

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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School children in Michigan. 1.3 million low income children will be affected by upcoming welfare cuts. Meanwhile, corporations get more tax write-offs and greater profits. The failing capitalist system is to blame for the economic crisis, not our children.

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INSIDE:

Detroit School Struggle	5
Indiana Labor Leader Speaks	6
Dictator Bill Destroys Michigan City	7
Health Security for the Undocumented	9
Future Police State Today	10

THE SYSTEM ATTACKS OUR CHILDREN

Read Story on Page 3

MAKE CORPORATE PROPERTY PUBLIC PROPERTY

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

EDITORIAL

The domino effect of the global economic crisis—a crisis rooted in the replacing of workers with high technology—is now rapidly cascading through all levels of American society. The start of the “Great Recession” was marked by the 2008 mortgage credit crash. The conditions for the credit crash were artificially created by global financial institutions eager to raise housing values in order to enrich themselves. The \$13 trillion government bailout of these same banks and lending institutions crowned an advanced stage of the corporate/government merger. What was public property instantly became corporate private property.

Since 2008 more than 500,000 public sector workers have lost their jobs. Real unemployment is hovering at around 20%, and foreclosures are at record levels. States, counties, cities, and school districts are coming up desperately short of the revenues necessary to maintain their operations. Social programs are being cut to the bone, collective bargaining is being eliminated and appointed emergency managers are replacing elected officials.

Tax receipts collected by local and state governments across the nation are plunging. This coming year, states face a shortfall of \$125 billion. This bankrupting of governments is the pretext for a new round of corporate scheming to steal what is left of the public domain. The fabric of American society is being torn apart by an economic system that no longer works. And nowhere has taxing the rich as a first step to the solution taken hold.

From water companies and turnpikes to power plants and parking lots, the public assets are being leased and sold to the corporations. For example, in 2008 Chicago Mayor Richard Daley rushed a proposal through city council to lease all of the city's 36,000 parking meters to investment giant Morgan Stanley. Once the deal was done, accountants

discovered the city had sold \$1 billion too cheaply and had also given away its rights for 75 years to manage the city's traffic and land use.

What has Morgan Stanley done? Raise parking rates throughout the city a whopping 42%! Next they plan to squeeze more cars and meters into existing spaces by getting rid of the mark-



Thousands of Chicago demonstrators confront a gathering of executives from some of the world's wealthiest and most powerful corporations.

PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK

ing lines, and expanding the hours requiring fees. After retiring last month, Daley joined the law firm that negotiated the deal.

The merging of corporations and government is the foundation for the corporations to seize our public property at bargain basement prices. The transfer of public property into corporate private property is simply another form of taxation of the people. This form by-passes the public treasury and goes straight to the corporations. It is part of the nationalization of the economy in the interests of the corporations.

Either we tax the rich and the corporations or they will continue to loot the public treasury and make us pay for it. On June 14 in Chicago, thousands dem-

onstrated under the banner of “Stand Up! Chicago.” They demanded that corporations pay their share to fix the housing foreclosure crisis, provide increased funding for quality public education and create livable wage jobs. They are putting forward a basic, socially responsible position for the working class to act upon.

The call to “tax the rich” is an essential first step forward because it represents a basic form of making public property out of corporate private property. It directly opposes what is occurring. That battle however, must be linked to the whole battlefield that is developing over nationalization. Nationalization in the interests of the corporations is the ruling class solution, but nationalization in the interests of the people is about turning corporate private property into public property. These are the political battles that must be fought for us to move humanity toward a cooperative society. Again, it is a matter of who can wield the power to obtain its own interests. One solution is fascism, the other is democracy. It's them or us!

An economic system that doesn't feed, clothe and house its people must be and will be overturned and replaced with a system that meets the needs of the people. To that end, this paper is a tribune of those struggling to create such a new economic system. It is a vehicle to bring the movement together, to create a vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it.

Labor-replacing electronic technology is permanently eliminating jobs and destroying the foundation of the capitalist system. The people's needs can only be met by building a cooperative society where the socially necessary means of production are owned by society, not by the corporations.

We welcome articles and artwork from those who are engaged in the struggle to build a new society that is of, by and for the people. We rely on readers and contributors to fund and distribute this paper.

The People's Tribune, formerly published by the League of Revolutionaries for a New America, is now an independent newspaper with an editorial board based in Chicago.

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

The System Attacks Our Children

COVER STORY

Clearly nothing is sacred for the wealthy and the corporations who run our country. Now they are again stepping up their assault on our children.

The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) recently reported that, "States are implementing some of the harshest cuts in recent history for many of the nation's most vulnerable families with children who are receiving assistance through the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant. The cuts will affect 700,000 low-income families that include 1.3 million children."

The CBPP adds: "A number of states are cutting cash assistance deeply or ending it entirely for many families that already live far below the poverty line, including many families with physical or mental health issues or other challenges. Numerous states also are cutting child care and other work-related assistance that will make it harder for many poor parents who are fortunate enough to have jobs to retain them."

In 1996, Congress created TANF to replace Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Among other changes, this "welfare reform" law provided that the time you can get benefits is limited. States are allowed to set TANF benefit levels, and benefit levels vary



widely from state to state.

Between 1996 and 2009, the number of children receiving welfare benefits declined by 60 percent, from some 9 million to about 3.3 million. Among children below the poverty threshold, the proportion receiving AFDC/TANF decreased from 62 percent in 1995 to 22 percent in 2008.

The original AFDC program was enacted in 1935, during the Great Depression. It was intended to tide families over until they could find work. Today, with automation replacing labor, there are fewer and fewer jobs to be had, and the wealthy have no interest in supporting people they can't employ.

Political attacks on the welfare system began in the mid-1960s and accelerated during the 1970s and 80s as automation expanded. Even though the bulk of America's poor are white, these attacks relied on racism, painting the welfare mother as a Black "welfare queen" who had "illegitimate" children

and committed fraud to make a living. Now the safety net has been shredded for everyone's children.

There is something wrong with a society that refuses to care for its children. The wealthy few and the corporations who are behind this attack on the children are utterly without morals. They talk about the "immorality" of the poor on welfare, and the moral value of work, yet they lie, cheat and steal, foreclose on homes, take away pensions and health care, and collect government bailouts to make their money, and then have so little morals as to throw children off welfare. The failing capitalist system is to blame for the economic crisis, not our children.

Regardless, arguments about the value of work are becoming academic, because we are moving steadily toward a "jobless" society where most of the work is done by machines, not people. We are at the dawn of an age where we no longer need to work, at least not in

the traditional sense, because society's new electronic tools are so productive that they are eliminating jobs and also creating unlimited abundance. We could have a cooperative society where all of us have a high standard of living without "working" in the sense of selling our labor power to someone else. Indeed, only a cooperative society makes sense under these conditions.

To build that society, the people must have political power. And to organize ourselves to win that power, the people must unite around the economic and political interests of those among us who have the least. This is the only way to guarantee that society gives everyone's children all they need to thrive and reach their fullest potential. The immediate step that must be taken is to tax the rich to pay for the things society needs—including proper support for our children.

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.peopletribune.org.

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Book Review: *The Big Short* by Michael Lewis

How Wall Street Got Rich Off the Debts of American Workers

By Chuck Parker

“These guys lied to infinity. I now realized that there was an entire industry, called consumer finance, that basically existed to rip people off. That’s when I decided the system was really, “Fuck the poor,” said Steve Eisman, mortgage bond analyst.

The best thing about *The Big Short* is that it reads more like a Who-Done-It than a boring economics textbook. The author tells the story of several unorthodox investors, like Steve Eisman, who were able to see through the lies spread by the big banks. And they figured out how to make a fortune by betting against the market. Hence the title—*The Big Short*—because when you bet that a stock or bond will go down in value, it’s called “selling short.”

Beginning in the 1980’s, because of stagnant wages and widespread unemployment due to labor replacing robots and computers, there was a growing inequality between the mass of the poor, and the smaller and smaller number of rich people. Wall Street saw a huge market for credit among the poorer section of the working class so they could keep buying commodities, and feel richer than they actually were. This was the first big killing they made off selling

credit to workers.

But if your credit rating was not so good, the price of credit card debt was too high. So they thought if they could mass market second mortgages, people would go for it because they would be replacing high interest credit card debt with low interest mortgage debt. But the profits from the interest on these loans was not enough for Wall Street, so they packaged thousands of mortgages into mortgage bonds, which they sold to investors and made a huge profit a second time from worker debt.

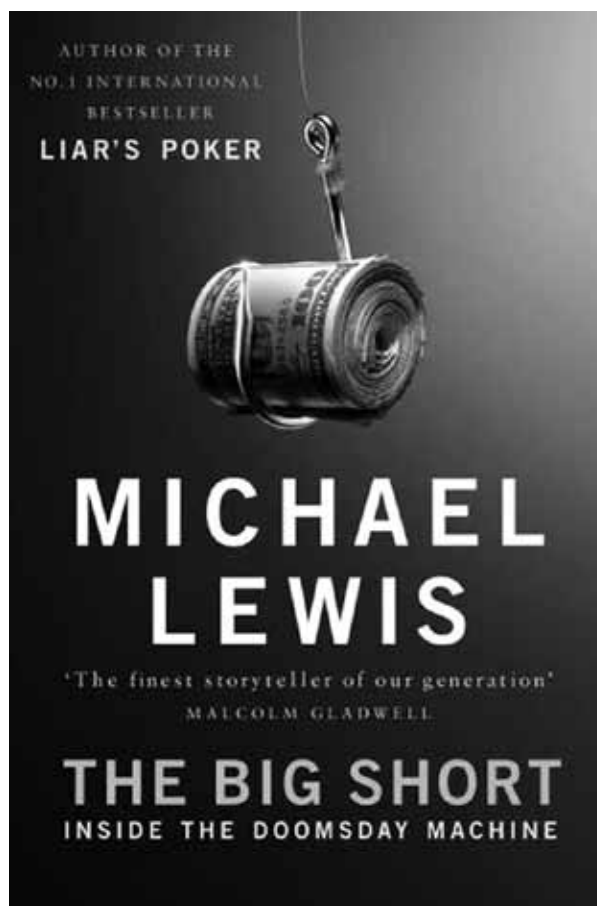
To convince investors to buy bonds made up of shaky mortgages, Wall Street hired thousands of experts to come up with creative, and deceptive ways to package these bad loans. They also got the highest AAA ratings from the major ratings agencies. This was supposed to mean that they were “risk free,” but that was also a lie. Despite all the evidence describing an entire industry built on a foundation of lies, the author, near the end of the book, asks the question, “Did the CEO’s of the big banks lie, or were they just stupid?” And he said that he believed that they

just didn’t know what was going on. As one life-long union activist who lost her house said when she heard this, “Oh, Come On!”

Most incredible of all, most of the big investors ended up hundreds of millions of dollars richer even after the crash, because the government stepped in and handed them trillions of dollars to bail them out. Another Killing for Wall Street—and this was the Easy Money! Meanwhile the devastation grows and grows, starting with foreclosures, unemployment, and homelessness, and spreading now as both Democrats and Republicans try to force cuts in social services, and the benefits of teachers and other public employees with proposed state budget cuts.

So far, it looks like investor Steve Eisman’s Golden Rule of Wall Street has been in effect, “HE WHO HAS THE GOLD, MAKES THE RULES.” But it didn’t need to turn out this way. If the banks had been taken over in the interest of the people, broken up, and their leaders jailed, the American working class would not still be stuck in the vice of debt created by these criminal bankers.

Read the Book! Learn Their Tricks! Prepare to Fight!



Al Fishman, 1927-2011 *A life of dedication to peace, equality and justice*

By Dave Smokler

On Friday, May 27 historic Central United Methodist Church in downtown Detroit was filled with people wishing to celebrate the life of Al Fishman. Al was born in 1927 in Los Angeles. He was raised in New York City and made his way to Detroit after withdrawing from the University of Michigan. He worked in production at Detroit’s auto plants and became a tool and die machinist.



Al Fishman supporting newspaper strikers in 1995-96, arrested for blocking entrance to Detroit News building.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

Al finished college at Wayne State University late in life and was hired by Detroit Mayor Coleman A. Young to be in charge of data processing at the Detroit

Police Department in the position of Third Deputy Chief.

Al Fishman married Margaret Radulavich in 1951. Margaret was a staunch activist, herself. Her brother Milo Radulavich, an Air Force lieutenant was discharged and stripped of his commission because his father and sister, Margaret, were accused of being communists or communist sympathizers. The case became famous after being featured on the Edward R. Murrow news show and helped to bring down the infamous Senator Joe McCarthy. Lieutenant Radulavich was exonerated and fully reinstated to his position with the Air Force.

Al’s progressive activities were legion. In 1950 he was arrested and harassed on the job for circulating the “Stockholm Peace Appeal,” a worldwide petition to ban nuclear weapons. In 1982 he became active in the Nuclear Freeze Campaign to stop the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons. He worked with

Sane-Freeze to stop the deployment of Cruise and Pershing missiles and to halt the MX Missile program. He was active in Peace Action for ratification of the Comprehensive Missile Defense Ban Treaty and helped to organize the annual Hiroshima-Nagasaki commemorations against nuclear energy and war. In 1999 he was arrested for committing civil disobedience at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico.

Al was a fighter for racial equality. He was arrested in 1950 when an interracial group insisted on being served at a Detroit restaurant in accordance with Michigan law. That year, as a member of the National Negro Labor Council, he was again arrested while gathering petition signatures to enact a Fair Employment Practices law. He was actively involved in the Willie McGhee, Martinsville Seven, Emmet Till and Angela Davis cases. In 1973 Al helped organize the “Turn Detroit Around” campaign which secured white votes for Coleman Young, the first African American Mayor of Detroit.

Al’s work for peace included: opposition to the Korean War; organizing within the Democratic Party as the Chair and Co-Chair of the New Democratic Coalition of Michigan which opposed the Vietnam War; organizing for the Vietnam Moratorium; opposition to the U.S. led bombing of Yugoslavia;

Peace Action’s campaign to end the sale of weapons to repressive regimes; demonstrating at the Indonesian Embassy against the sale of U.S. weapons used against the people of East Timor; opposition to the U.S. bombing and sanctions against Iraq as well as the Persian Gulf War.

As a member of the New Jewish Agenda nationally he was arrested at the South African Embassy while expressing his opposition to apartheid. Al was a staunch supporter of labor and boycotted scab newspapers during the Detroit Newspaper Strike of the 1990’s. He organized peace activists to participate in demonstrations at the newspapers, was arrested twice for acts of civil disobedience. Along with a delegation of community activists and unionists armed with proxies he protested the newspaper’s policies at a stockholder’s meeting.

Al set an example for future generations of what it means to have the heart of a peaceful warrior. We pay tribute and deep respect to a man who led a life of integrity that was dedicated to the principle of peace, equality and justice for all.

Much of the material for this article was taken from the Program for “A Service In Celebration of the Life of Al Fishman.”

The Honkala For Sheriff Campaign Gets Serious

By John Grant

The Cheri Honkala Green Party campaign for Sheriff of Philadelphia is now hitting its stride in a race dominated by a Democratic machine candidate.

Honkala is an internationally-respected poor peoples activist and founder of the Poor Peoples Economic Human Rights Campaign. She has been profiled in *The Nation*, and *Mother Jones* named her a "Hell Raiser of the Month." She has been arrested many times for actions like occupying homes.

David Cobb has run lots of campaigns. He was the 2004 Green Party candidate for President and is now a national Green Party leader. He described the Honkala campaign this way:

"The Cheri Honkala campaign for sheriff is a maverick, insurgent campaign taking on the entrenched power structure of Philadelphia. And Cheri is unique for this challenge, because she has decades of experience dealing with these bastards."

Cobb not only sees the Honkala for Sheriff campaign as good for the growth of the Green Party and independent political parties in general, but something "all progressives should be excited about."

"The Green Party is the electoral arm of the progressive movement," Cobb said. The fact the race for Philadelphia

sheriff is an off-year election, he feels, provides the Honkala campaign a perfect forum to address the federal bailout and banking scandal that hovers over the issue central to Honkala's campaign, home foreclosures on poor and working class families.



Honkala speaks to a Center City Philadelphia political group. If elected, Honkala has pledged to not evict people from their homes due to foreclosures.

PHOTO/JOHN GRANT

Honkala has made it very clear, if elected sheriff, she will not evict people from their homes due to foreclosures and her office will not perform Sheriff's Sales of foreclosed homes. Instead, she will re-design the office from being

a traditional tool of the banks to being an advocate and ombudsman for neighborhood people struggling to keep their families in their homes.

Running for political office is not easy, says Honkala For Sheriff Campaign Manager Jim Moran, a well-known union leader in the city. Following the May Democratic primary, he said the campaign is now in a "wake up call" mode.

"The key focus now is on signatures and fund raising," he said. That means getting volunteers out to obtain the signatures needed to get on the ballot in November and doing the mailings and making the calls to obtain funding.

Besides the usual hurdles, the Honkala campaign has a host of additional challenges. One is the fact local media tend to ignore independent candidates, and in such an idea-rich election this is a problem. The city is six-to-one registered Democrat, so Democratic machine candidate Jewell Williams, a North Philadelphia ward leader and state representative, has a big leg up. The Republican candidate, Joshua West, a paralegal and National Guard officer, is also a long shot, yet he tends to be mentioned in stories. The Honkala campaign is pointing out to the press that this amounts to lazy, shoddy journalism.

The Sheriff's office is currently un-

dergoing an independent audit in response to allegations of financial mismanagement. There is a mysterious missing \$53 million. The former sheriff, John Green, abruptly retired last year after holding the office for 23 years. The sheriff serves a four-year term.

"I want to see very broad outreach across the country," Moran says. "This thing gets more and more interesting as we watch the ripple effects of this depressed economy. We haven't seen the bottom of it yet."

International unions are becoming interested in the race, Moran says. He cited SEIU as one. He noted that AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka is on the record saying the Democrats can no longer automatically count on the union vote.

"Unions are not gun shy about not following Democratic marching tunes. I see that as a potential opening for us."

"All of it is coming home to roost," he said, referring to the top-down bank bailout scandal in conjunction with the dismal failure of the federal government to deliver promised help for struggling homeowners.

To find out more about the Honkala For Sheriff campaign or to donate to the campaign go the website at <http://www.cherihonkala.com>.

DETROIT'S WORLD-RENOWNED ACADEMY STAYS OPEN —BUT AT WHAT COST?

By Dave Smokler

The battle to keep open the world famous Catherine Ferguson Academy, a school for pregnant girls and teenage mothers, has entered a new phase. The powers that be slated the school to close because of the Detroit Public Schools' (DPS) "budget crisis." Students, parents, teachers and community activists pushed back hard to keep it open. The DPS Emergency Manager (EM) endured public meetings, demonstrations and a sit in of students and teachers who were arrested on the school premises. Another protest was scheduled to be held with the support of the UAW and well known celebrities including film star/activist Danny Glover.

Things were getting out of hand. If this continued the public might actually rise up and fight the EM's plan to dismantle the DPS and its unions. Other EM's might be at risk like the one who took over the city of Benton Harbor and the 40 odd new ones that were being trained to do the devil's work. The goal of putting the Detroit's educational system into the hungry clutches of charter school operators over which the citizenry had little or no control might actually be in jeopardy.

The powers that be had to move and

move fast. That they did. At the 11th hour the former General Motors executive now EM, Roy Roberts announced that Catherine Ferguson Academy would stay open, become part of an existing charter school company called Evans Solutions, Inc. and be combined with two alternative schools that teach expelled students. The planned protest became kind of a half-hearted celebration with lots of anxiety as to what would happen to the experienced teaching staff at the non-union charter, whether or not the school would keep its programs or even stay open in the future.

The EM law allows for the privatization of all aspects of Detroit's public school system, making the elected Detroit Board of Education absolutely powerless. The charter company that CFA was given to has an extremely questionable history. Wayne County authorities have questioned the propriety of millions of dollars worth of no-bid contracts it was awarded and last year it was ordered to pay almost \$50,000 for firing a school social worker who had breast cancer.

Our schools are being handed over to private interests whose primary interest is to make a profit, not provide quality education. Our society is becoming an out and out kleptocracy where every-

thing and anything is up for sale. Our elected officials are losing any power they once had to a corrupt corporate state where we and our children simply don't count. Is this the society that we want? Elena Herrada says she's not giving up and is running for the School Board again. She is encouraging others to run for office, too. Elena says, "They are trying to demoralize the population. As long as there is anyone in public office we have to stand in that place and defend public education. Civic participation in our institutions, such as they are, helps to make community, it makes us human."

The ultimate power still rests with us, the "governed." Without our "consent" the powers that be are powerless. Detroiters faced down the EM and his cronies and kept the CFA open. Although its future is still up for grabs, it is becoming clear that we cannot go back



Protesters in Detroit demand that the Catherine Ferguson Academy, a school for pregnant girls and teenage mothers, stays open.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

to "the way it was." Everyone deserves an equal, quality education. To insure this we need federal legislation to guarantee it to every school district in the country. Let's discuss why the world that we were so familiar with is collapsing around us. Let's develop a new vision for America in the 21st century of "the way we want it to be." Let's put our heads together and creatively develop strategies for us to become "the powers that be" and not have to put up with this stuff any more. We can do it!

Struggle Against State Attacks in Indiana Continues



Statehouse rally in Indianapolis, Indiana against anti-labor legislation.

PHOTO/LORA OLIVE, OLIVE@IQUEST.NET

Sandy Reid of the People's Tribune interviewed longtime Indiana trade unionist Larry Regan.

People's Tribune: Larry, tell us about the state attacks in Indiana.

Larry Regan: Indiana seems to have followed the same premise as Wisconsin. They tried to make the state a right to work state; that failed. Our state senators did the same thing as Wisconsin. They left for Illinois. Then they tried to eliminate collective bargaining for all of the public sector; they failed.

We defeated some of the Republican Tea Partiers, but they did alter the bargaining power of the teachers in the state. After July of this year, if they didn't have a contract, contract negotiations will be limited to wages and benefits—no union security and check off and no seniority benefits. They gutted the ability to negotiate a decent contract. It's affecting teachers across the state.

Working people should start waking up and look at what they are doing at the ballot box. People vote and find out they are voting against themselves. It's like the chicken voting for Colonel Sanders. That's what's been happening. On the side of economic conditions, cities are facing bankruptcy. There are massive cuts all over the state, for county and city workers.

PT: What are people saying about taxing the rich?

LR: The majority of the people in the cities in Indiana voted for Obama. The Republicans called for lowering taxes. The beneficiaries will be the rich. They know people are feeling they are overtaxed, and they are. Any good society would provide benefits and protections for their

citizens. But, people don't want to pay for protections they had in the past.

I look at the Tea Partiers. They are saying that government is a necessary evil. Right now they are implying that it is more evil than necessary. For the life of me—and you could go internationally—our tax rates in this country are nowhere near what they are in the rest of world, no matter what type of political system you have.

They are selling their agenda, getting some of the working class people to bite into their tax cut proposals. Their tax cuts are not going to benefit the working people. They will only benefit the wealthy. I'm willing to pay my share if the wealthy pay their share, and they're not. The wealthy are getting wealthier and middle class or lower class people are getting lower.

PT: What is the next step?

LR: We have to recognize that there is something seriously wrong with the system. It is obvious. If you can't see it, you're blind. They are coming after a lot of the social programs. Obama and the liberals are called socialists. If you ask some of these people when they are campaigning what they think about Social Security, they are going to say they won't touch it—or Medicare, they say they won't touch it.

The truth is they are coming after those programs. They are deceiving the public. What is more socialistic than Medicare or Social Security? I think the majority of people know they are going to need something down the road. Suppose they say there is such a deficit they have to eliminate those programs? We need these programs. If money has to be taken from the wealthy, then so be it!

Battling Corporate Takeover of America in the States

From the Editors

For the last 40 years, workers in America's industrial heartland have suffered the effects of labor replacing technology and globalization, resulting in the most concentrated job loss of any region in America. These industrial workers were at one time the highest paid workers in the world. They are now joining the most destitute, while living amidst the social destruction and decay that global capital leaves in its wake.

With fewer employed workers paying taxes and more unemployed in need of assistance, state governments have lowered the tax rates on corporations, while they have made substantial cuts to social service programs. Across the country workers are finding themselves the target of an all-out corporate-government attack. This is taking the form of an assault on democracy, the worst expression of which is currently seen in Michigan. America is being reorganized along fascist lines.

Workers are waging heroic battles in every state. However, their needs to be an independent working class strategy based on the fundamental changes taking place in the economy. The wage labor system known as capitalism is in its final stages.

As an economic system, it is being objectively destroyed each time a worker's job is eliminated and replaced by a robot or a computer program. A new economic system is in its early and painful stages of being birthed. Whether it is based on the demands of the workers or the demands of the ruling class of exploiters will be determined by strategic strength of one over the other to impose its will.

There is plenty of money to resolve the deficits and provide the social safety net our people need. The rich and the corporations have the money. We must make firm demands that both the state and federal governments tax the corporations and the rich, and that the federal government provide emergency aid to the states for expanded social service programs.

The struggle for overall solutions is the first step towards developing an independent, working class-based program centered upon the interests of the majority, not the corporations. This first step is central to creating a new society based on electronic production—an advanced society where the abundant social product created by the marvels of electronic production can be distributed to all on the basis of human needs.

CHICAGOANS DEMAND CORPORATIONS



Thousands protest outside CFO Executive Summit in Chicago.

By Brett Jelinek

Thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Chicago on June 14, confronting the CFO Executive Summit—a gathering of executives from some of the world's wealthiest and most powerful corporations. The protesters called for the corporations to "Give it back!"

Large corporations are making record profits, and many are paying no taxes. The demonstrators demanded that corporations pay up so that people can keep their jobs, stay in their homes, and keep neighborhood schools from being closed or privatized.

"With the third highest poverty rate

Assembly to End Poverty Convenes in Detroit

By Marian Kramer

The first Regional meeting of the Assembly to End Poverty in the Rust Belt was held in Detroit, Michigan, the weekend of June 18, hosted by the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization. The main purpose of the meeting was to receive reports from several states located in the region on the economic and political situation in their various states and to address these questions: can we organize a regional Assembly to End Poverty in the Rust Belt and create a plan of action to organize a movement to end poverty in the Rust Belt? Participants from some seven states attended the conference.

The Assembly to End Poverty grew out of the Poverty Summit Workshop that was held at the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit in June of 2010 with some 400 people. They agreed to work to politically educate leaders from within the dispossessed section of the working class, to collectively build strategy and tactics, and to challenge the cuts to the safety net. While doing so, they agreed to work to replace the shredded safety net and social contract with a new social contract that will guarantee a foundation of economic rights to the basic necessities of life. The understanding is that



Anti-poverty organizers meet at the first regional meeting of the Assembly to End Poverty in the Rust Belt.

PHOTO/LEONA MCELEVENE

poverty today is not the same poverty when Dr. King built the poor people's campaign and welfare rights was founded. The poverty today is the result of technology being applied to industry. Huge sections of our class no longer are needed to work.

One of the key things coming out of the first Regional meeting of the Assembly to End Poverty was a Call to hold a march on Washington on June 30, 2012. This is the anniversary of the formation of the welfare rights movement. We are not talking here about a movement

just for electoral politics. We are talking about building a movement that demands that this government have a plan to eliminate poverty and that we are a part of planning it for the interests of the working class, and to stop the wholesale corporate takeover that has increased this poverty. The conference discussed a plan on nationalization of education, healthcare, housing, and other necessities, in the interests of the people, not the corporations.

In the words of Mary Bricker-Jenkins, panelist and an organizer of The

Assembly, "The rallying cry is, 'ONE CLASS, ONE CAUSE!' Despite the ruling class efforts to separate us, we are one. And our one cause is that we will claim the wealth we have created to meet the basic human needs of all of us—no exceptions!—and of this planet that can sustain us—if we let it."

Rose Brewer says, "We must build a movement for social transformation in this country. It is a must, an imperative and poor people will lead it. The conference made that very clear."

Maureen D. Taylor, State Chairperson/MI Welfare Rights Organization, adds, "The only thing standing between what a new world might look like and humanity, is air and opportunity. It is that clear understanding and analysis that forms the engine of political reality that will drive THE ASSEMBLY toward greater recruitment and a widening reach to all those who want to participate in this great transformation. Good Luck, Assembly!"

You can reach the Assembly to End Poverty in the Rust Belt by contacting the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization at (313) 964-0618 or by email at info@mwro.org

ONS GIVE IT BACK!



PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK

in the US, the second highest foreclosure rate in the U.S. and the unemployment rate stuck at 9%, Chicago families are struggling," say organizers of the protest. The protest was organized by a coalition of more than a dozen labor unions and neighborhood organizations.

Pontiac, MI: Dictator Bill Destroys Michigan City

By Claire McClinton

While efforts are underway to repeal Michigan's Emergency Manager Act, (PA 4) with a ballot initiative, community and labor activists may find their strongest argument as to why this Bill must be done away with by sharing the experience of Pontiac, Michigan. Located around 30 miles north of Detroit, Pontiac was once a thriving city with GM plants, including the now defunct Pontiac brand.

The Emergency Manager Bill, signed into law by Governor Snyder this March, allows the state to send in a "financial czar" or "manager" to "financially distressed" cities, townships, and school districts. These managers have broad, unchecked powers which include: selling public assets, suspending powers of local elected officials, shredding union contracts, and even disincorporating local government. This law strips away any semblance of democracy and attempts to disarm the people of any means to challenge the "corporate takeover of Michigan", as referendum organizer Brandon Jessup put it.

The Pontiac Silverdome, built in 1970, was once the home of NFL team Detroit Lions. For years, it was the largest indoor facility of its kind. Taxpayers subsidized the stadium for \$55 million. The Emergency Manager sold it for \$583,000. After the Governor signed the more enhanced version of the Bill, the "manager" immediately took away all authority and salary from both the Mayor and the Council.

The Mayor's salary went from \$50,000 a year to \$0. Meanwhile, the assistant to the Emergency Manager makes \$135,000. Council staff was eliminated and Councilman Kermit Williams declared "I can't even talk to city employees about getting grass cut in my neighborhood."

Pontiac was the first of the cities with an Emergency Manager to successfully destroy a union contract. The "manager" requested and received permission from the state to terminate the 911 Police Dispatcher union contract. This was huge. Even though only about 11 workers were impacted, it shows that the Bill means what it says and is a grave threat to the union state we've come to know. Effective June 30, they will all be let go. Some of the workers have 22 years of service and there was no attempt to wait until the end of the year when their contract ended. Their jobs are gone. The county will now handle 911 calls for Pontiac.

Finally, as we go to press, in what is one of the most shocking actions yet, the Emergency Manager of Pontiac is requesting that this city be disincorporated or dissolved and become absorbed into the county!! By the time you read this article, Pontiac may not even exist anymore. The main asset they have left is their Water Treatment Plant, valued at around \$300 million. Investors are salivating to get their hands on it.

Cutting our schools, raising taxes on the working poor, taxing our pension, and soon kicking welfare recipients off the rolls, while giving tax breaks to



Demonstrator at UAW protest in Lansing, Michigan is protesting the Emergency Financial Manager bill which is destroying democracy in Michigan cities.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

corporations is something that will not stand. This governor is showing us that there is such a thing as class interests at play here. The fight to recall this Governor, recall the State Senator who introduced the fascist "manager" bill, accompanied by a recent law suit, as well as the Repeal the Bill movement are manifestations of the growing battle to wrest our state government from handing Michigan over to total corporate control.

“Stop Criminalizing the Innocent” Say Cabrini Green Residents

By Joseph Peery

“There comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression,” said Martin Luther King in a 1963 speech. That time has arrived for Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) residents.

At a recent CHA Board meeting, a proposal was made to change the tenant Lease and the ACOP (Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy). The lease currently reads as if all that is required to get a family evicted is the arrest (conviction not required) of anyone on the lease, or a visitor or guest, even if the criminal activity is unknown to the residents or even if it happened on the other side of town. The changes involved removing from the lease, the ‘innocent tenant’s clause’ (which offers some protection against eviction), and the requiring that everyone on the lease over the age of 18, including senior citizens, be periodically drug tested.

By June 1, angry CHA residents from all over the city, and their supporters in the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization, held a press conference and protest in front of CHA headquarters. They chanted, “Stop the war on the Poor” and gave statements to the media calling the proposal “discriminatory”, “in violation of civil rights”, “criminalizing the innocent”, part of “an assem-

bly line of homelessness” and “insulting and humiliating to seniors.” They called for HUD and CHA administrators to also be tested, as well as anyone else receiving federal subsidies, including rich housing developers and ‘condo owners’ in the mixed income sites.



Town Hall meeting at Charles Hayes Family Support Center to challenge CHA mandatory drug testing and removal of Innocent Tenants clause in CHA lease.

PHOTO/LIEZL ALCANTARA

The next day, a public hearing was held at the Charles Hayes Community Center, allowing residents to voice their opinions directly to CHA officials. So many people showed up that around one hundred people were left waiting outside. Again, person after person voiced strong opposition. This was in spite of the fact that many were afraid to speak

because the CHA videotaped the event and asked people to state their name and address when they went up to the microphone. Residents questioned statements by management that cameras installed on the properties are for ‘surveillance’—not for property or residents’ safety.

The local Alderman, Pat Dowell, stepped to the podium and said, “Corporate greed and other sins have created our problems.”

Resident Arlene Hill, summed it up best: “It’s going to put more people on the street and less people in housing.”

Less than a week later, a scandal broke out involving the CHA CEO, Lewis Jordan, and four top CHA officials. They used city credit cards to pay for meals at Chicago’s most lavish restaurants. They charged flowers for CHA employees, birthday cakes, holiday gifts, a suite at the United Center sports arena and employee traffic tickets to the tune of approximately \$15,000. Lewis Jordan submitted a resignation, will leave the CHA on June 30, and for now, drug testing and lease changes have been suspended.

There is a growing perception in this city that the CHA has become an unjust social institution that has moved away from its mission of housing the poor. At the same time CHA residents have reached a point of being unwilling to accept attack without putting up a fight. These types of proposals are going to be introduced all over the country. This begs the question: “How long are we, the poor, the many, willing to endure the threat of homelessness and hunger so that the rich, the few, may live a lavish life of over abundance?”

Disabled Worker Says “Human Beings Should Be First”

Sandy Reid of the People’s Tribune interviewed Quintin Williams about the situation among disabled workers in Detroit.

People’s Tribune: How long have you been disabled?

Quintin Williams: I have been disabled since 1991. I was in an auto accident. I’ve been getting disability ever since I came out of a coma, which lasted 6-8 months. Now I’m not able to work. I look forward to working and going to school and bettering my life. My disability is a spinal cord injury and a brain injury. I believe I can learn more and possibly attain employment, but that remains to be seen. I educate people who come into Michigan Welfare Rights and who ask me about certain hardships. My purpose in life right now is in helping people.

PT: Are you seeing more people coming into Welfare Rights?

QW: Yes due to the economic hardships that come upon our community and world, people are facing hardships they never thought would come upon them. People are being laid off or seeking employment; unemployment has ceased. Michigan isn’t trying to provide individuals with a better income for their households. Many people don’t know where to turn. There hands are empty, so to speak, in trying to seek employment so they can have a better life. There are no jobs available right now.

PT: What are people doing?

QW: Some are going to school. Some are just trying to hold on. Some are going to the Department of Human services to get state aid. That will be stopped shortly. If this happens, crime is going to increase and then the jail population will increase. We don’t want that. What will people do? If 12,000 people are cut off from the Department of Human Services, that is mothers, fathers, people who are heads of households. If they have been on there for a certain time, the governor says your benefits are gone. You are no longer eligible. Go seek a job. But there is no employment.

PT: Why do you think this is happening?

QW: Corporations are saying OK, we need to make this amount of money—how can we get rich and make people poor? They do not understand that they are destroying lives. They are not trying to give employment or help people get jobs. Technology is taking away jobs. Where there are jobs, people aren’t trained to go into those types of jobs. And many of these jobs are electronically maintained. Machines or computers are placed in those jobs. They don’t need people anywhere.

Not many people with disabilities want to receive disability or social security, but that is what they are going to do until they finish their education or find a job.

“So what are you guys responsible for?” asked Myra King, a CHA Board member and tenant Local Advisory Council President.

Others pointed out that the properties were being destroyed because of a lack of preventive maintenance, and that drug testing money could be better used for that purpose.

Also, many public services are being cut, transportation, public safety and city services. Where does it leave people? People are committing suicide basically because they have foreclosures coming up. It is a mess. It’s not that people want to be in this predicament, but here it is. No other outlets are available.

PT: Are people getting involved?

QW: There is a nationwide movement of people trying to get our own paratran-

sit services so we can do things we need to do. We need individuals to sign up.

PT: What is the overall solution?

QW: There needs to be more training and the limitability of corporations to cut jobs. There needs to be inclusion of each and every person. People with disabilities should be looked upon as a person. People with disabilities are ignored in society, but we are human beings also. Human beings should be first.

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EVERYONE IN—NO ONE OUT!

Health Security for Undocumented Families

By Rita Valenti

There is a cutting edge to the struggle for health care for all. It is the undocumented workers and their families.

In October of 2009, Grady Health Systems, in Atlanta, Georgia closed its dialysis clinic. 'Citizen' patients requiring long term dialysis eventually become eligible for Medicare and thus have access to the private dialysis clinics. Not so for those without papers. A grassroots effort has been able to secure continuing dialysis care for many of the 50 plus patients who were shut out of Grady, but the continuity of that care is fraught with insecurity. Without dialysis these people will die.

The irony is that nearly all dialysis patients receive public health insurance, but none of the dialysis centers are public.

The closure of the Grady dialysis clinic was one of the first actions taken after Grady, an historic safety net hospital, was privatized. Privatization removed local government from democratic accountability and replaced it with corporate profitability.

In May of 2011, Governor Nathan Deal of Georgia signed into Law HB 87—an Arizona anti-immigrant pro-



Children protest the board meeting that decided to shut down Grady Hospital's dialysis center in 2009. Grady, an historic safety net hospital, was privatized, putting treatment for the poor at risk.

PHOTO/JOHN SLAUGHTER

filing copypat law that, among other heinous provisions, can potentially put health care providers at criminal risk for treating and/or assisting undocumented patients except in an emergency.

The inhumanity continues. Less than two years after the closure of the dialysis clinic, two Grady neighborhood

clinics will be closed. Increased co-pays for indigent patients have been instituted. Over one hundred Grady workers have been laid off and more layoffs are planned. Those left working are doing the jobs of two and three people.

The alarm is sounding that an injury to one is an injury to all. Throughout

the Midwest, collective bargaining rights particularly for health care benefits have been attacked. In Georgia, the Atlanta Central Labor Council has opposed HB 87. But more so, a movement is growing. Over 100 high school students walked out protesting HB 87. Thousands have demonstrated at the Georgia state Capitol against the bill. Several national and regional gatherings have been held in the south to examine tactics and strategies moving forward. A call to Boycott Georgia has been raised by immigrant rights organizations and a lawsuit filed. And in Vermont, where grassroots efforts toward single payer, public health insurance for all have succeeded in passing a legislative framework for a state single payer plan, the Vermont Workers Center organized and stopped an amendment to exclude the undocumented from that plan.

The fight for health care for all—Everyone In and No

One Out—is an important piece of the class struggle. Militant defense of the undocumented worker is necessary for the defense and unity of the whole working class. Government must be held accountable to secure health care for all and not be allowed to turn public funding into private wealth!

DC HOMELESS MARCH ON CITY HALL

By Eric Sheptock

On April 14th, 2011, the Coalition of Housing and Homeless Organizations (COHHO) discussed the devastating impact that Mayor Vincent Gray's proposed budget cuts for FY 2012 will have on DC's poor and homeless community. A formerly homeless man asked, "Who's going to tell the poor and homeless in DC about the cuts?" In response, several people said that they would remain after the meeting to plan a strategy.

We met at the CCNV (Community for Creative Non-Violence) Shelter. (About 25 were homeless or formerly homeless.) At the next meeting about 50 people were present. Then something awesome happened.

I learned that a non-profit called Save Our Safetynet (SOS) would plan a Human Services Reality Tour inside of the Wilson Building (DC City Hall) on May 18. People would set up displays

and walk the Council members and/or their staff around to each display and explain the harm that will be inflicted on the city's neediest if the displayed social service is partially or fully defunded. The idea of having a march from CCNV to the Wilson Building prior to the reality tour was floated. I advertised it to my 15,000 on-line contacts through Facebook, Twitter and e-mail. Various non-profits posted it on their websites. I was invited to speak on Pacifica Radio. Word was spreading about this group of homeless people who were organizing at CCNV. A teacher brought his social justice class to a meeting. A free-lance writer for the Washington DC Examiner found out about the meetings through a flier on a supermarket bulletin board. Then came the big day.

Our small crowd of marchers made its way toward City Hall only to find more advocates there. Stragglers continued to join the demonstration. The crowd—about 200-250 people and a

considerable number of homeless—moved from office to office to express their concerns to councilmembers who were in favor of cutting the Human Services budget and/or against raising taxes on the rich. We pressured the DC Council into meeting our demands for continued Human Services. We continue to visit our city council and follow their every move. When a couple of council members who said they would vote in favor of our demands withdrew their support, we were right back in their faces en masse to get them right again.

The movement of the dispossessed is growing by leaps and bounds in Washington, DC—the belly of the beast. Various non-profits and supporters are coming together to save Human Services. The homeless themselves are stepping up to the plate. The media is beginning to cover homelessness. Shelter employees are telling residents about the developing, government-manufactured crisis and allowing homeless advocates to

THE FUTURE POLICE STATE TODAY

By Christopher Drew, Executive Director Uptown Multi-Cultural Art Center

Ninety percent of Americans carry cell phones. The youth of America are skilled in the use of this technology.

Even as surveillance cameras are exploding in public, watching our every move, and the police record us regularly, they do not want us to have the same ability to watch them.

Youth and other activists insist on their right to use their tools to capture police wrong doing in public. This is a right legal in 47 states and only audio recording is illegal in two states, Illinois and Massachusetts.

Police are showing they are willing to violate the law to arrest, confiscate cell phones, and beat up the public, charging citizens with made up cover charges to intimidate them from recording their public mistakes, even in the 47 states where video and audio is legal.

In California, a teen, Jeremy Marks, was arrested after capturing video of an officer slapping up a classmate waiting at a bus stop in a crowd of students. He was charged with "Attempted Lynching" because one cop said he shouted "kick her ass." That shout was not recorded on the video he was taking, strangely enough. He spent nine months in the county lockup with an outrageous bond of \$150,000 until a Google programmer read his case and bailed him out on Christmas eve of 2010.

After videoing police taking down a

suspect on New Years 2010 in Orlando, Florida, John Kurtz, a Copwatch activist, informed the officer who told him to quit filming that he knew his rights and wasn't going anywhere. The officer violently took Kurtz to the ground and arrested him. After multiple attempts to deny Kurtz bond, relentless efforts by Kurtz's friends, family, attorney and other privately contracted help, he was released from Orange County Jail after

seven days behind bars.

Kurtz's video camera with the evidence on it that would easily clear or condemn him of these charges mysteriously went missing. Kurtz is charged with battery on an officer, obstruction of a police officer, and resisting arrest without violence. He is facing a maximum sentence of six years in prison.

These are a few of the more outrageous examples. Many more abound

across our nation.

This trend will continue to grow as the public uses its power to record police in public more. These are the conditions for a growing civil right organizing campaign of major importance.

This is nothing less than an attempt to censor citizens' voices by taking away their right to document their lives and experiences in public so they can't report on police abuse to others or even bring evidence into court to protect themselves from abuse, much less use these documented experiences in their art if they happen to be someone who publishes her/his speech, or a citizen journalist with a blog.

As an art organization we are committed to telling the importance of this assault of censorship and of our basic First Amendment rights. We intend to inform the growing movement just how important it is to fight back. In England, citizens have already lost the ability to record police in public. We are next if we continue to sleep while the police press their case with violence and intimidation. This means nothing less than a secret police State! Your voices are powerful.

Chris Drew is presently facing a class 1 felony (4-15 years in state prison) for audio recording his own arrest for selling art for \$1 on State Street in Chicago while testing the constitutionality of the Chicago peddlers license (a misdemeanor). Contact him at 773-561-7676, 773-678-7545 or by email at umcac@art-teez.org



Chicago artist Chris Drew was arrested for selling his art. He was then charged with a felony for audio-recording his own arrest. Chris says jailings of people who record police engaged in wrong-doing are increasing around the country. PHOTO/DONATED

Visionaries of Yesteryear

Change cannot occur until the people achieve a vision of the kind of new society that is possible and that they want. 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.

"When it shall be said in any country in the world, my poor are happy; neither ignorance nor distress is found among them, my jails are empty of prisoners, my streets of beggars, the aged are not in want, the taxes are not oppressive, the rational world is my friend, because I am a friend of its happiness: when these things can be said, then may that country boast its constitution and its government."

— Thomas Paine
The Rights of Man, 1792

Lions Park Beach in St. Joseph, Michigan: Paid parking meters must stop!

By Lenette Evans



I have been going to Lions Park Beach in St. Joseph, Michigan, my entire life. I enjoy the beach, watching families having a picnic, walking along the shore, and sitting at the beach reading my Bible, listening to the peaceful sounds of nature and the seagulls.

I know others who enjoy taking a walk or sitting on the swings and eating lunch on their lunch break. Local churches have fellowship, prayer, and baptisms at the beach. Also, I have seen a local church musician play his guitar while others are singing.

My Dad is disabled, but my Mom and I take him down to Lions Beach to sit. Because the city of St. Joseph and City Manager Frank Walsh, and others, are so money hungry, they now charge locals to sit at the beach for a few minutes. Anyone that wants to get baptised with a church group now has to pay \$5. It is horrible to see the destruction that has taken place near the water plant. "No Parking" signs are along the road, a few big billboards and two pay meters at the beach.

This takes away from the natural habitat and tranquility that locals have enjoyed for years. There are some things in St. Joe that need to be LEFT ALONE. Frank Walsh has came up with one bad project after another and locals have to pay for them. First, Walsh took down the beautiful mature trees at Tiscornia and put in a parking meter. People can no longer park along the road at Silver Beach. They are forced to park at the Silver Beach PAID PARKING LOT. Centennial Water Park in the Whirlpool Park, which was supposed to be FREE, is not. The City of St. Joseph put in a parking meter at the end of Lions Park Drive which is patrolled by police officers that have nothing better to do than watch the parking lot and the beach all day so nobody parks in the lot except those using the water park.

To use the Carousel, which is \$2 for a few minutes ride, you have to park at another paid parking lot behind the carousel building. And so now... Frank Walsh and his army of officials which are a group of idiots who have nothing better to do than fill their pockets with money while making "BAD DECISIONS" in this community, now have another \$5 paid parking meter.

This is not the way to attract tourists to Berrien County. With Gas prices over \$4 a gallon, people out of a job, businesses that have closed, and families whose homes have gone into foreclosures, and many who have no place to live except on the streets, people cannot afford to pay every time they go to the beach. This is not what our city or beaches were built for.

People in this community are sad and angry at the paid parking meters and what is happening now at Lions Park Beach.

We already see the land destruction of the beautiful Jean Klock beach that was turned into the Harbor Shores Golf Course for the rich. Locals cannot afford this. This town is more and more being built around the Chicago people and the rich. Tourists do not see or understand the corruption that goes on in Berrien County.

Frank Walsh should put money towards community programs for our kids. Apply money to areas that need cleaning up and take down the parking meters and stop charging people for every beach and park they go to. Residents of St. Joseph and Berrien County, stand up and make your voices heard to make a difference!

Lenette Evans, Saving Souls Ministry
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VETERAN TALKS TO STUDENTS ABOUT WAR

By Dan Bluemel

When speaking to high school students, military recruiters like to promote a romanticized version of war and the armed forces, but Army veteran Ethan McCord is trying to counter that.

"I've been speaking to high schools for the past year, talking to students about the realities of war. That this is not 'Call of Duty.' This isn't some game," he said at a June 9 speaking engagement at Revolution Books in Los Angeles.

While serving in Iraq in 2007, McCord witnessed an Apache helicopter attack civilians. In April 2010, he began sharing his story after WikiLeaks released the classified cockpit video footage of the event, called "Collateral Murder." McCord, who was among the first soldiers at the sight, can be seen in the video saving two wounded children.

McCord explained he doesn't necessarily try to assuage students from joining the military, but to help them get a balanced perspective.

"I don't live in a fantasy world. I know with the economy today, they are going to join the military," he said. "But if I can change the way they act and react in the military, and tell them not to lose their own humanity and not to lose their moral compass, then things like



Ethan McCord speaks on Wikileaks Video at Revolution Books in Los Angeles, June 9, 2011.

PHOTO CREDIT/ESEWOLFIE

['Collateral Murder'] won't happen."

Aside from discussing the realities of war, McCord also talks about the realities of coming home. He said he tells students that the military hedges its bets on veterans never utilizing the GI Bill.

"They're hoping that you get killed in Iraq or Afghanistan. Then they don't have to pay that GI Bill," he said. "If you do survive, chances are your going to be so mentally screwed up, once you have a brain injury or PTSD, you can't go to school."

McCord also addressed the epidemic of suicides claiming the lives of

veterans, which some say outnumber combat deaths. According to San Francisco's *The Bay Citizen*, the California Department of Public Health reported that "1,000 California veterans under 35 died between 2005 and 2008," which is "three times higher than the number of California service members who were killed in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts over the same period."

"Is it because we are doing good things for God and country over there in Iraq? I don't think so," said McCord. "You can't kill somebody and go on about your business the rest of

your day like nothing ever happened. It sticks with you, and it will stick with you for the rest of your life." His overall reception at schools is positive, said McCord, with students even chanting during his speech. In a high school in Long Beach, students began to plan how they were going to push out a recruiter who regularly shows up at their school, he said. "We can go out and picket, march and rally all we want, but until we reach the students, this is going to continue to happen," he said. During his two-day visit in LA, McCord spoke to five area high schools. According to Marshall Blesofsky of Long Beach Area Peace Network, an organization that sponsored McCord's visit, the veteran addressed over 500 students. He also got one student to not enlist in the Marine Corps. "A student was in class for Ethan McCord's presentation," wrote Blesofsky on the organization's Facebook page. "Immediately after the class, he texted his recruiter. The student said, 'I am no longer interested in joining. I have received some new information.' 'The recruiter said, 'Why? What is the new information?' Ethan said, 'Text the recruiter back and tell him 'Do not contact me again.' The student did this."

Why We Need to Construct a Permanent Memorial to Remember the Triangle Factory Fire

By Andi Sosin and Joel Sosinsky
Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition

The New York City tour guide stopped at a building on the corner of Greene Street and Washington Place. Three small brass plaques are fastened to the cornerstone, identifying the building as the site of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911. However, the plaques are easy to miss, and many New Yorkers and city visitors walk right by the

building without recognizing its historical significance. Our guide motioned to the group to look upward, pointing to the windows nine stories above the street. "This is where the shirtwaist makers jumped from during the fire." The tourists, peering upwards at the windows, grasped the enormity of her statement. 146 Triangle workers, mostly young immigrant women, were locked in because the owners feared they would steal. Unable to escape, they perished in a horrendous conflagration that burned everything except the building's walls and floors.

March 25, 2011 marked the centennial of the Triangle fire, which historians describe as the worst workplace tragedy to occur in New York City before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The *Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition* (RTFC) brought together over two hundred participating organizations to commemorate the fire's one hundredth anni-

versary, and successfully coordinated an array of performances, art installations, conferences and seminars, which culminated in a dramatic procession of symbolic shirtwaist flags carried into the official commemoration ceremonies.

The RTFC has now turned its full attention to the second part of its mission, to create a permanent *public art* memorial to the victims of the fire that will serve as tribute to all of the working women and men who have perished in industrial accidents. In doing so, the memorial will heighten awareness of the significant role that the fire played in enacting worker safety and protection legislation, as well as to educate visitors regarding worker protection needs worldwide.

A Triangle Fire Memorial will not simply be a monument to the victims of the fire and their families but will honor those labor activists and union organizers who worked courageously to change an unjust and discriminatory labor system. Frances Perkins, Labor Secretary to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt during the Great Depression, remarked that, "the New Deal began on March 25, 1911." The Triangle fire not only affected New York politics, but also ultimately national politics, illuminating the role of governmental legislation in safeguarding workers' rights.

The process of creating this major

public art memorial is a collaborative effort, composed of an artist selection committee and representatives from the arts, labor, academia, family members, the local community, New York City's landmarks preservation agency, and New York University. Working with a public arts administrator, the RTFC and the artist selection committee will facilitate the memorial project through a significant number of environmental and local regulatory considerations, in addition to raising funds to install and maintain the memorial.

Today's political climate finds worker protections threatened by business and neo-conservative and libertarian principles. The RTFC contends that creation of a unique and visionary public artwork, "a destination memorial," will bring awareness of industrial accidents, and of worker's rights and worker's safety issues to New York City visitors from throughout the world. The Triangle fire can once again serve to remind citizens that *government exists by and for all the people*. Realization of a Triangle fire memorial will energize those who continue to advocate for social and economic justice for workers. For more information how you can help with this project contact the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition at <http://rememberthetrianglefire.org>.



Shirtwaist flags symbolizing each victim were carefully laid down on the street following the Centennial Commemoration of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, March 25, 2011.

PHOTO CREDIT JOEL SOSINSKY

VOICES FROM BENTON HARBOR, MI

Terrance “T-Shirt” Shurn Memorial a Big Success

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

Many thanks to all who attended the the Terrance “T-Shirt” Shurn Memorial Rally in Benton Harbor on June 18. It marked the eight-year anniversary of the Benton Harbor uprising, a public response to the June 16, 2003 high-speed Benton Township police chase resulting in the death of a young man named Terrance “T-Shirt” Shurn.

It was a wonderful afternoon in Benton Harbor with intervals of great sadness. Not only in mourning for T-Shirt, but for the homeless and mentally ill human beings roaming the streets. It’s easy to understand why I have a tone of desperation and urgency in my voice at times. Almost unfathomable is the inhumane cruelty of one of the world’s wealthiest corporations letting this happen within mere blocks of their headquarters. The argument can be made that it’s happening because of the corporation’s outsourcing. Would they EVER let this happen in St. Joe? (You can answer . . .)

During the course of the afternoon there were between 200 and 300 people listening to speakers and bands, and partaking of the catered food. I read a poem I wrote for T-Shirt, called, “What Is Next?” An inspiring speech was given by Fred Hampton Jr. from Chicago.



Performers rallied the crowd at the “T-Shirt” Shurn memorial.

PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK

The rap group Stargang performed an excellent original song called the “City of Broken Dreams”. Ellis Bethea sang (beautifully) “We Are America,” with input from recorded Rachel Maddow talking about Benton Harbor—unusual to say the least! Two other bands were Big Dudee Roo and Chicago blues band, the Amorey’s. I led the audience in three minutes of silence, a simple moving tribute to T-Shirt.

Law enforcement profiling and brutality, Whirlpool land grab and destruction, Whirlpool outsourcing of jobs to Mexico, and state takeover of Benton Harbor are all actions which oppress residents. I spoke about this, taking the opportunity to educate. I read from the People’s Tribune newspaper an article about the dictatorship called Emergency Financial Management and how it is fascism. Whirlpool has been systemi-

cally destroying the city and driving citizens out; the new governor Rick “the Ricktator” Snyder is now assisting the corporation, as did the former Governor Jennifer Granholm.

Gone is democratic self-rule in Benton Harbor. Almost gone is collective bargaining. Public discourse is minimized as local elected officials are stripped of authority. The EFM, Joseph Harris, can remove elected officials without permission from the people, disburse all state-federal and local funds without oversight, reject, modify or terminate any contract, sell off local government property, borrow money, and ignore notice requirements for the public in the adoption of ordinances.

I read another People’s Tribune article about the 12,600 families who will be thrown off welfare rolls on October 1. They also lose health insurance and food stamps. Every month thereafter more families will be eliminated. If you have been on welfare for three years, you have just one year left.

It is time we the people take a stand. We must move the fight to a different level by standing together. Can we now stand together people? Can we now stand together?

For information on how you can get involved, contact Reverend Pinkney at 269-925-0001.

Benton Harbor rap group Stargang inspires community



PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK

Sandy Reid of the People’s Tribune interviewed a new rap group that performed at the memorial rally for Terrance “T-Shirt” Shurn on June 18th.

People’s Tribune: How long has your group been around?

Stargang: We just formed maybe six or seven months ago. We are best friends. We have been making music since 7th grade.

PT: What’s your message?

Stargang: We want to send a message that people need to come out and do more for their community. A lot of people complain but never get out and vote and try to change what’s going on. We want to influence people musically to get involved. We want them to say, “I’m feeling that I want to do more.” We want a lot of people coming together.

All we want to do is make our music and change people’s lives with our music. We want to send an uplifting message. We want to show that we can be versatile and influence people at the same time as we make the music.

PT: What’s your vision?

Stargang: When events like this come up, we only get half of the people and

only half come to vote on what’s happening in the city. My vision is that when these type of events go on, there would be so many people that we end up getting shut down.

At the end of the day we are all affected by the situation. Until they do something about it, we’ll be stuck in this predicament. Our message to everybody our age is to get out and vote.

The song, *City of Broken Dreams*, is saying that Benton Harbor has a lot of talent that doesn’t get recognition. No one comes here because of the image that has been portrayed. They say it’s just a lot of trouble.

We are trying to show that we can influence people. We want to show that we want the same thing that you want. The only thing left to do here is to get on welfare. And now they’re cutting that. People got so comfortable sitting around waiting for the money to come. They got relaxed into that lifestyle. Now when they take it away, people have to get up and do something. But there are no jobs. It comes down to people getting out and being more involved in the community.

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