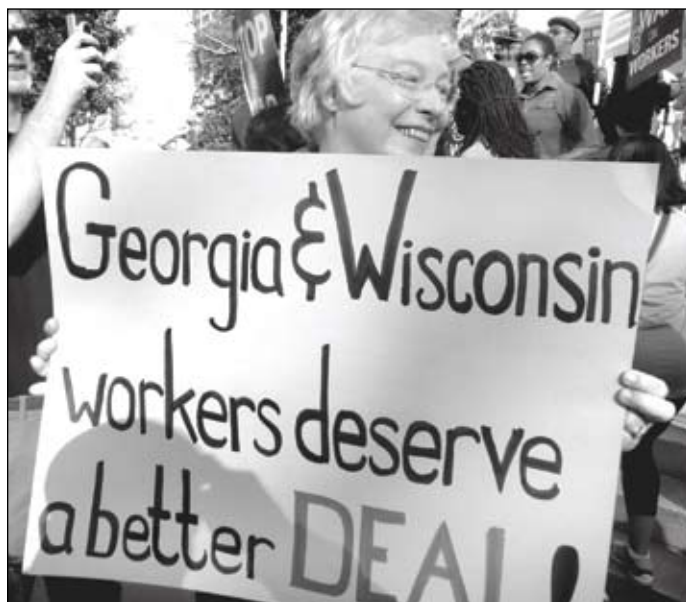
EF: Yes. I’m living with someone. I don’t have my own place and it’s just a shame.

Georgia Goose Lays A Brick

By John Slaughter

“The goose that laid the golden egg in America is free markets and capitalism,” says Larry O’Neal, the majority leader in the Georgia State House of Representatives. “[Our goal] is to make Georgia the most attractive place for the entrepreneurial spirit.” In that spirit, eggs (or something else) are being dropped all over the place, but they are hardly golden. The only jobs program they have to offer: cut taxes for the rich and the corporations, and shift the tax burden onto the backs of the working class and poor.

So how is that going? Georgia State University’s Fiscal Research Center reports that in the last 20 years corporate income taxes have been cut by 46 percent. In the last 10 years personal income taxes (for the rich) have fallen by 26 percent. Georgia ranks first in the country in the fall in state revenues in the last decade, 18 percent below even its neighboring states in the South. So,



Atlanta rally of public workers, their unions, teachers and students in support of Wisconsin and Georgia workers.

PHOTO /JOHN SLAUGHTER

no one in the country has cut taxes more in a so-called bid for jobs.

Yet, in 2009, after decades of cut-

ting taxes, Georgia’s ranking in terms of per capita income had fallen to 39th, below the level of 30 years ago. And the unemployment level now stands at 10.2 percent, well above the national average. It appears that what is actually being laid is a system in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

The cuts continue. Funds for education are being cut, health care is being cut even more, unemployment compensation is underfunded, the funding

for worker’s compensation is being reduced, and public employees are being

furloughed, jobs cut, wages slashed, and pensions raided.

It is clear that to continue to go down that road leads only to disaster. The egg is broken, it was never golden, and it cannot be put together again.

The people are rising up. There are protests every day to the phony solutions of those who are in the driver’s seat now. The people need quality education, they need quality health care, and they need good living wage jobs. The current program of Georgia’s rulers is headed in exactly the opposite direction.

It is time for real solutions to be put on the table, and it is time for the workers and poor to go on the offensive with their own solutions. The revenue that is needed to guarantee that everyone receives the food, housing, health care, and education that they need can only come from one place: from those who have the money. Tax the rich and the corporations.

After all, it’s only fair.

Anti-foreclosure Victory in Rochester

By Max Rameau
Take Back the Land

In a major victory for those fighting back against the foreclosure crisis, mortgage and foreclosure giant Fannie Mae began talks with Catherine Lennon about the Rochester, NY home from which she was forcibly evicted just one day before. The negotiations, initiated by US congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), took place after Take Back the Land- Rochester (TBL- Rochester)

Catherine Lennon lived at 9 Ravenwood Ave. in Rochester for seven years. Economic hard times forced some of her children and grandchildren to move into the home and the family to miss some mortgage payments. Bank of America began foreclosure proceedings shortly after Catherine’s husband died of cancer. Fannie Mae, recipient of a \$90 billion taxpayer bailout, took over the home and proceeded to evict the extended family of 11.

While the eviction was set for Monday, March 14, 2011, the community had other plans. TBL- Rochester organized a community eviction defense, with neighbors and supporters physically blockading the home for two weeks, preventing the family from being forced out. All that ended on March 28th as Rochester police brought the SWAT team and an estimated 25 police cars, to forcibly execute the eviction. Seven eviction defenders were arrested, including a 70-year-old neighbor still in her pajamas. However, the eviction defense did not end the fight, it only started the second phase.

After a flurry of supporter calls, emails and viral videos of intense media scrutiny, the very next day, US congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28) directly intervened, convening a conference call between Catherine and high level Fannie Mae officials, who are now re-reviewing her case.

Take Back the Land- Rochester is not at it alone. They are, instead, part of a broader Take Back the Land- Movement, a trans-local network of organizations dedicated to elevating housing to the level of a human right and realizing community control over land through “positive action.” A form of civil disobedience, Positive Action includes “live-in” (as opposed to sit-in) campaigns designed to house and keep families in foreclosed and public housing.

Take Back the Land- Movement affiliated organizations have engaged in Positive Action throughout the country, including Take Back the Land in Miami, Atlanta and Madison, Wisconsin,

as well as the Toledo Foreclosure Defense League, FUREE in New York city, ONE DC and Empower DC, City Life/Vida Urbana in Boston, the Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign, Right 2 Survive in Portland, OR and the national Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. A host of other organizations await training and support.

The Take Back the Land- Movement, then, is about more than one home, one family or even one community: it is about the human right to housing and the ability of communities -- not corporations -- to control their land.

For more information, visit <http://takebackroc.rocus.org>.



In a major victory for those fighting foreclosures, Fannie Mae began talks with Catherine Lennon about her home, which was foreclosed on.

PHOTO /BRITTNEY LOHMILLER

organized a 2 week long eviction defense of the Lennon home, which ended in dramatic fashion with a SWAT team followed by a phalanx of police and multiple arrests. The goal of the talks is to get Lennon and her family back into their home.

It’s Time We Take it Away From Corporations

Amazing, isn’t it. I pay taxes. You pay taxes. But General Electric, the largest corporation in the US with billions in profits each year, will pay no taxes this year. None. Another example of how our country is becoming more and more a nation of corporations, by corporations, and for corporations. This is our country. We built it. It’s time, past time, we take it away from corporations, take what is ours.

The Budget Crisis and Movement Building in Wash., DC

By Eric Sheptock

As federal and local budgets for much-needed social services are cut, the homeless advocacy communities of Washington, DC along with those who advocate for affordable housing are becoming increasingly concerned and are partaking in direct actions that are intended to address the developing crisis. The city is fast becoming a hotbed of protesters who are angry over cuts at the federal and local levels.

I sat in a room filled with about 60 homeless advocates and service providers on March 30, as we listened to a presentation on how the federal Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act will work. The HEARTH Act requires states and municipalities that receive HUD money, to re-house all newly-homeless people within 30 days of losing their place of residence. There is concern that

days, making HEARTH a glorified reduction in social services.

Washington, DC is continuing to deal with a projected FY 12 budget shortfall of \$320 mil. The mayor has decided to raise \$135 million mainly through tax increases. He has also proposed to cut \$190 million from the budget. However, the Human Services budget makes up one-fourth (\$1.5 billion) of the local budget (\$6.3 billion), but is taking two-thirds (\$130 mil) of the budget cuts. After factoring in a separate \$25 million cut in federal funding, the Department of Human Services is trying to fill a projected \$20 million budget gap for Homeless Services in FY 12, even as they refuse to accept any newly-homeless families — some having children 5 years old and younger — into the family shelter system.

DC law only requires that a person be provided with shelter if the temperature is 32 and below or 95 and above.

This law can be satisfied by allowing the homeless to sleep on a cot in the hall of a government building. Many advocates fear that the city is quickly moving toward only providing the bare minimum of services to the city's poor and that the moment of truth will come on April 1, 2012 — the official end of next hypothermia season and the day that winter shelters close in DC.

The fact that two-thirds of the proposed budget cuts are coming from Human Services which makes up one-fourth of the budget didn't set well with most advocates for the poor and dispossessed. It sent up the red flags in many people's minds and proved to them beyond a shadow of a doubt that the new mayor is content to throw the poor to the wolves.

Many people thought Vincent Gray would be a better mayor than Adrian Fenty. We are finding that each successive mayor is coming out more directly against the poor, due to the deepening crisis of capitalism. This last round of budget fights is making it clear that the capitalist crisis is spiraling out of control. There is no solution within the present system. The path to positive change is becoming clearer by the day.



NAHT (National Alliance of HUD Tenants) rally held in front of DC's CCNV Shelter on march 30th.

PHOTO/ERIC SHEPTOCK

many state and local governments will lose at least some of their HUD funding due to their inability to meet this and other requirements of the HEARTH Act, in effect decreasing the federal and local governments' commitments to housing.

With truth being stranger than fiction, I went directly from that meeting to a rally/press conference, which had been organized in front of the CCNV (Community for Creative Non-Violence) Shelter by me and members of the National Alliance of HUD Tenants. The aim was to highlight the damage that will be done by the huge cuts to HUD's budget that Congress was considering. The loss of 750,000 HUD housing units nationwide, as well as many affordable housing options will make it nearly impossible for any government agency to house the newly-homeless within 30

My Detroit

My childhood
Detroit
I
Slipped
you off
easily
as
a wet garment –
Yet –
beneath my bones
you remain
and
I suffer
your mistreatment
all the indifference
and scorn
Aretha hides
M & M rages
Bob Segar retires
Ted Nugent is silent
Barry Gordy & Motown
have fled
to Hollywood
& beyond
and Detroit-born
Robin Williams
never really lived there!
Still
where is the justice
in 80,000 trash
can fires burning
to warm hands
and feet??
Detroit:
I remember
those trash can
fires
from my youth
from my neighborhood:
toes gnarled
to nubs
by cold

corpses
curled
around
a single blanket
in a
solitary room
frozen water
pipes
leaking nothing
Detroit –
great prison
your prisons
will soon
empty out
like cockroach nests,
the rushes
are beating
against the silt
sided banks
of
furious waters
Perhaps
when
political prisoners
are back on the streets
and
the fires go out
the first movement
will begin
Perhaps
in the summer
when
there is
no water
and
fewer jobs:
only Revolutionaries
will walk
your streets

— Maketa Smith-Groves

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Michigan budget cut protest.

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Why The Triangle Factory Fire Is Worth Remembering

By Andi Sosin
and Joel Sosinsky,
The Remember the Triangle Fire
Coalition

On March 25th, 2011, due in significant part to the efforts of the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition, the eyes of progressives and advocates for the rights of working people were focused on the black and purple mourning bunting hanging below the ninth floor windows of the building that still stands on Washington Place and Greene Street, where thousands gathered to commemorate the centennial of the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911. That horrific “industrial accident” swept through the top floors of a non-union garment factory in New York City where 146 workers, mostly young immigrant women, chose to jump nine stories to their deaths, rather than being incinerated. The factory owners refused to take available safety precautions, and locked the exit door in order to prevent employee theft and keep out union organizers. A symbolic funeral procession of four hundred thousand citizens of all social classes and ethnicities compelled New York’s politicians to examine industrial working conditions and pass protective legislation, making the Triangle fire the reason for the safety regulations and labor laws we now take for granted. The deaths of these innocent young girls led the way for the growth of a strong American labor movement in the following decades. As union power is now at a low point, the Triangle fire



Walkers in the Triangle fire centennial procession carried shirtwaist kites decorated with sashes labeled with each victim’s name and age. View is of Washington Place looking East toward Broadway; at left is the FDNY Ladder truck, which symbolically raises its ladder only to the sixth floor, the height reachable in 1911.

PHOTO /RJ MICKELSON

centennial provides an appropriate reminder of how a fire that destroyed the lives of even a small number of people can galvanize a movement for social justice.

Growing out of an artist’s vision of creating ephemeral chalk memorials to the Triangle fire’s victims each anniversary, the goal of the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition has been to create a centennial event that would make a difference to those who participated in it. The Coalition served as a clearinghouse using Internet communications and so-

cial media like Facebook and Twitter, to bring together artists, families of the victims and survivors, scholars, feminists, and ethnic organizations, along with the American Society of Safety Engineers, the NYC Fire Department and Workers United, the successor union to the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, to commemorate the fire’s centennial. With over two hundred participating organizations, cultural events included plays, poetry readings, music and a scholarly conference. Highlighting the official ceremony was a proces-

sion of almost 1,000 activists who carried 146 poles from which flew shirtwaist shaped kites, decorated with the names and ages of each victim inscribed on a funeral sash. At 4:45 pm that afternoon, at the moment the first fire alarm was sounded in 1911, across the nation bells were rung to remember all the victims of workplace disasters.

Unfortunately we now live in a period where the fiscal exigencies prompted by deregulation, regressive tax policies, the financial crisis and Republican politics threaten to gut the workplace protections that were hard won after the Triangle fire. From the Massey mine disaster to the Gulf oil spill tragedy, to unfair union-avoidance tactics and attempts to bust public service unions in Wisconsin and other states, a cruel scheme is underway to further enrich the corporate elite while accelerating a race to the bottom for the American working class. We now risk returning to an era in which an avoidable tragedy like the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire becomes inevitable. The Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition successfully organized diverse groups around the memory of one workplace tragedy, but there are so many more tragedies that could be prevented here and in the foreign countries where industries have fled. To honor the memory of those who died in the Triangle factory fire, and those who labor in dangerous conditions today, we must be willing to raise labor consciousness through actions that ensure that the conditions that enabled the Triangle disaster never return.

Neighborhoods Being Demolished

Wall Street benefits from destruction of working-class homes

By Dave Ransom

All across the Rust Belt, cities are tearing down working-class housing — in Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Youngstown, Cleveland, Detroit. Nearly \$2 billion in federal money is being used to raze homes that have been left vacant because of the economic crisis.

The number of empty and abandoned homes in Detroit, for instance, has now reached 80,000, and the Motor City may be a fearful preview of urban America’s future. Mayor David Bing has pledged to raze 10,000 houses in his first term. Nearly 13,000 were bulldozed before he took office.

Today, block after block in Detroit has essentially been returned to prairie, complete with pheasants, grouse, and the occasional coyote. Some eighty percent of the once vibrant Recovery Park neighborhood has been denuded of homes — nearly 2,000 acres.

Many of the demolished houses were beyond repair. But their working-class owners were not the cause of that.

By computerizing production, driving down wages and benefits, laying off workers, and moving plants out of the area entirely, the auto companies have cut Detroit’s population in half.

Now it’s Wall Street’s turn to whack Detroit, as the big banks foreclose on working-class homeowners reeling from the economic crash. “It’s class warfare on steroids,” says one Michigan activist.

Nearly \$2 billion in federal money is being used to raze homes that have been left vacant because of the economic crisis.

Besides the two million houses for sale nationwide, there is an equally large “shadow inventory” of homes either in foreclosure or so far “underwater” they’re worth less than half the

mortgage — and whose owners will probably walk away.

Add the record number of foreclosures expected this year, and you can understand why some analysts see home prices as again “falling off a cliff” — with yet more people pushed out of the door and onto the street.

This was not supposed to happen. To keep people in their homes, the government promised many billions of dollars in mortgage relief.

So far, very little of that money has seen the light of day. Tens of billions of dollars have gone unspent, and hundreds of thousands of homeowners have been turned away.

It’s hard not to conclude that the government’s real housing policy is not to rescue homeowners, but to demolish a good part of the nation’s housing. The administration has already put up \$2 billion for the job, which is going to Detroit and other cities.

Though this is being billed as “neighborhood stabilization,” that’s probably just a smokescreen.

VOICES FROM BENTON HARBOR, MI

BENTON HARBOR IS NOW UNDER A DICTATORSHIP

By Rev. Edward Pinkney



Rev. Edward Pinkney, and his wife Dorothy

Benton Harbor is a community which has been abandoned, kicked, beaten and suffocated. No population should have to endure for decades what the residents of Benton Harbor

have had to deal with. The Emergency Financial Manager, who is a dictator in the City of Benton Harbor, has issued an order stripping all City Commissioners, and all city board members of all their authority to take action.

Joseph Harris is not a elected official. He was placed here in Benton

Harbor by Whirlpool, the blood sucking corporation, and former governor Jennifer Granholm. *This is taxation without representation. Stand up people! Stand up!*

The Kingdom is Going To the Dogs

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

The laborers are finally taking on a new vitality. Unionists and their supporters are winning big fights in Wisconsin. The U.A.W. has taken up social justice and the world is rapidly changing.

We are facing an unprecedented assault from politicians, corporations and government. They are attacking our kid's education, our public safety, our air and water, our rights as workers, the power of our votes and our ability to make ends meet. It is about tax hikes for individuals and tax cuts that benefit the big corporations and the rich.

When are the Pastors, Bishops, Ministers and Christians finally going

to stand up for justice for the people in their community? The Kingdom is going to the dogs. We have had Pastors, Bishops, Ministers and Christians not only in Benton Harbor, but around the country, who have been silent for too long. What are they afraid of? Are they afraid that their faith-based money will be cut off? There are many blood sucking corporations like Whirlpool who contribute to and influence the faith based church groups. We must rebuke the spirit of silence, jealousy and hatred that Satan has placed on us. It is time to protect the women and children at all cost.

Many congregations present their Pastor, Bishop or Minister before our God as all holy and perfect. I have witnessed the congregation crucify anyone who speaks truth and exposes them for what they really are. We cannot allow this. There will be a special wing in Hell for all Pastors, Bishops and Ministers who will not stand up for GOD's word and for the people.

Over Eight Million Dollars of grant money was allocated for the residents of Benton Harbor and was given to several ministers. We do not know what happened to that money. I call it hush money. Was it used for personal use? If there is evil intention, it will be exposed when the light shines right on them for the light makes everything visible.

Too many Christians have remained silent. Pastors Bishops and Ministers are using the pulpit as a place to hide. It is getting ridiculous. The people must tell them that they can no longer be silent. We want freedom and justice now! We have no permanent friends, no permanent enemies — just permanent interests.

Travesty of Justice

By Marcus Muhammad, Mayor Pro Temp, Benton Harbor

It is exceedingly unfortunate that we have troops fighting for "Democracy" overseas while "Democracy" is being stripped from citizens at home. Gov. Snyder should be ashamed of this despicable law. He was elected through a Democratic system to become the Governor. Right after he took office he took Democracy away from the residents in the poorest city in Michigan. It is hard to believe that this is not rabid racism. It would be shameful for the Senior PGA to attach

their historic event to the great injustice being perpetrated. There is a huge tombstone sitting in the State of Michigan. The name engraved is DEMOCRACY.

The Destruction of American Democracy

From the Editors

A rose by any other name smells just as sweet. The coup that overthrew democracy in Benton Harbor, Michigan and established a dictatorship called Emergency Financial Management is fascism — no matter what they call it.

Corporate power has declared war on us. The laws of military war and political war are the same. One of these laws is to never attack the enemy where they are strong -- attack where they are weak. The weak points in the defense of American democracy has always revolved around the African Americans. When President Reagan decided to attack the social safety net of all impoverished Americans, he concentrated his fire on the "Welfare Queen" in the Black ghetto. The majority of Americans stood passive while laws were passed lowering living standards. When the rest of the Americans realized these laws also applied to them -- it was too late.

When the Public Sector Unions came under attack in Wisconsin, it created a fire-storm as it should have. Labor unions and progressives rallied to defend the unions of the public service workers. The American Left is rooted in and responds to the economic struggles of the unions. Meanwhile, corporate power moved swiftly and decisively to destroy democracy in Benton Harbor — a poor Black community that few care about. They thus set the stage to destroy democracy in all of Michigan and then throughout the United States.

Again, fascism has struck at the weak point — where the struggle for democracy meets the reality of Black America. The future of our country is in the political -- not the economic arena. Fascism is a political, not an economic order. To win this war we must first disarm the enemy of this historic weapon of race — and fight for the political as well as economic rights of all Americans. The corporate takeover of Benton Harbor proves again that if we — the people — do not take over the corporations — they will take over us.



Protest against Whirlpool and the Emergency Financial Manager's takeover of Benton Harbor.

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