

THE KEYSTONE



A NEWSLETTER BY THE MEMBERS OF PUT PEOPLE FIRST! PENNSYLVANIA



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**A publication of the
Put People First! PA
Media & Communications
Team**

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Building Statewide Power

by Zachary, Philadelphia

At our Winter Leadership Retreat last year, we unanimously approved the 2018 PPF-PA campaign plan, 'Putting Healthcare as a Human Right On the Agenda in PA'.

Our midterm campaigns targeting the Pennsylvania Insurance Department (PID) in 2016 and in 2017 helped to prepare us for this year, as we learned how to take action together and put pressure on a little-known government agency, bringing them into the spotlight and holding them accountable. These campaigns resulted in significant victories including the first ever public hearing on rising insurance premiums in 2016 and statewide Town Halls in 2017.

But in 2018 we became strong enough to do something new: to target and influence politicians and power-holders across the entire State, putting healthcare on their agenda through coordinated, collective statewide action. Three examples stand out:

Before the May 15 primary, our Healthcare Rights Committees engaged over a dozen candidates in key PA House and Senate races, getting commitments for our very first policy platform, including 1) No Cuts/No Hurdles to Medicare/Medicaid + CHIP, 2) support for the establishment of a Healthcare Public Advocate, 3) restoration of the adult dental benefit in Medicaid and 4) a public commitment to Healthcare as a Human Right and public good.

Shortly after that, we helped lead the launch of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival in PA. We anchored the largest day of action on the Right to Healthcare and a Healthy Planet, during the fourth week of six consecutive weeks of action. On Monday June 4th, hundreds of us rallied in the Capitol Rotunda and 31 moral witnesses were arrested in a non-violent civil disobedience "die-in" behind the Capitol. Pennsylvania had the most arrests of any week four action in the campaign.

Finally, our Statewide Week of Action against Healthcare Profiteers September 10-17, not only demonstrated that we are now capable of taking coordinated action across PA, but also told a story about the ways profiteers are aligned across all components of the healthcare system, and so we must be as well.

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Campaign 2018 At a Glance

Putting 'Healthcare as a Human Right' on the Agenda



Build a Nonviolent Medicaid Army

Inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "nonviolent army of the poor." Build our base of poor and dispossessed people who are on, affected by, or unfairly excluded from Medicaid.

Target Healthcare Profiteers

Take action to put the system on trial and improve the conditions of our members' lives.



Hold Power-holders Accountable

Mobilize a platform of demands through candidate forums, and to make healthcare at the state level an election year issue.

Develop our healthcare policy vision

Build strategic partnerships with local allies, bring new members into our base, and begin to develop a shared statewide legislative agenda.



Mother Jones Leadership Program

The Mother Jones Leadership Program (MJLP) is for PPF leaders who are committed to uniting poor and dispossessed people in their communities, all across our state, and beyond. It involves six months of financial support, mentorship, study, skills development, and organizing - all directed at helping these leaders bring our organization to the next level.

The program is named for Mother Jones because of the example she set with her leadership. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, she traveled across the country supporting workers who were organizing and fighting for their lives and their rights.



Laile, York

After participating in the MJLP, its monthly group phone calls, mentoring calls and last but not least the studies on the Poor People's Campaign, I have learned to appreciate PPF more. My biggest learning experience was when I was offered a trip to a Single Payer Conference in Minneapolis. I learned that there are many in the movement who believe in recruiting the poor to assist in canvassing, door knocking and tabling to push their organization's campaigns, but who are not committed to promoting the leadership of the poor and dispossessed in leading a broad movement for basic human rights and to end poverty for all. PPF has given me many learning experiences. I can say that I am happy to be part of building something greater than myself. Thanks for your confidence and support.

Savannah, Johnstown

This year's MJLP has taught me a lot. It has given me a lot of experience on how to deal with difficult times. This program has also brought me closer to other members within the program and also just within Put People First. I have gained a lot of leadership skills that will help with being an HRC coordinator, and just to be able to help others develop within the organization. A particular moment within the program that makes an impression is when I helped facilitate the Leadership Across Difference workshop at the Healthcare Is a Human Right Collaborative Gathering this summer. This was the first large group facilitation that I have helped with and it has definitely been a great opportunity to work with others and everyone's abilities to accomplish something. Thanks again for the opportunity.

Hope, Johnstown

For the Healthcare Is a Human Right Collaborative Gathering in Hazelton, PA, this summer I got to be involved in the planning and facilitation of the Leadership Across Difference workshop. This workshop was the first that I had helped to plan and facilitate. It taught me that I have developed the skills to do both planning and facilitation for large groups, which is something that I had not seen within myself before. I believe I was more nervous about the planning phase than the facilitation, which surprised me because I was previously unable to speak in front of large groups. I thoroughly believe that the skills I have developed through the Mother Jones Leadership Program are what helped in the development of these abilities, and I am forever thankful for this opportunity.

Mother Jones Leadership Program

LaMetta, Pittsburgh

I want to thank you all in advance for being part of this life-changing organization. Being in Mother Jones, I received encouragement to become a leader. I learned about the history of nonviolence and the Poor People's Campaign. I learned to identify issues and connect with others in shared circumstances to build our organization. Most of all, I learned that we all need to support one another to grow as leaders. I refer to this as life-changing. Thanks to the Mother Jones Leadership Program and Put People First!



Munroe, Pittsburgh

My experience as a MJLP participant has influenced me even more to use my voice to invoke the necessary change that I wish to see in the world. Leadership skills help organize people to take action against injustice. During my time in this program we explored leadership across differences and I discovered how people from different cultural backgrounds can have experience similar forms of discrimination and injustice. These differences were first seen as a dividing factor and once discussed it became the connecting fabric that ties us all together and allows to unite as a new unsettling force! So armed with what I've learned from being in this program and the study of other revolutionaries like Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, and Sojourner Truth I will speak my truth where ever I go without fear! As I face a multitude of issues that plague society such as a lack of adequate health care, education disparities, environmental devastation, police brutality, racism, unclean water, and equitable distribution of wealth... I will always remind myself that it takes courage, determination, resilient, organizing, planning, and the willingness to speak the truth even if it's not the most popular thing to do! (injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere! ~mlk)

Tammy, Lancaster

The Mother Jones Leadership Program Retreat at the start of the program really helped me to focus and understand what the importance of leadership is. We were able to talk and learn as a group on the importance of the 4 C'S of leadership - Clarity, Competence, Commitment and Connection. I would say the best part of the retreat was learning about who Mother Jones was and what she did to make change happen. Just like Mother Jones and Martin Luther King Jr, I aspire to be an influential leader who inspires and motivates other poor and dispossessed people who wouldn't typically get involved in politics to actually become a part of this historical movement.

No One Is Ever Truly Alone

**"At Put People First! PA
... we work as a collective to help
each other become strong leaders
in our communities..."**

**If you feel alone in this world and
are at a point of wanting to give up,
don't. We are here for you, you are
not really alone."**



by Tammy, Lancaster

Beginning from the day of my birth June 1, 1977 I've struggled to survive, my mother told me I was born during a thunderstorm and was placed immediately into a incubation type chamber due to complications during birth, so I never had that immediate human contact, that soothing caressing snuggle that the mother offers her newly born child which helps them adjust to the change and soothes their fear, instead I was immediately confined into a small space separated from everyone else, alone and scared. I don't remember my birth for obvious reasons however as I reflect back upon my life I noticed something, there were many incidents where I felt abandoned, unloved, unwanted and alone.

Throughout my life I had a very difficult time trusting new people and connecting with them on a real personal level. I often wondered if I was a mistake, if I shouldn't be here, what is my purpose, why am I really here. My mother was delighted when she discovered she was pregnant with me and went to Watt & Shands to remove her wedding gown from layaway and replace it with a crib. My father on the other hand had already conceived his first child through a previous marriage and wasn't exactly as delighted about being a father again as my mother was about being a first time mom so low and behold my mother and father separated when I was about pre kindergarten age and I remember that day all too well.

My mother decided to leave my father and take my brother and I both with her. We walked from one side of Lancaster city to the other side taking with us only what we could carry and started a new life. From that moment on our mother was a single mom with two kids to support, she worked hard doing whatever work she could find that paid enough to support us. She worked in a chicken factory, toy factory, and fast food places to support us. Things went on like that for years until about the time I was in third grade.

Due to incidents that occurred at that time CYS took my brother and I from our mother and gave custody of us to our father. As the years went on we were bounced around a bit with other family members whenever my dad was in rehab and due to other incidents occurring we were eventually removed from our fathers custody and placed into foster care for awhile.

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Member Reflection: Poor People's Campaign



by Hope and Savannah, Johnstown

Following the exciting 6 weeks in Harrisburg, there was an opportunity to spend 5 days down in DC leading up to the mass mobilization on June 23rd. Each state from the campaign was asked to send up to 10 ambassadors for the 5 days. Hope and myself along with Jake Butterly had the honor of being some of these ambassadors from PPF-PA.

There were also other participants from various other organizations in PA, such as ACT UP Philly, the Coalition To Abolish Death By Incarceration (CADBI), Global Women's Strike, Popular Education Project, and many more. It was an enlightening experience to meet many new people whether they were from PA or many of the other states.

During the week there were many activities such as art builds, canvassing, political education through museum visits, an action at the Capitol, a JAM session, culminating in a rally and March on the Capitol on the 23 of June.

From the moment we arrived we were treated like family by everyone we encountered from the campaign. Each day when various people came you could definitely see the movement growing. On the very first day there, Hope was approached by Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis and was told that PPF is a shining example of what the Poor People's Campaign was all about. All throughout the week especially on Saturday ambassadors who rode the metro together would engage other metro riders by singing, chanting, or simply having a conversation with them.

This resulted in increased turnout for the Saturday rally. Without even realizing it we rode over to the rally with the woman who was documenting the PPC for her news channel, later on she asked if she could interview Hope and myself along with Theresa who we also met during the 6 weeks of action.

Member Interview: Jennina in Altoona

How did you become involved with PPF?

I met Greg and Danelle [PPF members from Lancaster and Johnstown] through the Bernie Sanders campaign. We all strongly believed in his platform which included Medicare for all. Danelle and I became good friends though Facebook, and she told me about a Healthcare Townhall that was happening here in Altoona- she told me I had to be there. I went and there was this guy.... he said he didn't want to pay for people who were too lazy to earn their own healthcare, he had a lot of opinions that were in direct opposition to everything I believed in.

I stood up and argued back: I was a single mom, I was then working 3 jobs and how DARE he call me lazy, my ex husband served in the military and was medically discharged for injuries he sustained in service, he was "ONLY" 60% disabled according to the VA, so that meant only he was entitled to medical coverage, not myself, not our children..... among other points.

At the end of the town hall, I was surrounded by all these people in red shirts (Put People First peeps). Ben, Danelle, Hope, Savannah and Munroe all gave me pamphlets, trifold and materials- Ben got my phone number and scheduled a 1 on 1 and the rest is history.

Why did you become involved?

One year before [joining PPF] my then fiancé became violently ill. He couldn't keep food down and lost 35lbs rapidly. The ER in Altoona kept sending him home telling him he only had gallstones and was over reacting. 6 months this was the routine. He got progressively worse- one night it was so bad I was sure he was going to die. I went to the ER with him, this time I was ready to fight.

I DEMANDED the names and ID numbers of any and all doctors and nurses who saw them, and I told them if anything happened to him, I wanted to know who to hold responsible and whose names to put on the lawsuit. Within an hour he was having emergency surgery - He was 28 years old, by the time he got a surgical consult, his gallbladder was gangrenous and infected so badly he almost died. We were 2 months away from our wedding and I sat in that hospital room wondering if I would be a widow, before I became his wife.

What would have happened if I hadn't fought so hard? Nobody should have to fight that hard to get necessary medical treatment here, in America.

That is why I fight. That is why I am a proud member of Put People First.



How has the Altoona Healthcare Rights Committee (HRC) grown since then?

The Altoona HRC began in April of this year, with just my husband, Tim and myself. We now have 5 active members and 7 total HRC members. We have actively participated in Poor Peoples Campaign events here in Altoona, Harrisburg and D.C.

Whats one highlight from 2018?

There were lots of amazingly powerful accomplishments in PPF this year. Our June 4th action was the largest Poor Peoples Campaign event in Harrisburg during the 40 days and around the country, with the most people who participated in Non Violent Civil Disobedience.

Our presence to events in D.C. and Nationally. Our recent state-wide week of action and the HUGE responses we received, particularly in the image of the Pittsburgh HRC's Manor care action and in advocating for our member Kim's health needs through Gateway Insurance. We also have been involved in actions in Johnstown, Pittsburgh and Lancaster!

People's Health and Gentrification

by Robin, Lancaster

Many cities, including Lancaster, Pennsylvania, are experiencing what is positively referred to as, “revitalization.” It sounds attractive, interesting, and is intended to increase revenue in the city. New businesses and housing are funded by middle to upper class families, individuals, and/or corporations to bring new life to cities in the forms of boutiques, coffee chains, higher-end shopping, and expensive trendy housing. Not only is it funded by the middle to upper class, it also attracts the middle to upper class. Revitalization can result in gentrification which has many unintended effects on vulnerable populations.

One of those effects is displacing the people and businesses that historically populated these areas of the city. This can cause the economic and social marginalization of the working class and those living in poverty.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) states that the displacement of those living in poverty impacts their healthcare. The health of the individuals of the working class and those living in poverty are most significantly affected. Access to and quality of healthcare for these populations declines.

This is in addition to the current status of health and healthcare in the nation where healthcare is already more expensive AND



substandard compared to other developed countries.

Compounding the impacts of gentrification on healthcare are new statistics that indicate that nearly half of Americans are living in poverty or considered to be low income. The result is that the most vulnerable populations will be negatively impacted by gentrification.

Vulnerable populations including but not limited to: the elderly, members of racial and ethnic minority groups, and women are at increased risk for the negative consequences of gentrification. Studies point to vulnerable populations having a shorter life expectancy, higher rates of cancer, birth defects, and infant deaths. There is a higher incidence of asthma, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Vulnerable populations also have disproportionate rates of residential exposure to environmental hazards, such as lead paint.

Per the CDC, “...other health effects include limited access to or availability of the following:”
affordable healthy housing
healthy food choices
transportation choices
quality schools
bicycle and walking paths,
exercise facilities, etc.
social networks

Gentrification directly impacts healthcare for vulnerable populations. This places the problem of gentrification squarely on the plate of the Put People First PA and the PA Poor People's Campaign among other organizations.

Over the next couple of months, the PA Poor People's Campaign and Put People First PA will be working on growing our base and determining the next steps in the movement.

By continuing the work that PPF has been doing for almost 6 years, and now that the Poor People's Campaign a National Call for Moral Revival has been launched, we will build a base that will truly be a new unsettling force that will no longer be silent about the disparities in healthcare, wealth, environmental devastation, and equality for racial and minority groups.

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2009, October 15). Health Effects of Gentrification. Retrieved July 13, 2018, from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypplaces/healthtopics/gentrification.htm>

Roos, D. (2011, May 17). How Gentrification Works. Retrieved August 14, 2018, from <https://money.howstuffworks.com/gentrification2.htm>

Welcome Katrina!

Katrina Raser has joined our team as the newest Field Organizer for the South-Central PA Region. She was born in South Korea but comes to us from Hummelstown.

First and foremost, she is a fiercely dedicated mother. When she's not fighting with her daughter, she's fighting for her. It was during one such fight, the fight to protect Medicaid, that she first came across Put People First! PA.

Her induction into the fight for healthcare in Pennsylvania was borne of a jail cell in Washington, D.C. During her time there, she actively participated in multiple, national, civil disobedience and birddog actions to protect healthcare. She also helped to provide legal support, training, and leadership for those actions. Katrina comes to us as a member of the March on Harrisburg family where she supported local campaigns to advocate for anti-corruption bills in PA. Katrina is also the current Co-Chair of the Central Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild. She is experienced in monitoring, documenting, observing, and recording police conduct at various types of actions. Among other things, Katrina spends much of her non-existent free time doing arts and crafts. She is thrilled to have been given this opportunity and is excited to share her experience and knowledge with us.



Building Statewide Power

continued from page 2, by Zachary, Philadelphia

As always, our Healthcare Rights Committees (HRCs) lead the way. It's an expression of the PPF strategy and coordination at its best: we build power in our regions through our HRCs, and then we leverage that power against power-holders at the local and state level -- whether that's to win coverage for our members from an insurance corporation, to win public hearings for PA residents from the PA Insurance Department,

to win a Healthcare Public Advocate, or to one day pass legislation making Healthcare a Human Right.

The more members we recruit, and the more leaders we develop, the more we are able to accomplish. That's why now, instead of targeting one single government agency, we have the opportunity to make new, even bigger demands on the entire State Government, the Legislature, and the Governor.

Art and Poetry Page



artwork above by Quinha, Philadelphia

After being lost in a dream
I cannot write of prophecies.
For future dreams,
Unknown to me,
Have never brightly shone...

I've looked
For signs and guide-posts,
For hash marks on the trees,
If others
Forged here before,
They left no note for me...

by Wendy, Lancaster

To be truly free
Let them go
Follow your instincts
Drugs may have robbed you of
A mother.
Life difficulties was the way to mature the gift.
Self taught
Waking up hurts
Only for a little
Believe in your suffering
You pain
Gaining a strength
A spiritual power
A light along the journey
Home
Self authenticity
Is a beautiful thing
Experience emotions explode.

by Laile, York

Poetry Page

The break of a NEW day,
 The lovely melodies of birds chirping
 Rays of the sun warms my face
 River Water slowly caressing my feet
 Grounded
 Grounding in the love of self
 Head back
 Arms reaching the heavens
 I smile
 Breathing in the toxic love of you
 Peace at your side
 Your warmth engulfing me
 To a beautiful rest beyond measure
 My love
 My light
 My completion
 The missing piece in my
 Puzzle
 My design
 Walking through the evergreens of your beauty
 Your solitude pulls me in
 Your magnetic presence
 Your gentle charisma
 Sitting basing in your strength

Holding on, the hope to be
 Intelligence igniting a long dormant soul
 Awakening the mind to a new light
 Clarity
 Direction
 Focus
 Holding onto you
 What will may
 What maybe
 As the wind blows
 Remain free
 Loving you for you always
 Loved me
 Wrapped in your smell I lay
 Thinking
 Today lord
 Today lord
 Today
 That sweet slumber
 That sound rest
 cuddle by my daddy
 Kneeling at his feet
 my tear soaking
 His
 Chest
 #verygratefulGoodnite

by Laile, York

Things Change Shape (this is a love story)
 ...i have a shape
 i live on a shape
 i walked in on your shape
 in the bathroom naked shape
 bent shape
 one foot standing on your underwear shape stuck reaching
 shape
 your hand said look at me!!
 you eyes said wow thats incredible!!
 your mouth said i have a body HOW??? did i get in a body?
 and i thought wow that is incredible
 but instead i said
 it's okay we're okay this will pass.....
 ...i have a shape..... (this is a love story)
 things change shape (thats called Time, passing)
 things change shape (thats called You, passing)
 Sometimes we pass away. A passing is a way.
 Sometimes we pass This way (this is a love story)
 Sometimes we pass That way this is a love story

by Quinha, Philadelphia

No One Is Ever Truly Alone

continued from page 6, by Tammy, Lancaster

We did eventually return back to our fathers care and at some point after that my brother and I separated, he went to live with our mother and I stayed with our father. My father was a strict complicated man who very frequently reminded me just what he thought my abilities were and pressed upon me how I shouldn't dream too big but rather think "realistically". Over the years I have had friendships that turned out to be anything but true friendships. Two Marriages that were anything but partnerships instead both spouses abused and controlled me. I was bullied in school and at places of employment. I was abused mentally, physically and sexually all throughout my life by family members, friends, spouses and even strangers. I tried a couple of times to take my own life and failed, instead I wined up hospitalized in a mental health facility three times.

"Being a part of
Put People First! PA
and
the Poor People's
Campaign a National Call
for Moral Revival has
literally saved my life."



What I learned to do to cope with my situation was to escape reality for a bit. I did this through my writing, reading, art, daydreaming, and I played a computer simulation game where I could live out my ideal life. I would fantasize about a world where people didn't have to struggle so much to survive, a place where people loved and helped one another with no questions asked. The kind of society where the people uplift one another instead of tearing each other down and fighting over scraps just to survive. I envisioned myself with special powers or capabilities to be able to help mankind achieve that goal. I would picture myself touching the Earth and healing her, healing the people who are sick, and standing up to people in power who hurt those who don't have the power.

I did my best during my life to lead by example on that aspect and yes there were folks that took advantage of my kindness but I never let it stop me from being who I am. I often stuck up for friends and relatives by confronting those who hurt them yet I never once did it for myself. I don't regret a single moment of my life, not even the bad times because those trials and tribulations have led me to where I am today. I can't say that I know for sure what or who has led me down this current path, what I can say is that I have finally found my purpose in life after searching for it for 40 years. Being a part of Put People First! PA and the Poor People's Campaign a National Call for Moral Revival has literally saved my life. After the 2016 Presidential election I was introduced to Put People First! PA right at a time in my life where I was about to give up for good and call it quits on life altogether.

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No One Is Ever Truly Alone

continued from page 13, by Tammy, Lancaster

I didn't really know what to think of the group at first, they are very different than any other organization I have ever seen. The members are from all over the state of Pennsylvania and yet when they are all together you would never guess these folks live hours apart from one another. I attended their 5th annual Membership Assembly October of 2017 and I was amazed and in disbelief that an enormous large group of people all cared and loved one another as if they were family. Through the whole weekend I became emotional and at times withdrew because that kind of closeness with people was something I have never experienced and yet it's exactly what I have been missing my entire life.

In January of 2018 at the Put People First! PA winter retreat I was introduced to the Poor People's Campaign and that weekend is when it all came together for me and I felt an overwhelming sense of purpose. I remember the exact moment when everything became clear to me, the moment I came to the realization that my life will be forever changed and that moment was when we watched a very brief clip of Martin Luther King Jr. casually joking around with friends, opening up gag gifts they got him that referred to being arrested for doing Nonviolent Civil disobedience. He didn't give a historical speech in the clip, instead he was just being himself and that spoke to me. My first reaction was sadness because I realized I grew up learning only part of the true history of our nation. I continued my research and through that came anger because I learned he was assassinated simply because he was uniting poor and dispossessed people across differences to stand up to those in power. I was able to envision his dream myself and I really want to see it become a reality.

Since the Put People First! PA winter retreat I have put my whole heart into this movement and I will continue to do so until I take my last breath.



This movement is what keeps me going through the bad times. I no longer think seriously on ending my life, instead now when those thoughts come to me I immediately tell myself, don't do it because that means they win. When I say they I'm referring to the true people in power that pull on the puppet strings of those that work hard to keep us all down. Now when I have moments of difficulty I have people I can reach out to, people who truly care about me, who love me for who I am and who never tell me I'm dreaming too big.

At Put People First! PA we are a family and we work as a collective to help each other become strong leaders in our communities and I'm honored to be a part of this fantastic grassroots organization. We will make fundamental change happen in Pennsylvania I can already feel it and see it occurring. So if you feel alone in this world and are at a point of wanting to give up, don't. We are here for you, you are not really alone. I hope my story helps you come to that realization, for as you can see my life started out with me being alone and now I'm a part of an organization that has hundreds of members who are all connected. We can make this world a better place for all it will just take us all uniting to take action to do so, join us.



Contact Us!

Web: www.PutPeopleFirstPA.org

Phone: 484-619-2306

Email: info@PutPeopleFirstPA.org

Facebook: Put People First - PA

Twitter: @PPF_PA

Instagram: @ppf_pa



