

A BIANNUAL NEWSLETTER FROM

PUT PEOPLE
FIRST! PA

the
keystone



HEALTH CARE IS A
HUMAN RIGHT!!



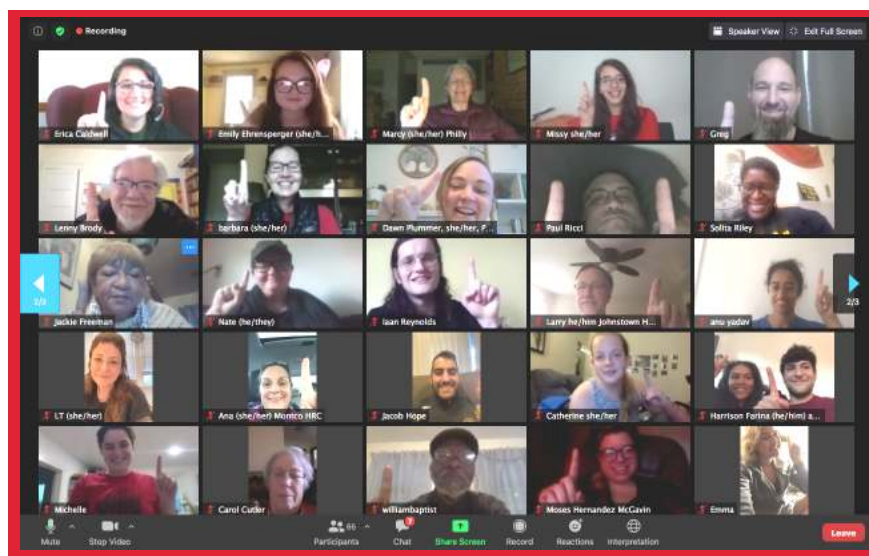
SPRING &
SUMMER 2021

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WHO WE ARE



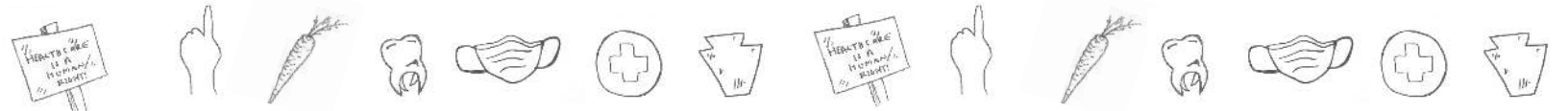
Put People First! PA gives voice to everyday people who are struggling to meet our basic needs. We define our basic needs as things we need to live healthy and fulfilling lives — things like education, housing, health care, jobs with living wages, food, and a healthy environment.

We're a membership organization made up mostly of people who know from our life experience that poor and working people need to unite and have a voice. No one else is going to do it for us.

We're building, county by county, all across Pennsylvania. We're urban and rural. We're multiracial. We're politically independent. Until we unite, we don't have the power to change things.



JOIN US!
WE NEED YOU!
WWW.PUTPEOPLEFIRSTPA.ORG



LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

TO OUR READERS:

Put People First! PA (PPF-PA) is a mass, base-building, human rights organization, dedicated to building each other up as leaders to unite the poor and dispossessed in Pennsylvania. We're organizing across the state to change the systems that deny us our basic needs through our Healthcare is a Human Right Campaign, our 10 local Healthcare Rights Committees, numerous Statewide Teams, and members in 19 counties.

You are reading the Keystone, our biannual newsletter produced by the Media and Communications Team. The Keystone is a gathering of writing and art produced by our members, who are the best people to tell our stories — our struggles with healthcare, our experiences organizing, and how our collectivity in PPF-PA has shaped us. We call the practice of writing our own narratives the Battle of the Story, a term we borrow from the Center for Story-based Strategy. If we don't tell our own stories about the solutions we need, the mainstream media will tell that story for us in a distorted way.

One of our Statewide Teams is the Media and Communications Team, which works to share our work and our narratives with the public, and to bring our members closer together through our shared stories. We do this work through publishing the Keystone, through our biweekly E-News, our social media presence, and our work with the press.

This is the Spring/Summer 2021 edition of the Keystone! You'll hear from leaders on what feeds their organizing work, the importance of building our membership base (base-building), and the ways the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced our commitment to the struggle for healthcare as a human right. You'll find updates on our campaign for a Public Healthcare Advocate in Pennsylvania, a public office that would fight for the healthcare rights of all Pennsylvanians at the State level, and our struggle to restore a comprehensive dental benefit to Medicaid. You'll read about how we combat ruling class ideas with our Projects of Survival, which meet our material needs while developing leaders. Not to mention artwork from leaders, reflections on our internal political education, and articles from our sibling organizations. These are our stories — your stories.

All the content in this edition of the Keystone comes out of the context of this moment: an economic crisis amidst a global pandemic. The past year and a half has reinforced what we know all too well to be true. We already knew that this oppressive system did not value the health or economic safety of poor people. We already knew that no oppressor has ever oppressed everyone in society equally: People of Color, Black and Indigenous people are disproportionately forced into poverty under an economic system that was designed to exploit all of us, but keeps us in check by pitting us against each other. We already knew the connection between poverty and health disparities all too well through our lived experiences. This year of COVID-19 has made these truths much more visible, and exposed more cracks in our broken system. So how does PPF-PA combat this oppressive system? We organize! We unite across lines of division under a common demand for our human rights.

We want to dedicate this edition of the Keystone to all of those we've lost this year. We dedicate this to those that ignite our struggle, inspire us continuously, and forever live in our hearts.

Thank you so much for being here,
The Media and Communications Team

by Members of the York and Lancaster Healthcare Rights Committees

In Put People First! PA we often start our meetings or events grounding ourselves with a practice called Mistica, or the spirit of struggle. This is a practice that we learned from the MST or the Landless Workers Movement, a mass movement in Brazil, and we develop it to fit our own conditions. This may take the shape of a video, a poem, art, music or some words that bring us into the space together. Mistica builds on our history. It defines who we are. Mistica is participatory, develops political clarity and builds collective identity. It reminds us why we continue to struggle despite everything we're up against.

Below is a Mistica that was shared by the York and Lancaster Healthcare Rights Committee at the start of a Put People First! PA meeting:

Terrell:

In the name of countless sharecroppers who did not live the promise of emancipation and worked in coal mines only to contract syphilis.

Or suffocate. Or be crushed.

Just to have their bodies thrown over hills in unmarked graves.

All of this in the name of early efforts to escape the worst of poverty and to secure a place to call home.

To my grandfather Uriel.

The son of a sharecropper and also a man who served in the navy where he was never called by his name and was forced to sleep on wooden pallets in the galley every night with the other black crewmen.

Some stories he refused to speak on. Stories I'm sure reek of humiliation. He went through that. All on the promise of an escape from abject poverty to live a somewhat dignified life for his time.

A dignity he was denied when returning home after protecting it abroad.

In his name and the countless souls whose existence is only proved to be fact in my own, I declare an end to poverty by design.



Erica:

In the names of Steven Price and Mark Hayes, whose stories were only separated by decades, struggling with the terrors of mind, with addictions, without shelter, without insulin, both dead before the age of 39.

In the names of my aunts, my cousins, and every other person who stayed because they had nowhere else to go...

I hereby declare an end to Poverty. Poverty of Health. Poverty of Housing. Poverty of Nourishment. Poverty of Spirit.

Let the landlords, insurance executives, and bankers tremble. Let there be no more rent for profit. No more holding our lives hostage. No more cold blackened feet. No more shivering nights. No more threats of eviction.

No more fretful choices of shelter or food, shelter or insulin, shelter and terror or exposure and escape.

No more will the only sweetness left in life be the deadly sugars of processed candy, or fermented ale, or fentanyl jails of veins, Spirits, and Minds.

MISTICA (CONTINUED)

Chris:

In the names of Kamala & Meg, Little Erin & Alana, Ms. Sadie, old man Ray, the quiet one, Quan (who sleeps in the hallway) the neighbor (now gone) Danial, Robin, the Boyfriend, the night singer, the clove smoker & girlfriend with the emotional support cat, Edward.

Who never complained to the landlord about the roaches, mice. Stoves not working, water leaking from one apartment into the other, the mold covering the bathroom walls: the list compiled by one but never sent to the city, because, where would they all go?

They saw the transformation of the building next door. They saw the neighbor, the kind man, who helped carry the groceries from her car, who made his fire pit and sat alone or with a lady friend, have to leave. 17 years. Now that new girl sez she pays \$1400 a month. 1 bedroom. She's a lawyer, she sez. Be quiet. Say nothing. Zip it.

The landlord came the other day.
Sez to me the new landlord from next door calls him all the time wanting to buy this building.

This is Gentrification.
This is Poverty.
This is no recourse.
This is unhealthy.
This is being
between a rock
and a hard place.
This is Lancaster City, PA.

Erica:

We hereby declare an end to Poverty. Poverty of Health. Poverty of Housing. Poverty of Nourishment. Poverty of Spirit.

Let the tent cities turn to ghost cities and let gardens grow from their soil. Let every neighborhood be full with generous hearts, and generous hands, and gracious spirits.

Let us collectively dream and collaboratively dare to create a world where no one is ignored.

Where no one is forgotten. Where no one is left to suffer at the margins of society. Where each and every one of us has what we need.

Let every vacant house be filled with children's footsteps and mother's laughter.

And let the children of the future gather to hear the strange stories of suffering in the time before every adult, every child, every infant had enough food to eat, enough warmth for comfort, and enough community care to weather the fiercest of storms and to thrive through the most terrible of diseases.



Terrell:

May The institution of poverty be abolished.

Let's give meaning to the departed by imparting more than nice words. Strong verbs at their best through the constant manifestations of shared pain and what we see today but won't allow to happen tomorrow through the work that we do today.

Let service to industry transform into service of self. And let self be seen as a complex web connecting all to which self is very important.

Let service to country mean the same. Mutual exclusion holds no necessity when dignity is given material basis.

So never should we reside in the 10% that may have seemed impossible before, but in the 30% that we are told is impossible today. And soon all will realize our service to one another is service to self.

Chris:

No more, me, me, mine,
Now: we, we, ours.

A feeling of belonging
Solidarity
Safety, security, health
Each to contribute as they are able, yet be taken care of equally.

I see the strength in numbers.
I see the new force rising.
Stay awake. Don't be distracted.
It is upon us. And it is good.

Put People First! PA joined people around the world in celebrating the conviction of Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd as a long-overdue moment of accountability. We stand in outrage at the recent killings by police of Adam Toledo, Christian Hall, Daunte Wright, Ma'Khia Bryant, Stephen James Hughes, and the countless others whose names we know or will never know and whose killers have not been held accountable. We also know that the only way that we will end police killings of our people and achieve true justice is by ending the system that is killing working class people of every color across the US and around the world.

The US State that murdered them is the same US State that murders working class people of all backgrounds every day through police violence, war, militarism, deportations and detention, border closures, family separation of all kinds, and the denial of our human rights to healthcare, food, housing, water, living wage jobs, a clean environment, and more. We must fight not only against police violence, the most visible form of state violence, but also against all forms of state violence that kills working class people of every background every day across Pennsylvania, the US and the world. The only way we can end police violence, white supremacy, and the structural violence of a system built on profit above all life is through solidarity across lines of division and through the leadership of the poor and dispossessed on behalf of the whole society.

Across Pennsylvania, Put People First! PA is organizing everyday people in cities, suburbs, towns, and rural places across the state of Pennsylvania. In 2020 we took action 38 times across Pennsylvania to connect the dots between all forms of state violence. We know that racism is inextricable from poverty, the war economy and militarism, environmental destruction, and the distorted moral narrative of white supremacist Christian nationalism. The only way we can truly end these interconnected evils is by unifying as poor and dispossessed working class people across all lines of division to become the "new and unsettling force" which MLK envisioned when he called for the building of the multiracial Poor People's Campaign, for which he was murdered by the US state. Join us!

MORE

We really encourage you to take some time to read Nijmie Zakkiyyah Dzurinko's article, **"WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? JUSTICE FOR GEORGE FLOYD REQUIRES TAKING THE RULING CLASS OUT OF POWER"**



The full article is available online from the University of the Poor: universityofthepoor.org/justice-george-floyd

HERE IS A SHORT EXCERPT FROM THE ARTICLE:

It's not enough to say "Black Lives Matter."

We must ask ourselves, "What will actually MAKE Black lives matter?"

First I want to say the names of Echol Cole and Robert Walker, two Black sanitation workers crushed by a malfunctioning garbage truck in Memphis, 1968.

MLK addressed these workers on March 18, 1968, shortly before the launch of the Poor People's Campaign – saying "Now, you're doing something else here. You are highlighting the economic issue. You are going beyond purely civil rights to questions of human rights. That is distinct... For we know that it isn't enough to integrate lunch counters. What does it profit a man to be able to eat at an integrated lunch counter if he doesn't have enough money to buy a hamburger?"

As I write these words in 2020 from my house in West Philadelphia there is a slow down of sanitation workers across the city, most of whom are Black, because so many are being affected by COVID-19, lacking hazard pay and adequate safety precautions from the city. The echoes of the two situations give me chills. ▼



PROJECTS OF SURVIVAL ACROSS PA

This past year Put People First! PA (PPF-PA) Healthcare Rights Committees (HRCs) across the state launched Projects of Survival. These projects, like Medicaid and benefits signups, are an organizing strategy that help meet our material needs, build our base, and politicize our struggle. A movement that combines a plan to both meet our needs and develop leaders has the potential to expose the fissures within our larger society and the state.

A for-profit healthcare system means that we don't get the care we need. Through Projects of Survival, we address some of these immediate needs by helping folks sign up for state benefits and offering food. But we don't stop there. Projects of Survival are also about making connections with new leaders to join us in the Nonviolent Medicaid Army AND develop current leaders through collective organizing.

Making those connections and building our base are what makes Projects of Survival different from Mutual Aid or charity. Mutual Aid projects are set up by communities in need to help each other, and are often essential for survival, but usually are not connected to organizing. Charities are really a ruling class strategy to categorize people as pitiable/needy or donors, which divides rather than unites us.

Projects of Survival are an opportunity for political education. They're an opportunity for us to come together and ask, *why aren't our basic needs being met?* Projects of Survival help politicize our struggles and build our power!



REFLECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE STATE

Pittsburgh

Members of the PPF-PA Pittsburgh HRC had the opportunity to get out and into our community to help people sign up for Medicaid and SNAP benefits. At House of Manna's food distribution, we have been able to complete numerous applications for benefits and make many new contacts with community members who were excited to sign our petition for a Public Healthcare Advocate. We also had many great conversations about individuals' struggles with the US healthcare system.

Northeast PA

Projects of Survival allow us to build relationships with people in our base as well as partners. It also allows for an assessment of the homeless situation in Wilkes Barre after the homeless camp was torn down by the direction of Mayor Brown.

Altoona

Altoona HRC partnered with The Nehemiah Project and the Martinsburg food bank. This was our first Project of Survival and the first events for some of our HRC members. It has been a great learning experience for moving forward with our projects as well as a great experience connecting with our community members!

Johnstown

The Johnstown HRC of Put People First! PA has been passing out dozens of boxes of food, and signing up people for food stamps and Medicaid as a part of an ongoing Project of Survival. We talked to people about our Healthcare is a Human Right campaign and how we need to organize and fight for our rights as poor and dispossessed people!

York

The York HRC of Put People First! PA has been gathering to do outreach at a spot in York county where our neighbors stock up on free, clean spring water. We have had great conversations with people who struggle due to our unjust healthcare system who seemed excited about joining our fight for healthcare as a human right! Water truly is life. Without clean, drinkable water, we cannot survive. The same goes for our healthcare.

Philadelphia

Members of the Philadelphia HRC have been working on a Project of Survival to ensure that our base has access to important medical, food, and heating assistance government benefits. We serve refreshments like donuts, coffee, meat and vegetarian wraps; and help people complete benefit applications while engaging them in organizing conversations around healthcare as a human right. Put People First! PA is now an official COMPASS Community Partner, allowing us to initiate and track applications online, as well as follow up with folks once we see their application has been approved.

Montgomery County

It was amazing to see so many people get signed up for healthcare! Community is what we need in these trying times and to see community being made / held was very special. On top of needing healthcare desperately, people need community and to be seen and heard. I think a lot about this and how mental health is crucial to survival. Getting healthcare can help people with their mental/emotional issues, and so can community care. Feeding the people in many ways is important work. ▼



THE SORRY STATE OF HEALTHCARE IN JOHNSTOWN IS NOT UNIQUE

by Ron Moose, Johnstown

Who could look around at the misery in our community and use it as a way to further enrich themselves? Why it is none other than the noble healthcare profiteer. So bravely they take human rights and commodify them in the form of the American Healthcare System. With health insurance providers doubling profits during a pandemic, hospitals are closed as unprofitable (for the shareholders), or doctors are fired over a lack of surgeries to perform.

Humble Johnstown with its 19,569 residents, at one point had the highest per capita COVID-19 infection rate in America. Three times and counting the Intensive Care Unit beds have been over 90% full in Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center. Throughout all this, Put People First! PA has demanded universal, free COVID-19 testing, yet Conemaugh would rather spend the money on renting a "mobile morgue." Unfortunately, the concept of overflow body storage isn't new in most of the rust-belt of America. Before the COVID-19 epidemic, we were in the midst of the opioid epidemic. In 2015 Cambria County had the 3rd highest overdose rate per-capita in the commonwealth. This too is a problem whose roots go deep into the pockets of local doctors over-prescribing medication all the way to the manufacturers and politicians that enable them. For long enough poor and dispossessed people have been crushed by the rising costs of insurance and lack of access to dental benefits to a downright lack of care. Access means nothing if you can not afford the services offered; examples as grotesque as these are all too common throughout our region, and nation as a whole. We cannot become numb.

To add further insult to injury, local for-profit hospital, Duke LifePoint, owner of Conemaugh Memorial, has received 1.5 billion dollars in loans and grants from the government, the latter never needing to be repaid. If that sounds strange to you, remember that Duke is owned by Apollo Global Management, a private equity holding company. This private equity holding company held over \$455,000,000,000 worth of assets at the end of 2020. The wealthy global owning class has no excuses not to provide for its "healthcare heroes."

The corporatization of hospitals is not limited to Johnstown; it's nationwide. To address these behemoths we simply will never be able to "out money" them, but we can and will out organize them. We must take our righteous anger and use it to organize our class. Republican or Democrat, everyone has had a personal disaster with the healthcare system. With this in mind, 2021 will bring us one step closer to implementing our Public Healthcare Advocate (state official to fight for individual healthcare rights) legislation to the Pennsylvania house. This will bring us one step closer to winning the fight for Medicaid For All and finally crushing the power of the healthcare profiteer. ▼

PPF-PA MEMBERS REFLECT ON THE IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

by Emma Schanzenbach, Pittsburgh

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the United States has lost a staggering number of people to COVID-19 — more than half a million. The government of the United States of America, through their botched and decentralized response to the virus, has contributed directly to these deaths. Even if you were able to survive the virus, which disproportionately affected poor and dispossessed working class Americans — especially Black and Indigenous people and People of Color — there are many side effects of the illness that, for many, have lasted almost a year after their initial infection.

I was personally exposed to the virus upon my return to clinical rotations as a medical student. Even though I was 25 at the time of infection, with mild allergic asthma as my only “pre-existing” condition, I have been fighting since June of 2020 to regain my health. Since I was unable to get a confirmation of a COVID-19 diagnosis at the time of my illness due to the unavailability of proper testing, most of my treatment after I was sick was guess work, and extremely costly. Unfortunately, since medical professionals do not know much about the treatment of the disease after the active infection, many other people are experiencing this same issue.

Put People First! PA (PPF-PA) issued an extensive list of demands to Governor Wolf in the early days of the pandemic, covering basic necessities to keep Pennsylvanians safe during this public health crisis: COVID-19 testing, food delivery to quarantined people, various means of making healthcare available and accessible, free vaccines, debt and tax forgiveness and many other measures that would protect the health and economic well-being of all Pennsylvanians. Had these measures been enacted, there is no telling how much illness, death and personal financial disaster could have been avoided. You can read our full demands to Governor Wolf on our website:

www.putpeoplefirstpa.org

The following are reflections from PPF-PA members about their lived experiences dealing with COVID-19 and its after-effects. To hear more stories from PPF-PA members about the health and economic impacts of pandemic, tune in to our Pandemic Reflections Blog Series on the PPF-PA blog:

www.putpeoplefirstpa.org/blog 📖

If you'd like to share a story about how the pandemic has affected your life in the blog series, we'd love to hear from you. Contact Amalia at atonsor@gmail.com

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“If I were sick and socially isolated to protect others from getting sick, how would I be able to care for others and meet my basic needs without the help of my community? How would I be able to get the medications, supplies, and healthcare I need without access? Without insurance? Without money? How would I be able to stay home to recover if my employer threatened me with termination? These are some of the questions that have been unrelenting in my mind since my family contracted COVID-19 in November 2020 after an employee at my husband's workplace came into the office with a cough... the illness was really, really hard. We had all of this amazing support... and it was STILL really, *really* hard... Thousands of people who have suffered from, and are suffering with COVID-19 and it's after-effects are doing so without the vital support and access to healthcare that my family and I had throughout our sickness and recovery. *Even one person suffering alone, without support, and/or without access to adequate healthcare is too many.*” -Michele Capobianco, Lancaster

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“I contracted COVID-19 the end of January 2021 and the lasting health effects make it extremely difficult to do the simplest of day-to-day tasks. I'm still experiencing fatigue, inflammation in the chest which causes chest and back pain, trouble breathing with the slightest exertion. COVID-19 brain fog is affecting me in a variety of ways. I feel wiped out just doing simple tasks...

Healthcare profiteers like UPMC and Penn Medicine have no desire to truly learn all they can about the virus to fight it. They just want the information that could help them use the virus to make profits... and the icing on the cake, y'all, is that these healthcare profiteers are the very entities that our elected officials on **ALL** levels of government put in charge of fighting this pandemic... with OUR tax dollars. That's the biggest slap in the face our government could give us. This pandemic has shown how healthcare is run by the same corporate class that evicts us from our houses when we can't pay rent, keeps folks locked up while telling them to socially distance, denies us safe places for young people to get education. We **MUST** unite the poor and dispossessed and demand our basic human rights — because it is the only way the working class will survive.”

-Tammy Rojas, Lancaster

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UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE: WHAT IT COULD BE, WHY WE DON'T HAVE IT, & THE WAY FORWARD

by Fran Gilmore, Montgomery County

What does healthcare look like in a country dedicated to free healthcare as a human right?

We need look no further than the tiny socialist island of Cuba, 90 miles south of Florida. Remarkably, Cuba's 1976 constitution has six healthcare principles. The first two are:

- Health care is a right, available to all equally and free of charge.
- Health care is the responsibility of the state.

In order to make healthcare truly accessible, Cuba assigns a family physician and nurse team to every urban neighborhood, to rural communities and also to some large factories and schools. Neighborhood teams live in the healthcare facility, and provide both on-site care and home visits. Doctors are required to serve for two years on a team, and nurses often stay in one neighborhood for years, getting to know their patients well. Cuba's success is suggested by comparing a few health statistics with those of the United States. These numbers are from 2010, unless indicated.

Health Status Indicator	Cuba	United States
Infant mortality per 1000 live births	6	8
Low Birth weight rate	5.4%	8.15%
Life expectancy	77.97	78.2 (2009)

Source: *The Curious Case of Cuba*, D.W. Keck, MD and G.A. Reed, MS, *Am J Public Health* 2012 August; 102(8) e13-e22.

Cuba regards global health cooperation as an obligation — it is the sixth healthcare principle enshrined in the Constitution. Cuba has sent thousands of doctors around the world, created unique treatments and medications, and runs a **free** medical school for foreign students.

Cuba's achievements are especially remarkable, given that it is a tiny and very poor island, squeezed by a US embargo since its revolution, and damaged by the collapse of its trade partner, the Soviet Union, in the 1980s. This past year, the pandemic plus Trump's reimposition of US restrictions on tourism walloped the economy again. (Biden has not committed to repeal those restrictions.) Still, Cuba's innovations and universal care persist, illustrating the power of the political commitment to serve the people's human needs.

Why don't we have universal health care in the United States?

The most fundamental reason is that healthcare is treated as a commodity, a source of profit, rather than a human right. Attempts to legislate national healthcare have all been opposed by healthcare profiteers, who have turned our pain and illness into a multi-trillion dollar global industry.

Corporate-owned hospitals are gobbling up other healthcare institutions all over the country, and closing those deemed unprofitable to shareholders. In PA, eight hospitals were closed in 2019 and 2020. Two of them, which had been go-to hospitals for the poor — St. Joseph's in Lancaster and Hahnemann in Philadelphia — are being rezoned for luxury condos.

Before the corporatization of hospitals, universal healthcare has been fiercely opposed by the organization of doctors, the American Medical Association (AMA) since the 1930s. By the 1950s, opponents also included big pharma, and insurance companies. Today a whole list of corporate entities — hedge funds, owners of nursing homes and many others — are united in opposition, along with the Republican party and much of the Democratic party as well.

The percent of Cubans who have or have had COVID as of March, about 5.4%, was just over half of those infected in the US, about 9.3%. The COVID fatality rate in Cuba is 0.6%, one third of that in the US, 1.8%. Cuba has developed its own vaccines, currently in trial, and expects to vaccinate its entire population by the end of the year.



Quote by portrait of Che Guevara says, "A human life is worth more than all the gold of the richest man in the world."

Photo: Sven Creutzmann/Polaris

Popular political movements have put universal healthcare on center stage. Despite this, among the powerful the debate is still about health insurance, not what we need, which is healthcare. The battle for healthcare in the United States has been waged since 1912. So how do we overcome the corporate class and its puppet politicians and move forward?

How do we move forward toward universal healthcare?

As COVID-19 has spotlighted the inequality and racism of current healthcare, the need for universal healthcare has become clearer than ever. But how do we get there? We are part of a nationwide movement, the Poor People's Campaign: a National Call for Moral Revival, which calls for the poor and dispossessed to be the leading edge in the fight for our human rights. Together with sister organizations across the country, we have launched the Nonviolent Medicaid Army, using healthcare as a rallying point for our class and building power by organizing across differences among the poor and dispossessed. We seek to expose healthcare profiteers and their Wall Street connections, and hold them accountable to our demands. In this way, we are working to overcome the power of the corporate class and ultimately achieve universal healthcare. 🗳



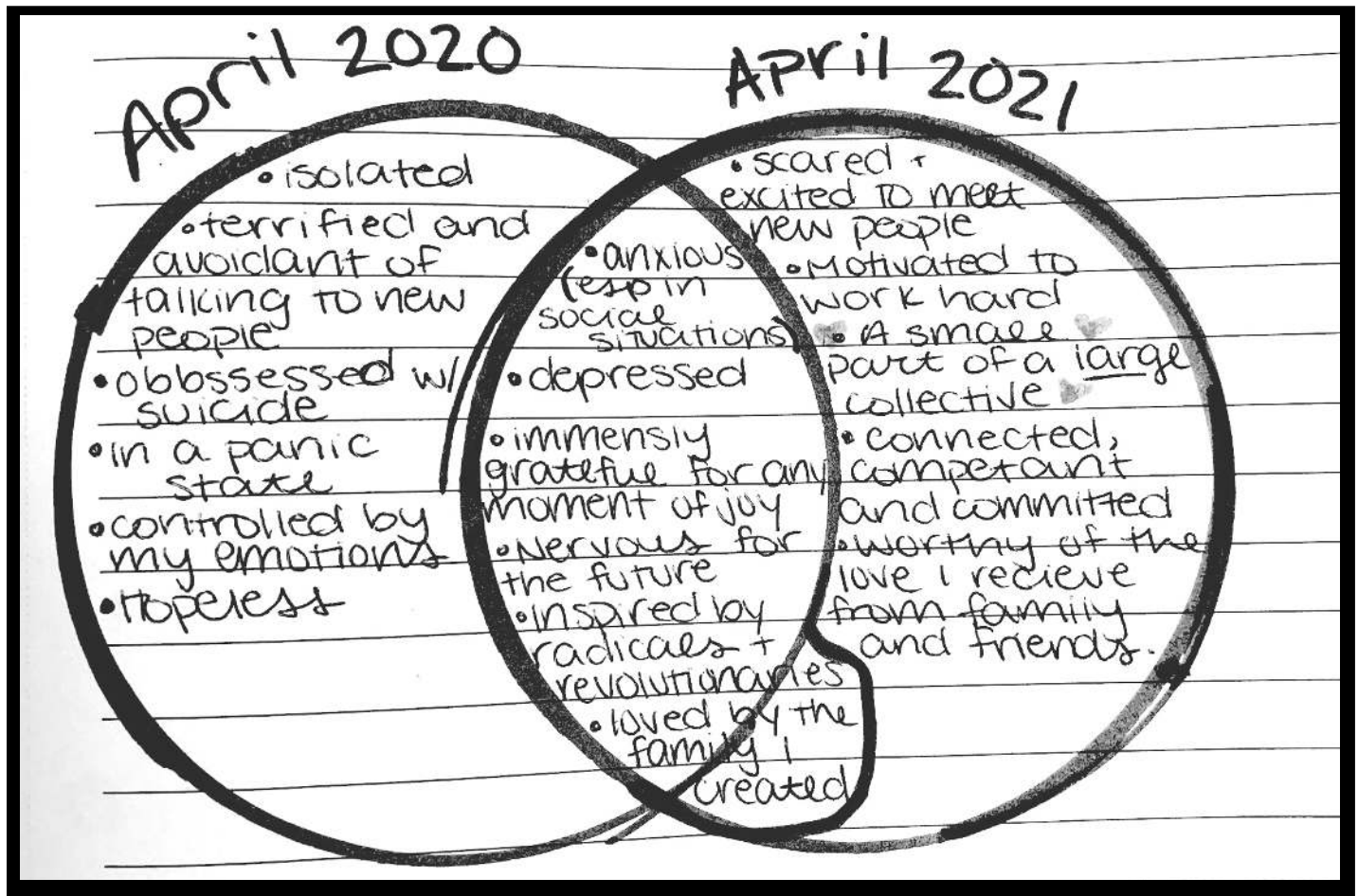
MEMBER REFLECTION: LAUREN LEILANI IONA, PHILADELPHIA

Once, when I was 13, I woke up and immediately started to cry. I had a fever and some of the worst throat pain I'd ever experienced, and I was not handling it well. Just swallowing felt like a hundred tiny knives were carving up my esophagus. My head was heavy and unbearably hot, all of my bones ached, and the thermometer read about 103. I rushed to wake my mother up, feeling sure that she'd take me to the hospital.

I remember feeling so crushed when she told me we couldn't go. It was too expensive for us to go to the ER for a fever and a sore throat. My parents were both waiting on paychecks that week, and they needed every penny for rent, bills, gas, and food for me and my siblings. She did the best she could, sending me back to bed with a few Advil and a cold, wet rag to place on my forehead. I can't remember how many days I had to wait, but I remember being in and out of fevers and barely able to eat because of the pain in my throat. My parents had to borrow money from a relative to fill the gas tank and pay for me to go to a clinic. It turned out that I had strep throat and needed antibiotics.

Looking back on it, I understand why my mother didn't want to take me to the ER. When living paycheck to paycheck, every cent matters so much. You're constantly faced with either/or situations; sometimes, they can be life-threatening. Now, a case of strep throat isn't the worst thing that can happen to a person by far, but it still holds strong in my memory as an example of how messed up our healthcare system truly is. That a simple trip to get medicine for a child with a sore throat could've been the difference between having electricity on in the apartment, or food on the table, or gas in the car. I believed back then that there was no good reason for a financial barrier to help a sick person get healthy again, and I believe it now more than ever as an adult. We have everything we need to take care of each other, but we are barred from it by cruel and greedy policies that have no excuse to exist.

For a long time, I felt that there was nothing I could do to change that. I was so pessimistic and didn't know anyone who felt like they could do anything about the laws that govern us, either. It's a recent development in my life as a young adult that I started to meet people who were not feeling so hopeless, who are instead determined and optimistic. For me, all it took was developing friendships with these people to encourage me to try getting involved in organizing. I'm new to this, but I'm motivated by the work that Put People First! PA (PPF-PA) is doing to connect, educate, and empower people to fight for our right to healthcare. Every meeting I attend leaves me feeling better about our chances to make fundamental changes happen. I appreciate the patience and understanding the members of PPF-PA have shown me, and I am happy to be learning as we go along about ways we can help each other as people with a common goal. All people deserve healthcare, shelter, food, and opportunities for happiness. All people deserve a good life. The best chance we have at getting those things that we deserve is uniting and fighting for it together. 🗳



**MEMBER REFLECTION:
SEFI SCHILLER, MONTGOMERY COUNTY**

The rally cry, "Healthcare is a human right!", sparked my interest in Put People First! PA ((PPF-PA). I stand with PPF-PA because we are dedicated to improving the lives of millions of poor people. Prior to joining PPF-PA, I knew it was important to advocate for people who don't have the time or resources to advocate for themselves. I was excited to join PPF-PA because this organization is doing more than only advocacy. We are organizing the poor to rise up against the powers that be.

I have the experience of attempting to navigate the healthcare system while having an undiagnosed mental condition and combating addiction. Being poor and having no insurance, I was at a loss. I was fortunate enough to have a friend that found a non-profit called Safe House in Austin, Texas, that took me in. Healthcare should always be not-for-profit. Mental health needs to be addressed in this country. Mental health, addiction, and homelessness have an undeniable connection.

I also know what it is to be a member of the working poor. When I was trying to get back on two feet, I was working two jobs to survive. I worked as a substitute teacher five days a week and as a home health aide two days a week. Neither job offered insurance or sick leave and failed to pay a living wage.

I now live comfortably but that doesn't mean I can just forget about the struggles of being poor. My experiences have led me to become a member of the Montgomery County Healthcare Rights Committee. PPF-PA is dedicated to organizing and mobilizing the poor because we understand no one is going to save us except ourselves. ▼



IS HEALTHCARE CURRENTLY A HUMAN RIGHT IN PA?

NO!



- ✗ Over 1 million people are priced out or excluded from health care each year in PA.
- ✗ More than 1.5 million Pennsylvanians are in medical debt, and residents' total medical debt likely exceeds \$1 billion.

WHY NOT?

Right now Pennsylvania law treats healthcare as a **commodity** rather than a human right. It's up to us as everyday people to build our power so we can defend our health care rights!



IS THERE CURRENTLY A GOVERNMENT OFFICE THAT FIGHTS FOR OUR HUMAN RIGHT TO HEALTHCARE?

NO!

There are lots of separate processes for people to file complaints and try to get their needs met, but they're hard to find, hard to use and it's hard to win meaningful outcomes. The fragmentation of the current system hides the true scale and scope of the problem.

In 2016-17, PPF-PA won the first ever public hearings on rising insurance rates with the Pennsylvania Insurance Department (PID). This was a big deal, because we made our voices heard in conversations that had gone on between the PID and the insurance companies behind closed doors, and we fought to have a say in decisions that affect us.

Through that process, we saw how tightly the PID is captured by healthcare profiteers: despite our testimony, the PID granted these companies rate increases even bigger than what they had asked for!



THERE REALLY ISN'T A GOVERNMENT OFFICE THAT FIGHTS FOR ALL OUR HEALTH CARE RIGHTS...

AND THERE'S NO ADVOCATE IN GOVERNMENT WHO IS TASKED WITH STANDING FIRMLY ON THE SIDE OF EVERYDAY PEOPLE IN OUR BATTLES WITH HEALTHCARE PROFITEERS.



SO WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO **WIN** OUR HUMAN RIGHT TO HEALTHCARE IN PA?

WE NEED TO BUILD A MASS MOVEMENT OF EVERYDAY PEOPLE SO WE CAN CHANGE THE SYSTEM!

WE NEED TO PROTECT & ADVOCATE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES AT THE POLICY LEVEL AS WE BUILD THE POWER OF OUR CLASS ACROSS THE STATE!



THAT'S WHY PPF-PA IS FIGHTING FOR A NEW STATE OFFICE FOR PA:

THE PUBLIC HEALTHCARE ADVOCATE





the PUBLIC HEALTHCARE ADVOCATE

WHAT IS A PUBLIC HEALTHCARE ADVOCATE?

A PUBLIC OFFICIAL (BACKED BY A STAFFED OFFICE) WHO FIGHTS FOR THE HEALTH CARE RIGHTS OF ALL PEOPLE AT THE STATE LEVEL

PUBLIC MEANS...

- ★ Protecting the health care needs & rights of all residents of the Commonwealth
- ★ Serving the public interest, not the interest of profiteers
- ★ Holding both private profiteers and public agencies accountable

HEALTHCARE MEANS...

- ★ Responding to the needs of residents on all kinds of healthcare plans/programs, as well as everyone excluded from care
- ★ Responding to public health crises like environmental devastation, prison healthcare, and pandemics

ADVOCATE MEANS...

- ★ Fighting for all residents to get the healthcare that they need and deserve as their human right



what would
the PHA do?

what will it
take to create
a PHA in PA?

We are drafting legislation to create the Public Healthcare Advocate and need the state legislature to pass our bill. That means we need to organize in our communities to pressure state legislators to take action. And that's what we are doing across the state in 2021!

1

fight for our healthcare rights, as individuals and as a class

2

act as a mouthpiece for our struggles by creating spaces for people to have a direct say in the healthcare decisions that affect our lives

3

help lawmakers to make our healthcare system work for patients and healthcare workers

4

work to hold healthcare agencies and industries accountable

THE PUBLIC HEALTHCARE ADVOCATE IS WHAT WE MAKE IT!

WE ONLY GET WHAT WE'RE ORGANIZED TO TAKE!

¿ES LA ATENCIÓN SANITARIA ACTUALMENTE UN DERECHO HUMANO EN PA?

¡NO!

- ✗ Cada año, más de **1 million** residentes de Pensilvania están completamente excluidos de la atención sanitaria o obligados a renunciarla debido al costo.
- ✗ Más de **1,5 millones** de residentes de Pensilvania tienen deudas médicas, y la deuda médica total de los residentes probablemente supera **los mil millones de dólares**.

¿POR QUÉ NO?

En este momento, la ley de Pensilvania trata la atención sanitaria como **una mercancía** más que como un derecho humano. Depende de nosotros, como personas comunes, construir nuestro poder para poder defender nuestros derechos de atención sanitaria.

¿EXISTE ACTUALMENTE UNA OFICINA GUBERNAMENTAL QUE LUCHE POR NUESTRO DERECHO HUMANO A LA ATENCIÓN SANITARIA?

¡NO!

Hay muchos procesos separados para que las personas presenten quejas y traten de satisfacer sus necesidades, pero son difíciles de encontrar, difíciles de usar y es difícil obtener resultados significativos. La fragmentación del sistema actual oculta la verdadera escala y alcance del problema.

En 2016-2017, ¡El Pueblo Primero! (PPF-PA) luchó y ganó las primeras audiencias sobre el aumento de las tasas de seguros con el Departamento de Seguros de Pensilvania (DSP). Esto fue un gran logro, porque nos hicimos escuchar en las conversaciones que se habían desarrollado entre el DSP y las compañías de seguros a puerta cerrada, y luchamos por ser parte de las decisiones que nos afectan.

A través de ese proceso, vimos cuán estrictamente capturan el DSP los especuladores de la atención sanitaria: a pesar de nuestro testimonio, ¡el DSP otorgó a estas empresas aumentos de tarifas aún mayores de lo que habían pedido!



REALMENTE NO HAY UNA OFICINA ESTATAL QUE LUCHE POR TODOS NUESTROS DERECHOS DE ATENCIÓN SANITARIA...

NO HAY NINGUN DEFENSOR EN EL GOBIERNO ENCARGADO DE DEFENDER Y DE ESTAR FIRMEMENTE DEL LADO DE LA GENTE COMÚN EN NUESTRAS BATALLAS CON LOS ESPECULADORES DE LA ATENCIÓN SANITARIAS.

ENTONCES, ¿QUÉ SE NECESITA PARA **GANAR** NUESTRO DERECHO HUMANO A LA ATENCIÓN SANITARIA EN PENNSILVANIA?

¡NECESITAMOS CONSTRUIR UN MOVIMIENTO MASIVO DE GENTE COMÚN PARA QUE PODAMOS CAMBIAR EL SISTEMA!

¡NECESITAMOS PROTEGER Y DEFENDER A NUESTRAS COMUNIDADES A NIVEL DE POLÍTICAS MIENTRAS CONSTRUIMOS EL PODER DE NUESTRA CLASE EN TODO EL ESTADO!

ES POR ESO QUE ¡EL PUEBLO PRIMERO! ESTÁ LUCHANDO POR UNA NUEVA OFICINA ESTATAL:

EL DEFENSOR PÚBLICO DE LA SALUD





EL DEFENSOR PÚBLICO de la SALUD

¿QUÉ ES UN DEFENSOR PÚBLICO DE LA SALUD?

UN FUNCIONARIO PÚBLICO
(RESPALDADO POR UNA OFICINA CON
PERSONAL) QUE LUCHA POR LOS
DERECHOS DE ATENCIÓN SANITARIA DE
TODAS LAS PERSONAS A NIVEL ESTATAL

DEFENSOR QUIERE DECIR...

- ★ Alguien que lucha para que todos los residentes obtengan la atención sanitaria que necesitan y merecen como derecho humano

PÚBLICO CONLLEVA...

- ★ Proteger las necesidades de y los derechos a la atención sanitaria de todos los residentes de la mancomunidad
- ★ Estar al servicio del interés público, no del interés de los especuladores
- ★ Responsabilizar tanto a los especuladores privados como a las agencias públicas

SALUD SIGNIFICA...

- ★ Todas las necesidades sanitarias de los residentes en todo tipo de planes/programas de atención sanitaria, así como las de todas las personas excluidas de la atención sanitaria
- ★ También significa las respuestas ante crisis de salud pública como la devastación ambiental, la atención sanitaria en las prisiones y las pandemias




¿Qué haría el
Defensor Público
de la Salud?

¿Qué se necesita
para crear la
Oficina del
Defensor Público
de la Salud?

Estamos redactando legislación para crear el Defensor Público de la Salud y necesitamos que la legislatura estatal apruebe nuestro proyecto de ley. Eso significa que debemos organizarnos en nuestras comunidades para presionar a los legisladores estatales para que tomen medidas. ¡Y eso es lo que haremos en 2021!

1 

luchar por nuestros derechos de atención sanitaria, como individuos y como clase

2 

actuar como portavoz de nuestras luchas, creando espacios para que las personas tengan voz directa en las decisiones de atención sanitaria que afectan nuestras vidas

3 

ayudar a los legisladores a hacer que nuestro sistema de salud funcione para los pacientes y los trabajadores sanitarios

4 

trabajar para responsabilizar a los especuladores de la atención sanitaria y a las agencias que los regulan

¡EL DEFENSOR PÚBLICO DE LA SALUD ES LO QUE HACEMOS!

¡SOLO OBTENEMOS LO QUE ESTAMOS ORGANIZADOS A TOMAR!

IN BASE-BUILDING, WE DON'T ALWAYS KNOW WHERE WE ARE PLANTING SEEDS OR WHEN THEY WILL SPROUT

by Ben Levanduski, Northeast PA

I encountered Put People First! PA (PPF-PA), directly or indirectly, many times in the years leading up to my involvement. In reflecting on what led to my joining the organization, it is easy to see that in addition to the immediate circumstances and the member who reached out to me to come to that first meeting, this series of encounters created a mental groove of recognition that made finally taking the step of joining feel just right, like a puzzle piece clicking into place that took forever to find.

My first involvement with organizing involved counter-recruitment actions at my high school during the US invasion of Iraq. An English teacher who was a member of a Quaker community and the American Friends Service Committee recognized these efforts. He told me he had friends in a group called the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, and that of all of the groups he had seen over the years, they were some of the best organizers. He gave me some articles to read and hinted that he would set up a conversation with someone who might be able to offer some guidance to these student protests. Sadly, I was too fleeting and immature to follow up. I was interested in confrontation for its own sake, not in being most effective or taking mentorship. Still, the name stuck with me.

Years later, I made a social media post about my insurance denying coverage of a medication. A PPF-PA member posted that there were a series of hearings being held across the state about the rising cost of insurance. Again, I didn't follow-up but I was impressed and happy they were in that fight. Since then, I have heard these hearings referenced countless times.

Finally, about a month before I joined PPF-PA officially, Nijmie Dzurinko came to speak in Wilkes-Barre. I saw the flyer online and planned to attend, but the day off brought an ice storm that made the hour drive seem unsafe. Still, I remembered the flyer, the language used, how I had a gut-feeling this was something worth attending. A month later, I shifted from a passive potential audience member to an active member of PPF-PA. These are just some of the more noteworthy encounters I had with the organization before circumstances were finally conducive for me to become a member.

The timeline is not always clear, and engagement with new contacts that seems fruitless may actually be leaving a lasting impression. Many of us have had the experience of speaking to a new contact, fumbling through questions, thinking something like "this is going nowhere fast," only to have that person attend a meeting and state that the conversation made a great impression. Those calls are like distilled versions of the longer time line I described.

What other lessons are there here? One is the importance of carrying ourselves as representatives of a movement and PPF-PA as much as possible. We never know who may be overhearing a conversation, listening to our remarks at an event, taking in but not reacting to our posts. There is a paradox at play. We must be consistent, persistent and analytical about reaching new people. At the same time, we must keep faith that our efforts are having unseen effects. Much is going on beyond our individual perception. Condensing these events into a linear narrative could give the impression that I was in some resistance or deliberation about joining PPF-PA, but that's really not the case. I was coming and going from other things, being shaped and developed by life experiences, and there was not yet a Healthcare Rights Committee in the area. These were simply data points, memories, piled up in such a way to create a positive impression that PPF-PA was an organization worth joining, That it would be around for the long-haul and was popping up in more and more places.



DRAWING A CIRCLE

drawing and song by Beckett Koretz, Philadelphia

All I've got I'll learn to share with you
We give and take with every breath
What else is there to do
I'll end my life with nothing, but it feels so full
It feels so damn full to me

Won't you look in my eyes
Can I look in your eyes, dear one
I've been waiting for you
We've been waiting for you
Bet you've been waiting too

And we're drawing a circle
Everyone's inside it
We're breaking the curses
That keep us divided
Let's try it

Oh won't you fill my mind up with your mind
Oh what could be as brilliant
As all of us combined
Dreams beyond imagining
But they feel so close
They feel so damn close to me

Cuz we're building a world
Everyone's invited
We're breaking the curses
That keep us divided
Let's try it

A PEOPLE'S VACCINE



by JR and AR, Healthcare Workers Team

In February 2021, Put People First's (PPF-PA) Healthcare Workers Team, in collaboration with our Political Education and Leadership Development Team, held a political education session, "The People's Vaccine" to discuss Pennsylvania's COVID-19 vaccine landscape and share specifics about the science of the vaccines.

Vaccine distribution has not been equitable, transparent, universal, participatory, or accountable. The vaccine itself, for now, is free of charge after being researched, developed, and manufactured with federal (our) money. Yet many facilities have charged exorbitant fees for it. In Philadelphia, there was even a bizarre case of the Department of Health contracting a "nonprofit" which planned to charge for the vaccine and sell people's private data. The City ended this contract under public pressure.

The biggest vaccine profiteering has been by global pharmaceutical companies patenting their vaccines. The Gates Foundation pressured Oxford University to sell its patent to one pharmaceutical company instead of sharing it publicly. Now that company is the only one which can make that vaccine when there could be hundreds more across the world. With only a few companies producing the vaccine, rich countries are hoarding the world's limited supply, creating what some call "vaccine apartheid." If patents were eliminated, we could have a true people's vaccine.

In Pennsylvania, there has been no centralized or state-run system for distribution. Each county was instructed to create its own system, and every individual has been on their own to figure out how to access the vaccine. Access inequities include information about vaccine distribution being mostly online, which is inaccessible to many people, lack of transportation to distant sites, and uneven distribution by the state to the different counties. All of those barriers to access are related to poverty, which affects over 5 million people in Pennsylvania. Not surprisingly, then, the wealthiest counties in PA have had the highest rates of vaccination, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Health, and white people have been vaccinated at more than double the rate of people of color. In addition, some institutions introduce their own inequities in distribution. For example, a private school near Wilke Barre, PA vaccinated ineligible school faculty before many eligible people could even schedule an appointment.

Some reports explain the racial disparity in vaccination by hesitancy among Black people and other people of color caused by the long history of medical experimentation and mistreatment of people of color. However, research suggests that hesitancy itself is not the main reason for racial disparity and is also high among many white people. Widespread misinformation on mainstream and social media explain hesitancy of many people of all ethnicities, but what best explains the racial disparity in vaccination rates is the combination of poverty and systemic racism.

Prior to The People's Vaccine event, PPF-PA members generated questions and concerns at our monthly statewide call. Nearly 50 members from across the state called in to ask questions about the vaccine that they couldn't find clear answers to anywhere else. Question topics included vaccine ingredients, safety, side effects, distribution, eligibility, healthcare profiteering, accountability, mRNA technology, the variants, and cost. Answers were researched and presented by PPF-PA healthcare workers, who may not be expert epidemiologists or vaccinologists, but are the experts who share our own experience with the global system that produces poverty for most and untold wealth for a very few.

This session was a true testament to the dedication, teamwork, and power of our organization across racial and geographical lines of separation. Through political education, we work to understand the conditions we face including how they were created and are maintained. This is how we are developing the analysis to build a more just system grounded in human rights.

WE DEMAND A PEOPLE'S VACCINE! ▼



In the stormy days following the presidential election last November, Put People First! PA (PPF-PA) held Poor People's Hearings all over the state posing the question, "What, to the poor and dispossessed is Democracy?" This echoes a speech given by Frederick Douglass in 1852 in which he asks the question "What to a slave is the fourth of July?" The words below are adapted from what PPF-PA co-founder, Nijmie Zakkiyyah Dzurinko, wrote about the message our Hearings were designed to bring to our class.

WHAT TO THE POOR AND DISPOSSESSED IS DEMOCRACY?

by Nijmie Dzurinko, Philadelphia

We are heading potentially into a volatile period of mass mobilization. Along partisan lines, both Democratic party-connected liberals and Republican party-supported right wing forces and white nationalists are preparing to mobilize to influence the outcome of the election. Both of these forces are being operationalized by the ruling class to keep the working class divided. Particularly during this time, divide and conquer politics are going to come to the fore: urban vs. suburban vs. rural, white people vs. people of color, eastern vs. western PA, etc. The central message of the liberals will be that Trump is the source of the problem and removing him will restore democracy and decency, as the right claims election fraud.

While we agree that every vote must be counted, we diverge on the rest of the analysis. **"The prescription for the cure rests on an accurate diagnosis of the disease."** -Martin Luther King Jr.

We must be clear that the fundamental backdrop of this period includes the interlocking crises of systemic racism, poverty, the war economy and militarism, and ecological devastation that predated the election and will persist after the election — no matter the results.

The reality is that there is no true democracy for the poor and dispossessed. The rich have a democracy. As the poor and dispossessed, we live in a dictatorship of the rich. We experience the dictatorship of the rich every day as hospitals deemed unprofitable are closed, even during the pandemic; when 40% of people killed by the police are having a mental health crisis; when up to 40% of PA renters are facing eviction; when multi-billion dollar global corporations like UMPC get a billion dollar COVID-19 bailout while paying no taxes.

We won't experience democracy as the poor and dispossessed until we actually have healthcare, housing, living wage jobs, transit, education, and freedom from discrimination, criminalization, incarceration, and detention. We have been in crisis—before COVID-19, since COVID-19, before the election, and that crisis will continue after the election. To achieve democracy, in addition to voting and counting every vote, we need to:

- ➔ Organize, organize, organize to build power for poor and dispossessed people across race and geography in Pennsylvania.
- ➔ Unite to overcome the divide and conquer strategies that pit white people against people of color and urban, suburban, and rural people against each other.
- ➔ Build clear, competent, committed and connected leaders from every race, gender, and location. 🗳️

REFLECTIONS FROM THE POOR PEOPLE'S HEARINGS

“

KARIM NATHAN, PHILADELPHIA

"We believe democracy for the poor and for the dispossessed cannot be boiled down to a choice between [the] two parties... **Democracy for the poor and for the dispossessed, for the working class, means having the ability and the power to fundamentally change our conditions.** It means standing up for basic human rights, which have been forsaken by both parties. These rights include the right to housing, the right to safety from police and state violence, and the right to healthcare. We stand here as part of a Nonviolent Medicaid Army that is fighting against the commodification of healthcare on all fronts. We reject the assault on Medicaid... the selling off of hospitals by private equity, the program of austerity and privatization of healthcare that has been presided over by BOTH parties... Because as long as healthcare is bought and sold as a commodity and not provided as a basic human right, it will never be affordable to the poor."

RAPHAELA HUFF, MONTGOMERY COUNTY

"As a new member to PPF-PA, I was inspired by this event. It was validating to witness people getting out on the streets to give voice to many issues that have been on my mind for years. I think that it's important to publicly affirm the struggles of the poor due to the fact that **we, the poor, have been taught so deeply to believe that if we are not achieving economic 'success', it must be due to some shortcoming of our own.** It's powerful and eye opening to hear people laying out the facts about the oppressive and abusive ruling class in a way that clearly displays the injustice at play. It was also meaningful to me to see the event take place in the town where I live, Norristown, PA, as I feel this is an area often overlooked or looked down upon by many."

GABRIELLE ANGELINO, MONTGOMERY COUNTY

"The days following the presidential election, as votes were counted and incessant predictions were made on live television, the tension in our country was thick and suffocating, as though every person was holding their breath. Within my own Healthcare Rights Committee and others statewide, we did not pause, we did not wait in anticipation, we did not hope or pray, we organized. We as an organization understood that for the poor and dispossessed there is no democracy. There would be no hero to save us after the last ballot was counted. Regardless of the winner, our next steps remained the same. We held our Poor People's Hearing in Norristown a day after the win by Biden/Harris was announced. While many democrats and liberals were celebrating, we gathered to agitate our community and encourage people not to become complacent just because Trump has been ousted. As a class, we must prepare to work tirelessly no matter who is president, to take the power out of the hands of the ruling class, as we know that they will never just give it to us."



MEMBER REFLECTION: DENYNE POLLARD, MON VALLEY

Hi! I'm Denyne, pronouns she/her, co-coordinator of the Mon Valley Healthcare Rights Committee (HRC) of Put People First! PA (PPF-PA). The Mon Valley lies about 45 minutes South of Pittsburgh. The Monongahela River connects the two cities, running through coal fields that powered steel and other metal industries for more than a century.

I have the pleasure of belonging to the absolute best organization, building and uniting leaders across Pennsylvania. I'd like to speak briefly about my personal experience with having gone through this Pandemic and how much of an impact PPF-PA has had on my life.

I feel this way because I am in consistent communication with the members of PPF-PA whether we live, laugh, love, learn or cry together. The point is, it is *together*. I am strong, I am knowledgeable and confident, and I can prove it. It's something I've learned being in this organization. It's not because anyone told me this, it's because I can look back over my history, I can analyze, I can read and research this for myself. I became all the wiser. This organization and the awesome people in it have truly influenced me and many in my community to stand up because we're worth it. We're worthy of clean air, clean water, affordable homes, transportation, safe affordable housing, fair wages, free education and lastly...healthcare for all! This is why we push so hard. It's certainly why I push so hard. My children are worth it and their children, who are to be the future, they are worth it. I assure you that my mother, who worked for over forty years to add to the good of this country, is most certainly worth it. So we pride ourselves on uniting and building leaders in the fight for healthcare and our basic human rights! Yes, you are most certainly worth it!

Somehow it's always the poor and dispossessed who are left out to die and to struggle to meet the demands of the government (representing the ruling class). The government that says they're for the people...but they're actually not for us. Somehow the rich keep getting richer and the poor keep getting poorer. Since the pandemic, there are many, many folks out here who are jobless and uninsured and are truly feeling the pain: The pain of uncertainty. The pain of having no financial cushion for an emergency. Let's look at the seniors and put ourselves in their shoes for just a shopping day: out to get medications and money orders for bills, main meals and some basic essentials; no store nearby and transportation is a bitch; forced to choose between buying medicines or having meals for the month; it is necessary to be a bit aggressive to get in and get out while staying safe from COVID-19. It's all utterly stressful as ever and alone.

Boy oh Boy, if you're out here in the Mon Valley, we're going to find you. Or be certain to look for us — we'll make sure to be a shining light for all you folks just like us. You're worth it!



Solidarity Forever!!!
Thank you PPF-PA

MEMBER POETRY

FRANK SCARSELLA, JOHNSTOWN

SHAPE OF OUR PAST

If we are to Uplift the People, we first
have to understand How we Got Here.
Teaching the People means Hearing
them. Seeing them. Being them! Being of
the people! Because no Outsider will ever
Uplift Us.

We must see the past Clearly! The valley
was shaped by the river but cannot see
the changes in itself that it brings.

What we must do is rise above it, see the
changes. See the years that shaped the
valley — that shaped the People — and
then Redirect the River.

GABRIELLE ANGELINO, MONTGOMERY COUNTY **UP IN THE LIMBS AND LEAVES**

This tree I live in is very old.

It's withering and rotting from the inside out.

It was here long before our ancestors were brought here

Chained

- ankle to ankle, wrist to wrist -

in the humid hulls of ships:

built with the carcasses of our tree's own ancestors.

Up in the limbs and leaves

- the skin and bones of our tree -

curls and leans underneath the pressure of oppression.

The skin hates the bones for not holding it up;

the bones hate the skin for sagging.

Neither blames the roots who have carried poison throughout this
tree for years under the cloak of nutrition.

This tree I live in is scarred by war and marred by self-loathing.

If only it could look down at what lies just beneath its feet.

"LESSONS FROM THE 1930S + '40S": REFLECTIONS ON PPF-PA'S 2021 WINTER READING GROUP

by Noam Sandweiss-Beck and the Political Education & Leadership Development Team

How were the 1930s and 1940s a missed moment for the poor and dispossessed? How does the history of that era live on today and what lessons can the poor and dispossessed learn in their fight today?

In 2020 the University of the Poor convened a group to study what is sometimes known as the New Deal Era, roughly beginning with the Great Depression and running through the 1930s and 1940s. The purpose of this initial study was to better understand that period's history and its lessons for us today, with the hope of laying the groundwork for further study, curriculum and leadership development, and more.

Put People First! PA's (PPF-PA) Political Education and Leadership Development team asked this group to help develop a study with them for our annual Winter Reading Group for leaders across Pennsylvania. Leaders from the Vermont Workers' Center (VWC) also joined the educators' team for the 6-week study.

The study pulled together over 50 leaders from Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Maryland. The course was titled "Lessons from the 1930's and 1940's: A Time of Crisis" and was intended as an introductory course on that era. It was also the first time this material was taught in this way for our national network and the educators for the course all came to the material with different levels of expertise and experience with the history. The result was a course that was very much a trial run, much less an authoritative approach to the history and much more a collaborative process where both educators and participants co-created the course and learned through it.

THE COURSE WAS ORGANIZED AROUND A SET OF KEY GOALS:

1. Study the victories, defeats, and missed moments of this historical period
2. Place the various organizing drives of this moment alongside each other, so as to develop a broader understanding of the working class struggle as a whole in this historical period
3. Unlearn the interpretations of this history that the ruling class propagates, which advances their class interests and is opposed to the interests of the working class
4. For participants to develop their own and each other's discipline around collective and self study within our organizations of the poor and dispossessed
5. Strengthen and develop the political connections between PPF-PA and other current organizations of the poor and dispossessed (VWC, UPoor and a delegation of organizers from Maryland)



Each week's class opened up with music, a song, or a poem drawn from the 1930s and then was followed by a presentation (often with slides), full group discussion and small group discussion. The small groups were consistent throughout the course and regionally organized. Small group discussion leaders met with each other weekly at the end of class.

Each week looked at the history of the '30s and '40s through a different lens. The first week was an introduction to the course and its goals. The second week told the story of the Great Depression and the early spontaneous and organized responses of the poor. The third week travelled South to look at the revolutionary consciousness and organization of the poor through the lens of the South. The fourth week dug into the experience of organized labor, its cooptation, fightback, victories, defeats, and missed moments. The fifth week investigated the history of the New Deal Coalition and the question of the political independence of the poor and the poor's relationship to the electoral arena. The sixth and final week focused on what W. E. B. Du Bois called "the propaganda of history," prevailing interpretations of this historical period which act in the interests of the ruling class by obscuring the real lessons for our class. ▼



WINTER READING GROUP REFLECTIONS FROM THE VERMONT WORKERS CENTER

Gathered by Keith Brunner, Vermont Workers Center



The 1930s are back in the headlines. Every other day you can read stories comparing Joe Biden to Franklin D. Roosevelt, or advocating for — or against — a Green New Deal. So what can we learn from studying the original New Deal and Great Depression of the 1930s? How did movements of the poor and working class navigate the period, and what were the “missed moments” we can see with the benefit of hindsight?

This winter, Put People First! PA collaborated with the Vermont Workers’ Center (VWC) and University of the Poor on a six-week reading group to answer these and other questions critical to our movement to end poverty today. We spoke with three VWC members who participated in the study to hear their insights and reflections.

💡 "They're Worried"

“Today we’re in the midst of an unprecedented economic crisis,” said Avery Book, a VWC leader from Thetford, Vermont. “The powers-that-be are quite worried. And the more sophisticated among them see a 21st century version of the New Deal as a way out of the crisis.”

The Great Depression, triggered by a deep structural crisis of capitalism, was a period of widespread economic and social upheaval. “There were spontaneous uprisings against hunger, lack of jobs, mass evictions,” said Karen Saunders of Brattleboro, Vermont. “But there were also organized strikes and activities aimed at transforming the system as a whole.” These themes — spontaneity and organization, and the role of class conflict as the driving force of history — were central to the Winter Reading Group.

Participants also studied the experience of the Southern Tenant Farmers’ Union and “the key importance of organizing in the South,” said Avery, referencing W.E.B. DuBois’ observation that whoever controls the South, politically controls the country. Ever since the defeat of Reconstruction, Wall Street has controlled the South.

💡 Missed Moments

“Where struggles succeeded, it was often because of leadership that recognized the need for working-class unity,” said Karen, highlighting the 1934 West Coast dockworkers’ strike that grew into a general strike in San Francisco. “People saw workers attacked by police, troops, private police, vigilantes, and came out into the streets. Unemployed councils joined workers at the picket lines, along with women who said ‘this is our fight, too.’ It was real collective action.”

“The 1932 Bonus Army encampment of World War I veterans in Washington, DC showed how this was a period when people really came together and demanded change to make their lives better,” said Amy Lester, a VWC leader from Plainfield, Vermont. “It didn’t matter if they were black or white — they fought together for relief for themselves and their families and communities.”

But the movement’s Achilles’ Heel was its inability to secure its political independence from Wall Street.

“We had a whole session on Upton Sinclair’s 1934 campaign for governor in California, which mobilized working-class people all over the state to ‘End Poverty in California,’” said Avery. “Sinclair was defeated, but his campaign had a significant impact on the Democratic Party, which sensed the possibility and danger of losing political control to an independent movement.”

President Franklin D. Roosevelt incorporated elements of this platform into the New Deal, a series of Federal programs and reforms that provided important benefits to some sections of the working class, while leaving others out, notably farmworkers and domestic workers.

For these workers, the New Deal took the edge off the crisis and cemented their support for the Democratic Party for decades, a challenge that independent electoral efforts of the poor were hard-pressed to overcome. Economically, the New Deal — followed by World War II — helped save capitalism from its own contradictions, positioning the US to face off against the Soviet Union and national liberation movements after the war in a quest for world domination.

💡 Studying Together

“People are hurting and need relief, and a \$1400 stimulus check isn’t going to improve our lives in the long run,” said Amy. “With all the talk about the Green New Deal today, I was curious about the original New Deal — Did it live up to its hype? All of us from Vermont were excited to be learning this history and came away hungry for more of this kind of learning together.”

“Studying with other organized members of the working class is really valuable,” said Avery. “Today we’re seeing different sections of the ruling class trying to coopt different sections of the poor and dispossessed. There’s so much we can learn by comparing notes and working together with people in other states.” ▼



WINTER READING GROUP REFLECTION

by Jessica Boyle, Northeast PA

My experience with our Winter Reading Group studying the 1930s was one of gaining clarity. In practical ways, my understanding of history and our current moment came into clearer focus. I learned content but, more importantly, I made connections that allowed me to better contextualize what I'm experiencing in the world around me.

Prior to the study group, I'd been wrestling with my thoughts and feelings on capitalism, particularly on how and why I felt like a traitor and it felt so dangerous to turn my allegiance away from our current economic system. Uncovering the nearly one hundred years of history demonizing socialism and communism brought things into perspective.

After the study, I could situate my discomfort much more appropriately and understand that my distress was not coming from internal conflicts about the rightness of my new thinking but from long-standing external indoctrination based on greed and fear. I gained an empowering ability to reject that indoctrination.

In addition to clarifying my thinking, the study group helped to begin clarifying a new identity for myself as a member of this community of truth-tellers and revolutionaries. A chosen identity and alliance not foisted on me by fiat of birth. From my dark, frigid deck in the northeast corner of the state, I felt united each week with all of you, my beautiful siblings, and you gave me courage. ▼

MEMBER REFLECTION: ANITA KNISELY-DURHAM, MONTGOMERY COUNTY

The Good Soup

Life started as soup. A heaping of carbon, water, and nitrogen, with some rocks, minerals, and metals sprinkled in for zest. We remain soup, nothing changed in us that we aren't sharing the ingredients of that ancient soup. We have the ingredients to go in, but try as one may, it's a recipe shared only between each bowl and the Chef. Every bowl of soup is unique in small sometimes unseen ways, and sometimes the Chef spices things up.

When a friend in college took his life, for whatever reason, there were imbalances of certain neurotransmitters in his brain: The cells in his brain failed to provide what he needed to deem life worth living. Falling out with friends and loved ones, I found myself with a similar flavor in my brain. I was unable to truly receive the help I needed due to larger circumstances not treated in the healthcare system. As a society, we understand mental problems as purely individual, not related to the world that they arise from. When you look at every person, they leave the facilities functional, but tossed back into the same circumstances that brought them there, they end up in dire straits.

Sometimes the only ones who benefit from this mental healthcare system are profiteers. In an economy driven by profit, even the individual's amazing unique circumstances and individual nature must be made to be heard in the languages of dollars. As long as we can keep working for the larger profit of the economy, what individually drives us to each sunrise doesn't matter. Because of the amazing soup we were born from, we are unique and worthy individuals whose life, loves and troubles will never be found anywhere else. Life is the most miraculous thing in the universe and we should have a society that values the irreplaceable wonder of everybody.

Healthcare is a human right, and it should not be run for the interests of profit, but to meet everyone's needs. I was in and out of inpatient care, as were many of my peers. This really placed everybody involved (patients, caregivers, loved ones) in tough and painful positions regularly. When our for-profit system fails, the only folks who win in that situation are healthcare profiteers, pocketing money as we struggled to manage the chemical soup of our bodies. Imagine a world where we can work to get to the root of many folks' problems to help them live their lives to their fullest.

My healthcare journey is one about learning what that fullness of life can look like, not only for others, but also for myself. Since those hospital stays, in spite of lots of delays and the like, I've begun my way on a journey to live a life I'd live again and again for the joys I currently feel. Put People First! PA is the first place where I saw people committed to fighting for healthcare who really centered those who've seen how little they care about our health at the top of the healthcare industry. It's honestly amazing to be in a space where everyone is clear on what we have to do as a class to get what we need. ▼



"Thin Ice"
Painting by Anita Knisely-Durham

by Community Care Team

Did you know Put People First! PA (PPF-PA) has a Community Care Team? The Community Care Team supports leaders to create spaces that feel safe, supportive, open, and trusting so that we can do our best work together as a community. We work to build our collective vision for how we want to be in relationship with one another.

The Community Care Team strives to engage in the following types of support:

- Emotional
- Material
- Accountability & Conflict Resolution
- Community Building

For generations there has been a concerted effort by the ruling class to divide the poor and dispossessed so that we are so invested in fighting each other, we do not join together to defeat our real enemy. As a mass organization of the poor that develops leaders across different sections of the working class, we know that our members have had to navigate violent societal terrains. In PPF-PA, we come together across lines of difference. Our responsibility is to do the work of building the unity of our class, including people who are different from us.

Here are a few excerpts from PPF-PA's Community Agreements, which you can find in our Member Handbook, to give a sense of the culture we work to create:

- Nobody comes in with the same set of experiences and knowledge. We believe that no one knows everything, but together we know a lot. We believe that we are all responsible for the success of PPF-PA spaces.
- We practice the platinum rule: Treat others the way they want to be treated, not just the way you want to be treated. We ask folks to assume that others have good intent, while also expecting everyone to be accountable for the impact of our actions and words.
- We all enter this organization with many hurts and many strengths. Each of us has at some point (past, present, or future) hurt and been hurt. Harms and conflict naturally happen along the way of doing our work, and we do not shrink away from this reality, but move through conflict bravely and honestly so that we may personally grow, and so that our collectivity grows stronger. We remain committed to each other and to the task at hand. 🖤

COMMUNITY CARE REMINDERS FOR THE MEMBERSHIP ASSEMBLY 2020

We understand that Zoom is new/difficult for many of us. We hold patience, kindness, and understanding for facilitators, each other, and ourselves if any problems arise

We encourage folks to take some time before a Zoom session to give yourself prep time to feel present in the space. Being on time shows care for the presenters and other participants--
high discipline, high morale!



Camera Ready

Being on camera is a way for us to engage with each other and support facilitators through feedback and encouragement. You have a choice if you want to be on camera or not.

If you are nervous, remember we are encouraging each other! Being active in the chat is another great way to show support and your presence.



Collectivity

We know that the unity of our class across lines of division is not an easy task. We've been taught to act as individuals. We've been taught that we're too different. We remain committed to this struggle. We know the truth is we have much more in common than what makes us different.



Share appreciations

Be vocal with appreciation for presenters and other participants. Welcome new folks in! Reach out and check in on fellow HRC members to debrief sessions together.

If you need support, members of the Put People First! PA Community Care team are trained to be there for you.

"Community Care Reminders" from the 2020 Put People First! PA Membership Assembly

REFLECTIONS FROM THE 2020 NATIONAL UNION OF THE HOMELESS WINTER OFFENSIVE

by Kristin Colangelo, Philadelphia

Homeless organizers across the United States are sounding the alarm as the cold sets in, bringing the nation's attention to the everyday emergency of having no place to call "home for the holidays," especially during the global pandemic's first winter.

A network of people who are homeless and formerly homeless has recently re-established the National Union of the Homeless (NUH) to bring organization and voice to the largely invisible millions who struggle to secure their human right of housing in the world's wealthiest country.

An original NUH organized in the 1980s out of a fundamental economic shift. Computerization, robotization, and deindustrialization led to mass layoffs and ultimately family homelessness. This was a new face of homelessness that the country had not seen before. It was a shift from the stereotype of skid row homelessness to displacement of entire families and communities. The current U.S. shelter system was created in reaction to this shift.

Today, continuing automation of the economy had increased homelessness in the United States even before the outbreak of COVID-19. Between 8 and 11 million people were unhoused at the beginning of 2020, including those living on the streets, in shelters or encampments, or doubled up with others.

RECORD EVICTIONS UNDER PANDEMIC

Without rapid, massive public investment by the federal government, the country soon stands to experience the largest wave of homelessness in its history. The Aspen Institute estimates that 30-40 million renters are at risk of eviction in the coming months. The national eviction moratorium is extended month by month, but no serious talk of rent cancellation makes mass evictions a real possibility.

The pandemic has made painfully clear that homelessness is not the result of individual failings. Rather, it is a symptom of a troubling national trend caused by the lack of living-wage jobs and the defunding of public housing. Housing insecurity is also inseparably tied to other human rights violations faced by the poor, including lack of healthcare, systematic police violence, family separation and rising levels of hunger.

The resurgence of homeless unions across the country is one response to these multiple crises for the 140 million poor and low-income people in the U.S. Joining a homeless union is one way for otherwise disenfranchised people to fight for collective solutions to common grievances. In February, the California Homeless Union won a \$330,000 settlement against the City of Marysville and Yuba County for destruction of personal property when a homeless encampment was dismantled by police.



FIGHTING FOR THEIR LIVES

Across the country, unhoused people struggle against criminalization and are often denied basic civil rights such as voting and identification. These violations have been made worse under the coronavirus pandemic, in which serious public health consequences result from inhumane and unsafe treatment.

As of April 2021, the death rates in all major cities of homeless has increased exponentially; LA reported a 32% increase and NYC reported a 75% increase since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020. Not all deaths can be directly contributed to folks contracting COVID-19, but all can be linked to the significant increase in the overall lack of access to healthcare, preventative care, mental health services, and other services supporting general wellbeing.

THE WINTER OFFENSIVE: WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS

The NUH is active in close to 20 areas across the country and is adding new affiliates every month. As part of the National Organizing Drive, NUH launched the 2020 Winter Offensive, taking place between Thanksgiving and the Jan 15th MLK Day of Service. This concentrated effort worked to increase the visibility of homelessness during the holiday season and broaden its base of support and collaboration during the Christmas season.

With the slogan, "The right to housing, no death in the streets!" the NUH held a series of 4 virtual gatherings and a number of church services focusing on the sins of poverty in the face of unprecedented wealth and the systemic roots of homelessness and poverty. These events were held in partnership with the Nonviolent Medicaid Army (NVMA), Freedom Church of the Poor (FCOP), National Welfare Rights Union (NWRU), Kairos Center, PPC:NCMR and viewed by over 1,000 people nationally and globally.

(Continued on next page.)

During the Winter Offensive The NUH made the bold claim that “in a time when there is a significant push to commercialize this holiday season, we are fighting to ‘put Christ back into Christmas;’ the revolutionary Christ, the man who fed the hungry, healed the sick, cared for the poor and built a love revolution to bring down the oppressive power structure of that day. This is especially significant during the holiday season when the major operations of the multi-national NGO the Salvation Army use these holidays as an ideological and religious symbol of charity as the solution to poverty and homelessness that we directly oppose. This was, and will continue to be, a central theme of the NUH Winter Offensive

The Winter Offensive highlights the demands of the organized poor for the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness at a time of unprecedented inequality. In a year where over 60 million people in the U.S. have filed for unemployment and tens of millions face eviction, billionaires have seen their fortunes swell by over \$1 trillion.

The NUH is not calling for charity or a few crumbs from billionaires’ Christmas dinners. Homeless organizers around the country are raising their voices to say we need a fundamental reorganization of society to make sure that all are cared for.

“The holiday season is a period of the year when as a civic religious ritual, much of the country gives a certain amount of attention to the poor and homeless,” said Dr. Min. Savina Martin, head of the Clergy Council and Senior Adviser of the NUH who was a leader in the original union of the 1980s and ’90s. “We contrast the charity messages we hear with the message of Jesus, and the Martin Luther King’s Nonviolent Army of the Poor. That is, our message is that it’s both possible and necessary to end poverty once and for all.” ▼

DENTAL HEALTH COVERAGE

The Pennsylvania Government cut the Medicaid (welfare insurance) dental benefit in 2011, eliminating coverage for needed procedures like crowns, root canals, periodontal services (deep cleanings for your gums), and anything more than one set of dentures. Put People First! PA (PPF-PA) is fighting back through our campaign to restore the Adult Dental Benefit in Medicaid. One way we’re doing this is by organizing people who need the adult dental benefit restored. We are doing this partially by using our new Facebook group, connecting people across the state. Join us: <https://bit.ly/2RB1Dcu>

MEMBER REFLECTION ON RESTORING THE ADULT DENTAL BENEFIT TO MEDICAID

• by Kelly Earnshaw, Philadelphia

No one should feel alone and dehumanized when it comes to their health. Yet for the past few months, that is how the process I have been navigating as I seek dental care makes me feel.

Science proves dental health directly impacts your overall health. But medical insurance companies, driven by cost-efficiencies rather than health outcomes, will not cover basic dental care, like root canals. As an infection continues to compromise my health, my insurance company will not help, despite the fact that when I called, they told me multiple times that all I needed to do was have paperwork submitted. Although my dentist completed the paperwork, they still deny coverage. My jaw line is destroyed from two recent extractions, but the insurance company does not care that this will likely happen again, because an extraction costs them less than a root canal.

I have never felt so alone, dehumanized, and as if the system cannot be overcome. Essentially, I cannot solve this without thousands of dollars, a statement which astounds and shocks people across the world in other developed nations. Our nation is meant to lead, and yet as a society, we cannot fulfill basic human rights. I have followed the process, which has added months for my infection to progress and worsen, and still, they deny basic coverage. I am fearful as time goes on, I won’t be able to get a root canal anymore, and the dentist will say another extraction is required. In that sense, I feel like I should just give up fighting, because I cannot pay for more implants, which will already cost me over \$7,000 for the two previously extracted teeth.

(Continued on next page.)

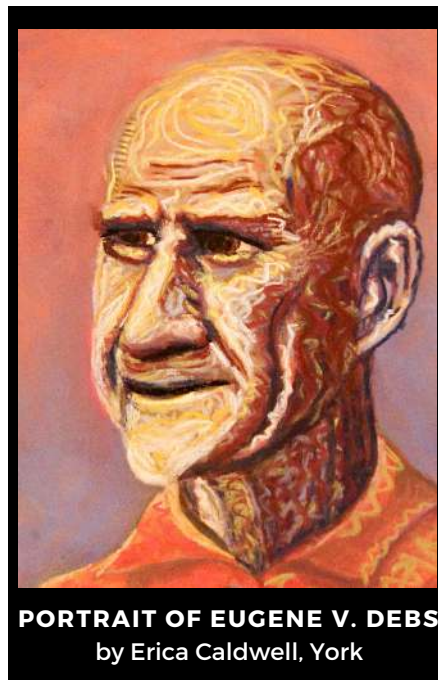


DENTAL HEALTH COVERAGE (CONTINUED)

The only light I have felt throughout the past several months has been from Put People First! PA (PPF-PA). Not only have I felt support, but empathy as well. In fact, I just got another denial after filing a grievance concerning the first denial, and I immediately sent the paperwork to Philadelphia Healthcare Rights Committee members, Iaan and Jacob, who even took time to join the grievance call with me and show support. Without this network, I would have given up by now, as so many others with nowhere to turn do. I cannot adequately express my gratitude and how much PPF-PA's encouragement, compassion, and responsiveness has meant to me, because it is beyond words.

I now understand why people avoid going to the dentist at all. I never had any dental issues, until now. I realized I had put off going to the dentist, but sadly, this was funding related as I feared essential costs. This is not right. We need a better system, we need a better way, and we need a fundamental shift in power. No one should feel so alone and lost when seeking basic health care, yet the vast majority of basic dental services are not covered. Simply put, this needs to change.

Pennsylvania pared the Medicaid adult dental benefit in 2011 down to cleanings, extractions and one set of dentures. If dental problems, especially infections, are neglected, they can result in infection of heart lining, premature birth and low birthweight, pneumonia and other respiratory diseases, and possibly cardiovascular disease. PPF-PA is fighting to get the legislature to reinstate full adult dental coverage as part of our Healthcare is a Human Right campaign. You can join us in the PPF-PA Dental Benefits Group on Facebook! ▼



**SAVE
THE DATE!**



The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival is uniting people across Pennsylvania to challenge the evils of systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, ecological devastation and the nation's distorted morality of religious nationalism. Put People First! is part of this larger network in Pennsylvania!

UPCOMING EVENTS WITH THE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN: A NATIONAL CALL FOR MORAL REVIVAL



On June 21, 2021, poor people, low-wage workers, moral and faith leaders and advocates will gather online simultaneously with a socially-distant rally at the state legislator in Raleigh, North Carolina for a *National Poor People's and Low-wage Workers Assembly* with over 40 state Poor People's Campaign coordinating committees, thousands of religious and moral leaders and over 300 organizing partners. Interested? Stay up to date at <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org> ▼



In Remembrance

*The Keystone is dedicated to our loved ones who have passed this year.
Some of those who we honor are:*

Patrick Braswell. Rochester Homeless Union President.

Walter Zmarzley. He was a steelworker at Bethlehem steel until he retired and also a US army veteran.

Rebecca Neuber. Better than any one else Jacob Butterly knew at diplomacy and doing the right thing. A great mom.

Stay in touch!

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