

INSIDE: The Year the Democratic Party Broke; Fighting Homelessness; What the Democratic National Convention is Costing Philly; A Timeline of Low Points in Party History; Protecting Children From “Child Welfare”; Visions for a Better Society; and more...

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UnConventional Times

HISTORY IS MADE IN THE STREETS

PHILADELPHIA, JULY 2016

FREE

Who Will End Racist Policing and Prisons? Not the Democratic Party

by Albert Nathan Reese

When members of the Philly Coalition for REAL Justice interrupted Bill Clinton at a campaign stop for presidential candidate Hillary Clinton here in April, they got the whole country talking. Photos of activist Rufus Farmer holding a sign at the event—“Clinton crime bill destroyed our communities”—appeared in newspapers nationwide. The myth that the Clintons were friends to urban neighborhoods when they were in the White House finally started to fizzle.

Lately, the Democratic Party has been saying it wants to change the racist police and prison systems that plague our country. But the Democrats have played a key role in creating them and propping them up. The visions of hope for real change come from grassroots groups like the Human Rights Coalition and events like the Black DNC Resistance March organized by the Philly Coalition for REAL Justice.

Stop-and-Frisk

In Philadelphia and across the country, police routinely stop people of color and pat them down. During the first half of 2015, the ACLU reports, 69% of stops and 79% of frisks in Philly were performed on Black residents. More than half of all frisks were done without “reasonable suspicion.”

Democrat Mayor Nutter massively expanded stop-and-frisk, promising it would get weapons off the streets. But it’s been proven ineffective. The ACLU report found that only six guns were recovered during 2,380 stops.



Philly's REAL Justice Coalition took to the streets July 6, marching on Broad Street and blocking the entrance and exit ramps to I-676. There were 12 arrests in outrage that yet another Black man, Alton Sterling, was killed by police, this time in Baton Rouge on July 5. Photo by Joe Piette.

While campaigning for office in Black neighborhoods, Mayor Kenney promised to end stop-and-frisk. He told NewsWorks in April 2015, “If [I’m] mayor, stop-and-frisk will end in Philadelphia, no question.” But after taking office, Mayor Kenney said

stop-and-frisk, which he calls “pedestrian stops,” will continue.

Police Brutality

Like stop-and-frisk, police brutality is based on the idea that people of African (and often Latin American)

descent are always guilty. The U.S. Department of Justice reports that 81% of people shot by Philly police in recent years were Black. In most of the police shootings in which an officer thought a suspect had a gun when they didn’t, the suspect was Black.

In July 2015, six Philadelphia police officers facing overwhelming evidence of ongoing corruption and brutality who had been fired got their jobs back—with back pay. This isn’t unusual. Patricia Vickers, a local

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James Dupree's artist studio in Mantua was almost seized and demolished in 2014 for business interests. Though he eventually prevailed, West Philadelphia gentrification is rapidly accelerating all around the art space. Photo by Laura Evangelisto.

Pushing People Out

How the Democrats have used gentrification to change the face of Philly

by David Thompson

The housing crisis has hit Philly hard. Incomes are falling, while rents and property taxes are skyrocketing. This has pushed thousands of working-class people and people of color out of their neighborhoods. In North Philly, the African-American population dropped 22% in 12 years.

It’s getting harder and harder for those who remain to find affordable housing. The waiting list for public housing stretches 100,000 names long. That means people who apply for it and qualify could wait up to ten years

to get in—if they’re lucky.

We need major changes now: we need protections against unjust evictions, we need rent control, and we need a massive amount of new and better public housing.

But the Philly Democrats aren’t trying to do any of those things. In fact, they’re pushing the poor out of Philly even faster. For decades, the Democrats who run Philly have bent over backward for developers and landlords, leaving tenants and low-income homeowners to fend for themselves.

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Four More Wars With the Democrats?

by Walter Smolarek

Among the weapons manufacturers, the war-mongering foreign policy “experts,” the generals in the Pentagon and the leaders of oppressive governments worldwide, there is one point of agreement: Hillary Clinton is their candidate. She is the one who they can best rely on to bomb, maim and kill for the profits of the big banks and corporations.

Every election year, the Democratic Party presents itself as the party of peace that will only put American soldiers in harm’s way if absolutely necessary. They have been playing this trick for decades, and we need to stop letting them get away with it. From Korea to Vietnam to Yugoslavia and Somalia, some of the bloodiest U.S. military adventures since World War II have been started by Democratic presidents. But we need to look no further than the past decade or two to make this clear.

Afghanistan

The war against Afghanistan was and is a catastrophe. Tens of thousands of Afghan civilians and thousands of U.S. soldiers have died, the country is torn apart by civil war and there is no end to the occupation in sight. The Republican George W. Bush administration exploited the tragedy of 9/11 to begin their plan to assert dominance over the Middle East, but almost every Democrat in Congress voted in favor of the war.

Barack Obama campaigned as the peace candidate in 2008. But one of his first major actions as President was to deploy an additional 30,000 U.S.



University of Pennsylvania's newly constructed Pennovation Center is home to an outdoor drone flight test facility in Gray's Ferry. Photo by Laura Evangelisto.

troops to Afghanistan.

Iraq

Possibly the worst disaster of the 21st century so far was the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Iraq was an easy target for the Bush administration, because much of its population had been starved to death by Democratic President Bill Clinton. According to the United Nations, 1.5 million Iraqis died

as a result of U.S.-imposed sanctions on the country. This included 500,000 Iraqi children.

Hillary Clinton voted in favor of the invasion of Iraq. As recently as June 3, 2011, in a speech in her role as Secretary of State, she said we should “start thinking of Iraq as a business opportunity.”

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The Year Philadelphia’s Democratic Party Broke

by Jack Grauer

In 1976, Democratic assemblyman David Richardson of Philadelphia called for a “crusade against the repression of Philadelphia’s poor.” Jim Kenney, Philly’s current Democratic Philly mayor, says we need to “grow our commercial corridors” to fix poverty.

The way local Democrats talk about poverty has drastically changed. They used to describe it as a social problem. They now describe it as a business problem.

When Ed Rendell became Philly mayor in 1992, he was one of the first local Democrats to talk about poverty as a business problem. The tone has lingered since he left office in 2000.

Rendell didn’t invent the idea of talking about poverty this way. The notion was in the national political weather well before he took office. What he did was use a fiscal crisis to convince the city it should open the window and let that political weather drift into local government.

People often talk about Philly as a city historically run by the Democratic Party. But we didn’t have a real local Democratic Party until the ‘30s. And the Party didn’t have its own money until it agreed to support the New Deal, a proposed fix for the Great Depression.

Keep this in mind. It shows that fiscal crises mark big changes in how Philadelphia’s Democratic Party works.

A lot of middle-class families left Philadelphia throughout the ‘70s and ‘80s. Many did so because of the real or imagined threat of drugs and related violence.

Cities like Philly also lost a lot of federal cash support during that time. And outsourcing among other factors cost the city about half its factory jobs.

Population and job loss meant less tax revenue. Less tax revenue meant less money to run the city.

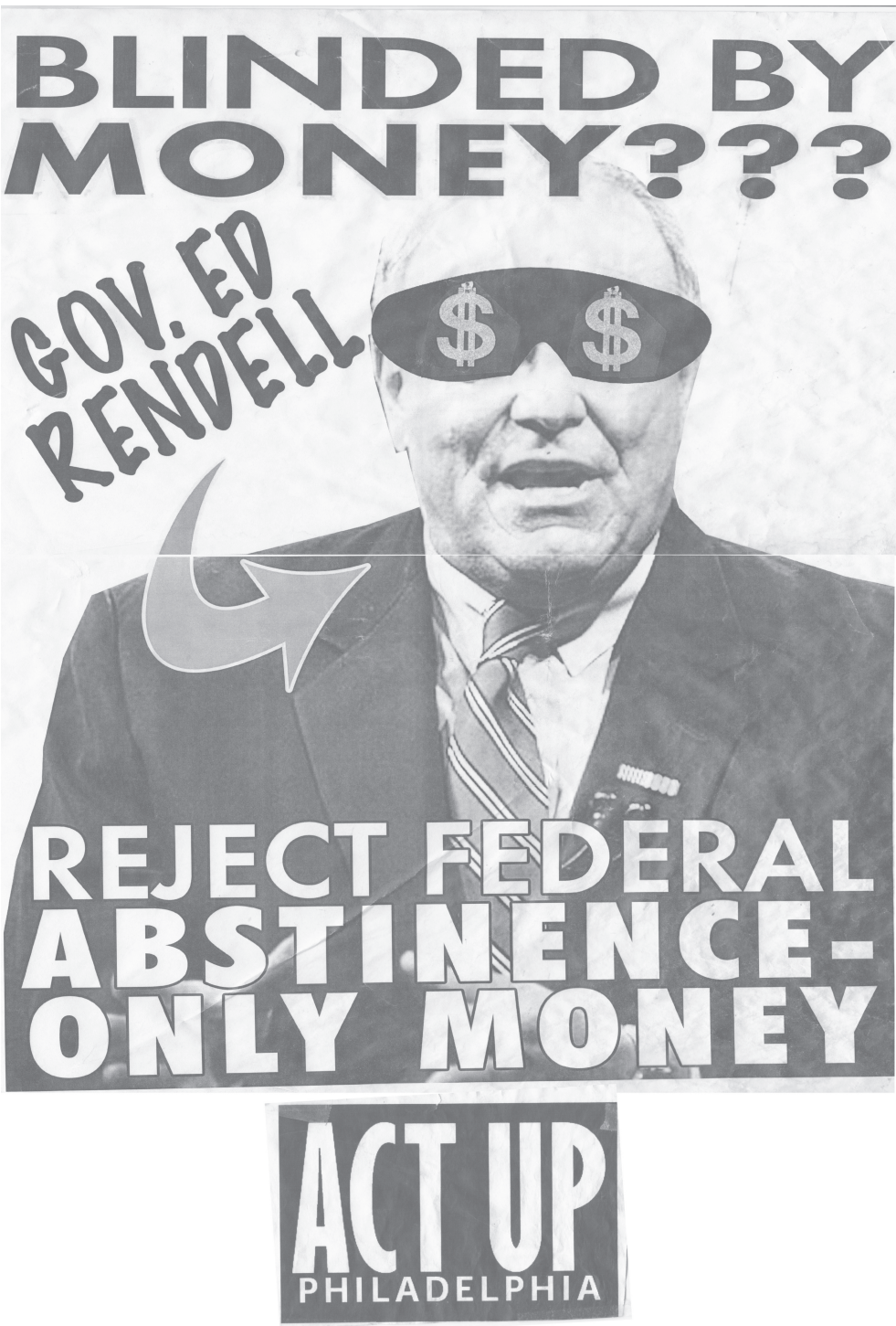
Philly was \$75 million in debt by 1991. We needed \$300 million to avoid a shutdown. No one would loan us that much money. Our credit was maxed out. We had to find the cash ourselves.

We also needed a new mayor. Money problems for that reason became a big issue in Philadelphia’s 1992 mayoral election.

Ed Rendell ran for mayor as a Democrat. He argued it wasn’t drugs, outsourcing or the loss of federal support that brought Philly to crisis.

According to Rendell, the real cause of the crisis was lazy union workers and bad city management. We could only fix it by cutting city spending overall, along with city workers’ jobs and pay.

Months after Rendell won the election, he sent a memo to the press intended to look like a leak, labelled “confidential.” It described how much time and money city workers waste, according to journalist Buzz Bissinger. Bissinger claims he watched Rendell and his cabinet plan the release.



In 2008, Ed Rendell was governor of Pennsylvania. ACT UP Philly made this poster to protest his request for federal funds for sex education that wouldn’t actually touch the topic of sex. Abstinence-only programs tell teens the only way to protect themselves from HIV is to not have sex until marriage. Condoms are taboo, despite their track record as a lifesaver. Same-sex marriage was illegal at the time. The head of Rendell’s office told ACT UP: “Rendell and myself know that abstinence-only education doesn’t work. But we need all the money we can get.”

The scheme worked. The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Daily News and The Wall Street Journal ran quotes from the memo.

This fake leak helped give Rendell the support he needed to cut city workers’ pay by about \$350 million over four years. The unions went on strike. But the strike only lasted a few days.

Rendell also “privatized” almost 50 city services. “Privatization” means a government responsibility like education or healthcare gets handed to a private firm. The government pays that firm to do the work and takes an oversight role.

Private firms usually compete to get the work. Usually, the firm that can do it most cheaply gets the job.

Local government has since continued to privatize itself. Philly spent a quarter of its budget on private contracts in 1996. We put about half our budget toward private contracts in 2015.

These may sound more like decisions by a Republican-run government than a Democratic one. Yes, Philadelphia is a historically Democratic city. No, Democrats don’t get final cut on the city’s budget.

Final say on Philadelphia’s fiscal decisions goes to a quiet but powerful organ called the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority (PICA). The Pennsylvania Commonwealth formed PICA in 1991. It was another product of Philly’s financial crisis next to Rendell’s mayoral stint.

PICA is an unelected board of state legislators. It can block Philadelphia from getting loans and state funds.

Through PICA, Republicans get ultimate veto power on the budgets of “first-class” cities in Pennsylvania. Philadelphia is the only “first-class” city in Pennsylvania.

PICA protects Philly politicians who make unpopular choices. Former PICA chairman Bernard E. Anderson

called it a “heat shield” for Philly officials who “cut payrolls, eliminate superfluous services, restructure government agencies, introduce new management techniques, and renegotiate labor contracts.”

Philly has in the past few decades seen something less than the crusade against the repression of Philadelphia’s poor that David Richardson pictured in the ‘70s.

The Democratic Party has carried out something more of a knob-twiddling experiment from behind PICA’s political heat shield in the name of fiscal responsibility. Yet, in strictly fiscal terms, things haven’t improved for most Philly residents.

The small percentage of families making more than \$150,000 a year grew slightly between 2000 and 2014.

But the rest of the city is waiting for the trickle-down with empty buckets. More people in the city now have jobs than when Rendell left office in 2000. Yet more of them also now live in poverty.

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Changes in Income and Poverty in Philadelphia Since 2000

These numbers come from the 2000 US Census and the 2014 American Communities Survey.

- In 2000, 55.92% of Philadelphians not employed by the military but considered able to work had jobs. By 2014, that number had increased to 59.24%.

- The percentage of Philadelphia residents living below the poverty line increased from 22.89% to 26.68% between 2000 and 2014.

- In 2000, the annual estimated median household income per family was \$50,916 in 2014 inflation-controlled dollars. In 2014, the annual estimated median household income per family was \$46,470.

- 2% of Philadelphia families lived on more than \$150,000 a year in 2000. That percentage had increased to 5.5% by 2014.

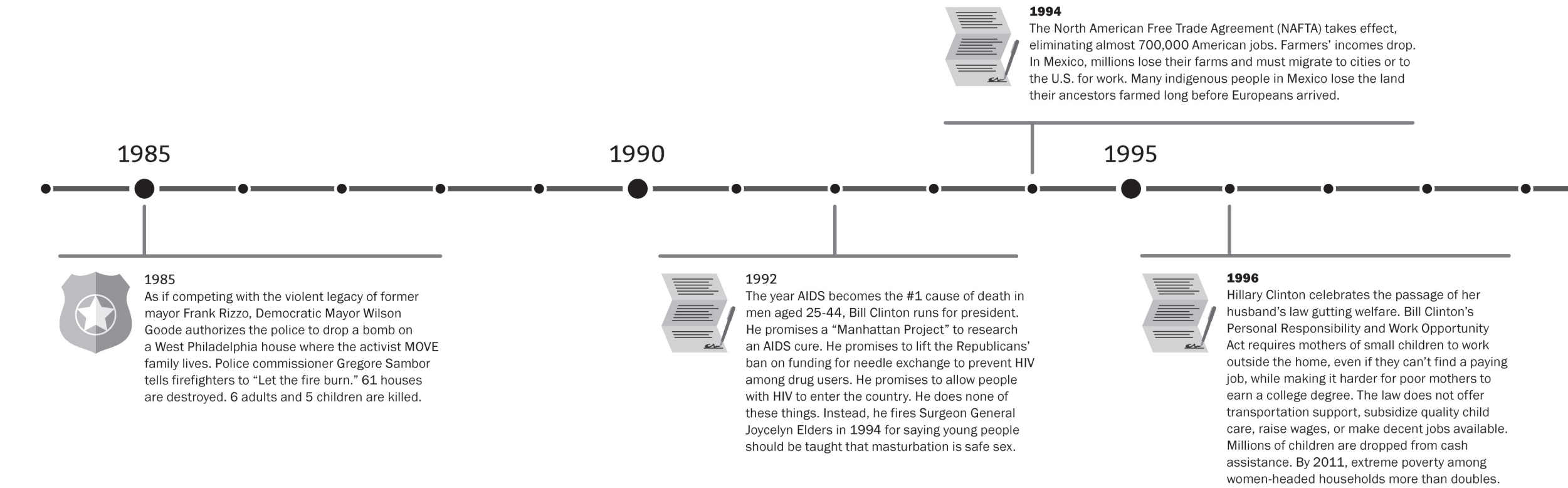
Occupy Wall Street

The protest camps in over 100 cities in fall 2011 changed the way Americans talk about economic inequality. California and New York passed “millionaire taxes.” California passed a Homeowner Bill of Rights with some protections against foreclosure. And a major anti-union referendum was defeated in Ohio. “The 99%” is now a household term.



Protest. It Works.

With Friends Like These... Low points in Democratic Party History



The War on Philadelphia’s Homeless



The Benjamin Franklin Parkway has been the front line in the battle to drive away the homeless. The city is sinking vast funding into redeveloping the parks for tourists, while misusing existing resources for those living on the streets. Photo by Laura Evangelisto.

by Laura Evangelisto

Poverty’s getting worse in Philadelphia. The income gap is deepening.

Growing numbers of food insecure and homeless Philadelphians struggle to get steady access to food and shelter. About 5,500 of our neighbors live without homes.

City officials could fix this problem. But they choose not to. They instead work only to sanitize preferred areas of the city to please businesses and wage an indirect war on our homeless neighbors.

The war takes many forms. City officials make up sneaky rules to force the homeless away from Center City. That’s where tourists, media and investors go.

Former Mayor Michael Nutter added new parts to Philadelphia’s laws in 2012. These new parts held that anyone who publicly shares food must get a permit to do so. These permits would have taken time and money for groups to get.

With these new rules, the city created barriers to giving out resources the government is failing to provide. A federal court ruling was the only thing that kept the city from using these rules to stop the free exchange of food. On July 5th, the city removed the laws from the city code, but the damage had been done already.

Groups discouraged by those rules disbanded and stopped sharing meals. But the history of what the city did and how officials explained it tells

us the path it will take in the future.

The reasons and tactics the city used then are being repeated today. Officials said the purpose of the new laws was to get homeless people indoors where the city could give them what help they need.

Philadelphia could end homelessness if it so chose. The vacant homes are there: about 40,000 of them. The money to put people in them is also there.

This would be laughable if it weren’t such a bold lie. The City of Philadelphia was in fact cutting services for the homeless at that time.

Months before the food-sharing ban, the city closed its largest homeless shelter. They claimed it cost too much to run. Officials said they’d put the savings toward building new homes for the homeless. This never happened.

The city has broken countless promises about how they would help the homeless. At the same time, city officials will actively stop groups who try to make good on those broken promises without local government’s help.

In the late 1990s, one group fixed several abandoned houses and gave them to homeless families. The police stepped in and removed the newly

housed residents. Years later, those homes remain vacant.

The city uses the cover of negligence to a similar result.

In 2015, the federal government granted Philadelphia millions of dollars to help its homeless residents. City officials didn’t spend that money on new housing and homeless services.

Instead, they bought a new computer system to track and monitor Philadelphia’s homeless population. The city puts new money toward such systems all the time. Rarely, however, do they increase spending on housing and related services for the people these systems track.

Philadelphia could end homelessness if it so chose. The vacant homes are there: about 40,000 of them. The money to put people in them is also there. The federal government gives the city about \$30 million a year for this purpose.

But this local government would sooner starve than house the homeless. They’ve stuck to this plan for decades. The only things that change are the reasons they make up to cover their goal: to push the homeless out of their tourist’s playground.

Laura has worked with North Philadelphia Food Not Bombs for the past 16 years. They provide hot dinners Sunday nights on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway across from the Franklin Institute.

facebook.com/NPFNB

Dear Readers,

Have you ever thought it might be a little awkward to yell and sing in the middle of the street with tons of other pissed-off people? Has part of you ever said, “No, that would be awesome!”? Maybe you’re losing your apartment, or your school was closed, or you’re sick of breathing in toxic air from the refinery. As the people who put together the UnConventional Times, we’d love to see you in the streets!

Huge corporations and banks control politicians, so our votes don’t amount to much. But we can take back our power by disrupting business as usual.

The Democratic Party and its members have done a lot of damage to this city, this country, and our world. The fact that Donald Trump and the Republicans are threatening apocalyptic showdowns around the world and more racist violence at home as a policy platform doesn’t let the Democrats off the hook. No matter who gets nominated or elected, we’ll need strong social movements to continue the fight.

This one-time newspaper is affiliated with the DNC Action Committee and grew out of its meetings but is not endorsed by it. Check out **dncactioncommittee.com** for when and where to join protests during the Democratic National Convention in Philly, July 25-28. We’ll be out there with you!

— Laura Evangelisto, Jack Grauer,
Judas Lee, Suzy Subways
The Editors

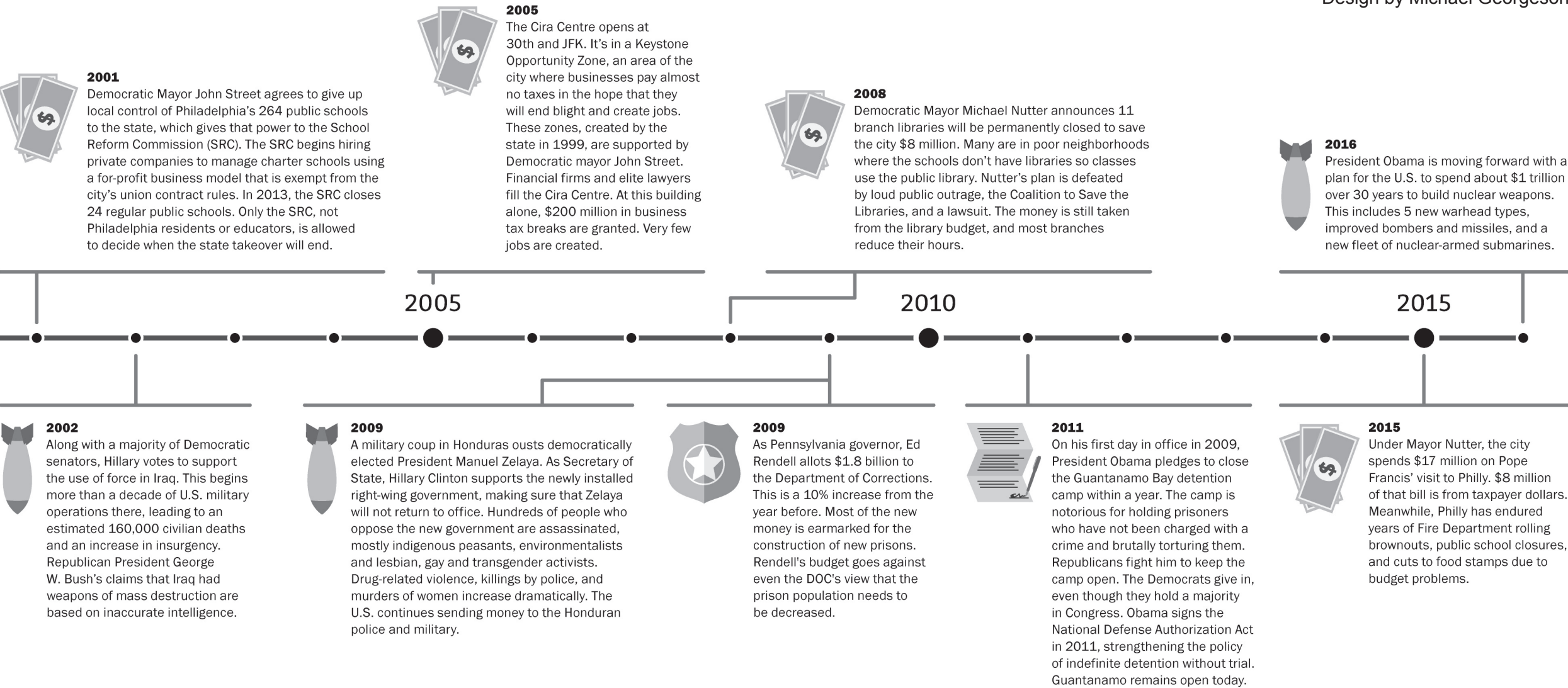
Poster artwork by Beth Pulcinella.

March for Our Lives End Unemployment, Hunger and Homelessness!

Monday July 25, 3pm
South Side of City Hall

Check march4ourlives2016.org for updates

Design by Michael Georgeson







We Could Run Things Better Ourselves

by Suzy Subways

The Democrats are depending on us to vote for Hillary because we're afraid of Trump. And yes, we are afraid of Trump! But voting is only one day. What are we the people doing the rest of the year? These Philadelphians remind us to dream big.

What would education look like in a world you'd want to live in?

“Every child has a right to high-quality, fairly funded, public education. Schools need the resources to provide enough materials and fully supported staff. Students, families, and educators would be at the decision-making table. Learning experiences would push students to think critically, to unleash their imaginations, to see themselves as members of a community with deep and valued history, to see themselves as learners able to explore their own talents and interests. Schools would have a stance against racism and see “discipline” matters as moments for teaching and learning. Schools would be places where students learn the skills and strategies they need to solve the problems of the world they are inheriting.”

—Anissa Weinraub and Sarah Burgess
Teacher Action Group network

How would workplaces be run?

“The future of work and enterprise is one where worker co-op members own, control, and manage the businesses that meet the needs of communities. By bringing democracy into the workplace, workers will be bosses of themselves and one another. Worker-owned businesses put people in control of decisions that matter. This centers them, their values, and their families and community—instead of investors and bosses, whose primary goal is to skim off a profit. Workplaces will become sites of practicing our skills for democratic process and interdependence. Worker cops are already doing this now. That's part of the power of economic democracy.”

—Esteban Kelly
Executive Director, US Federation of Worker Cooperatives

What would healthcare look like in a world you'd want to live in?

“Public health should be people's health. From birth through death. The people should always have access to the best innovative treatment regardless of their ability to pay. For-profit insurance should be a thing of the past, without corporations deciding who receives quality healthcare by what type or if you have insurance. These models are already used in Europe. Medicines should also be free and not the “your money or your life” model that is

currently in place. Large insurance companies and pharmaceutical companies make huge contributions to our elected officials that influence healthcare and medication.”

—Jose de Marco
AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP)

What role would media play?

“Media for the people tells the truth. It's a media that reveals the nature of our shared condition. It is a media that allows us to find compassion in our difference. Media for the people builds the ties we need to take care of each other and this planet. It's not the media of lies and divisions that flood our airwaves today. Media for the people uplifts the common sense that we are each better off when we look out for one another.”

—Bryan Mercer
Media Mobilizing Project

What would we have instead of police?

“I think the most secure societies are ones where civil society, political leadership and the people are united in a common purpose: doing what benefits the people, especially working people. Rather than police, i.e., an arm of exploitive class rule, I'd propose people's committees. Something similar to what exists in Cuba, committees for the defense of the revolution.”

—Dr. Anthony Monteiro
Black Radical Organizing Collective

What would we have instead of prisons?

“Prisons tear apart communities and increase violence. Harm, violence, and trauma need to be dealt with seriously. This is exactly why we need to abolish prisons and put our energy towards forms of justice focused on accountability, healing, and transformation. Responses to violence should be developed within communities, not by the state. The state is invested in maintaining white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism, not in creating justice. When we deal with harm in ways that don't involve the police and prisons, we are building toward what a world without prisons can look like. We need to invest in liberation, not confinement.”

—Layne Mullett
Decarcerate PA

How would people make decisions in our communities?

“In a possible world, the most complete development of the individual and fullest development of the community is managed directly by the people affected.”

—Lucid Strike
Praxis research collective

“To put it simply, anarchism is the political philosophy that people are better off making decisions for themselves, and communities making decisions for their communities, rather than having any centralized power/governing body do it for them. Furthermore, anarchism is opposed to capitalism and all systems of oppression that attempt to exploit or control.”

—Wooden Shoe Books collective

What would a world without poverty and homelessness look like?

“A world without poverty and homelessness is right around the corner. I see her coming, and she is unstoppable. There is no longer the politics of scarcity—only the politics of love and sharing.”

—Cheri Honkala
National Coordinator,
Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign

Black DNC Resistance March

Tuesday July 26, 2pm
Broad & Diamond

Shut Down the DNC! March

Tuesday July 26, 4pm
City Hall

Check dncactioncommittee.com for updates

Who Will End Racist Policing?

Continued from front page

activist with the Human Rights Coalition and the Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration, said that for police officers as well as state prison guards, “There’s not proper training. There’s not accountability. They can do whatever they want to do, and nothing happens to them. And they know that.”

Mass Imprisonment

Stop-and-frisk means more arrests of people of color. Michelle Alexander shows in her book *The New Jim Crow* that the huge increase of Black people in prison over the past few decades is rooted in the war on drugs. Yet white Americans are more likely to have used cocaine, according to a 2013 government survey, and white youth more commonly sell drugs. Bill Clinton expanded “the ‘get-tough-on-crime’ thing and the ‘get-tough-on-drugs’ thing,” Vickers says. “It was focused on the Black communities.” After Clinton’s 1994 crime law, incarceration grew to levels that would have been hard to imagine a few years before, and with Hillary’s support.

In Pennsylvania, 70% of those on death row are people of color. Racial bias in the death penalty has been widely documented. But Hillary is “still for the death penalty,” notes the Coalition for REAL Justice in a statement to the *UnConventional Times*—despite the fact that “some have been innocent and placed on death row.”

Vickers’ son Kerry Marshall was under 18 when he went to prison for life without parole. Pennsylvania has the highest number of minors sentenced like this. “They were kids when they committed that crime,” Vickers says. “The thought is that they’re never going to change. Like something you did when you were 15...you’re going to stay that same person for the rest of your life. Everybody knows that’s not true.”

Visions of Hope

Not only did the Democrats help create a broken system, the fixes they offer are just not enough. Soon-to-be candidate Clinton and Mayor Kenney are pushing for body cameras for police. But they don’t talk about the ways officers protect themselves from accountability. Even the push toward “community policing” by Clinton and Kenney is mind-boggling. If police are bringing racist, deadly violence into communities of color, how will being there more consistently help?

Real change doesn’t come from the top, since the people at the top usually have the most at stake in keeping things the way they are. It has to come “from below,” as the Mexican Zapatista movement says. Bold visions of hope are created in communities struggling for something different.

Prison has to move away from being “all about being punished,” Vickers says. “They need to be focused on healing, they need to be focused on redemption.... It’s not making the world a better or safer place throwing a person in jail for the rest of his life.”

The REAL Justice Coalition says we need a wider view of the problem. They point out that “all those wars” the U.S. has pursued internationally “are waged against communities of color.” And the weapons of war are brought back to the police in our communities. The coalition argues that it will take solidarity between people across borders to effectively resist racism.

The Movement for Black Lives

Although much deeper change is needed, street protests forced cities around the country to make reforms to policing. They got top prosecutors voted out in Chicago and Cleveland, and made Ferguson, Missouri change its racist system of heavy fines. This is part of a long history of protest against police brutality. In Philly, it’s resulted in police shooting fewer people each year since 2013.



Protest. It Works.



Artwork by Beth Pulcinella.

Detained Children: “Freedom, please...”

About 70 miles from Philly at the Berks County Family Residential Center in Leesport, PA, immigrant women and children who escaped violence in their home countries are detained in what is basically a jail. President Obama has dramatically expanded family detention. Lindsay Harris, a lawyer, writes of her visit in February:

“A band of toddlers followed us from room to room. The children, ranging in age from 1 to 4 years old, wore signs written in colored pens and taped on their fronts and backs that translated into English as ‘Freedom! Freedom!’ and ‘Six months of detention. No more!’ and ‘We are not criminals.’

“No photography is allowed on tours of the detention center, but the image of a band of eight toddlers, all holding hands, standing in a line and blocking our path, will forever be etched in my memory. ‘Nos tratan mal’ (They treat us badly), said the sign on the chest of a little boy, and ‘Libertad por favor’ (Freedom, please), said the sign on the back of the little girl next to him.”

March to Shut Down Berks Family Detention Center!

Monday July 25, 10am
Capitolo Field, 9th & Federal

Check vamosjuntos.org for updates

The Real Cost of Putting on a Political Convention

by Kris Hermes

Who’s paying for the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Philadelphia this summer? We are!

The sprawling three-day event will cost an estimated \$85 million. But the DNC Host Committee has refused to tell the public the amount of corporate and individual donations it has received.

If history is any guide, taxpayers will bear the brunt of that cost. When Philadelphia hosted the Republican convention in 2000, taxpayers covered \$40 million of the \$66 million price tag. More recently, Philadelphians were forced to spend \$8 million on the papal visit.

In addition to the cost of hosting the DNC, here are some other things we’re paying for.

In 2014, Philadelphians footed half the \$20 million bill for a new “fusion center.” This hub of law enforcement agencies will be used to gather and share information on political activists during the DNC.

It’s likely that undercover police or informants will be paid to coerce young protesters into doing things that can result in prison time.

Five million dollars will be spent on hiring police from outside the city. This includes Pennsylvania State Police troopers, who have a history of politically motivated surveillance and infiltration.

The security machine led by the

FBI and Secret Service may also include private security companies like the Philadelphia-based Institute of Terrorism Research and Response. In 2010, this company was used to unlawfully spy on a wide range of political groups. The political groups included lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender activists and people who want to stop natural gas drilling and end wars.

It’s likely that undercover police or informants will be paid to coerce young protesters into doing things that can result in prison time. This kind of entrapment is commonly used at political summits like the DNC.

Former Philadelphia Police Commissioner John Timoney was one of the architects of today’s aggressive model for responding to political protest. This model includes heavy surveillance and infiltration, denying permits to protesters, raids and arrests before demonstrations have even begun, police violence against protesters and bystanders, and mass arrests. It also uses forms of preventive detention such as excessive charges, high

bail, and keeping activists detained longer than allowed under the rules of habeas corpus.

All of this costs money. We’ll be paying dearly, whether it’s for (a) the personnel, equipment and weaponry to carry it out, (b) the cost of arresting,

detaining and prosecuting hundreds of people, or (c) paying for the results of violating people’s rights.

Meanwhile, Philadelphia’s public schools are closing and badly neglected. Almost 30% of the city’s population — 430,000 people — are living below the poverty line.

In an effort to reduce some of the costs, the city is expected to buy an insurance policy for rights violations by the police. The city has not said how much the policy will cost. But in 2000, the Republican convention host committee bought a \$3 million policy. This covered the city against claims of police assault and battery, false arrest, wrongful imprisonment, defamation, discrimination, and malicious prosecution. At the time, activists accused the city and its police of engaging in unlawful and violent behavior knowing they would be covered by insurance.

Last year, the City of Philadelphia made the dubious promise not to spend money on the DNC. But it did guarantee a \$15 million line of credit to deal with any unexpected costs that go over the DNC Host Committee’s budget.

Regardless of the heavy financial costs of putting on the convention, Philadelphians and activists coming to Philadelphia to protest the DNC will certainly pay a price.

Kris Hermes is an activist, legal worker and author of *Crashing the Party: Legacies and Lessons from the RNC 2000* (PM Press).



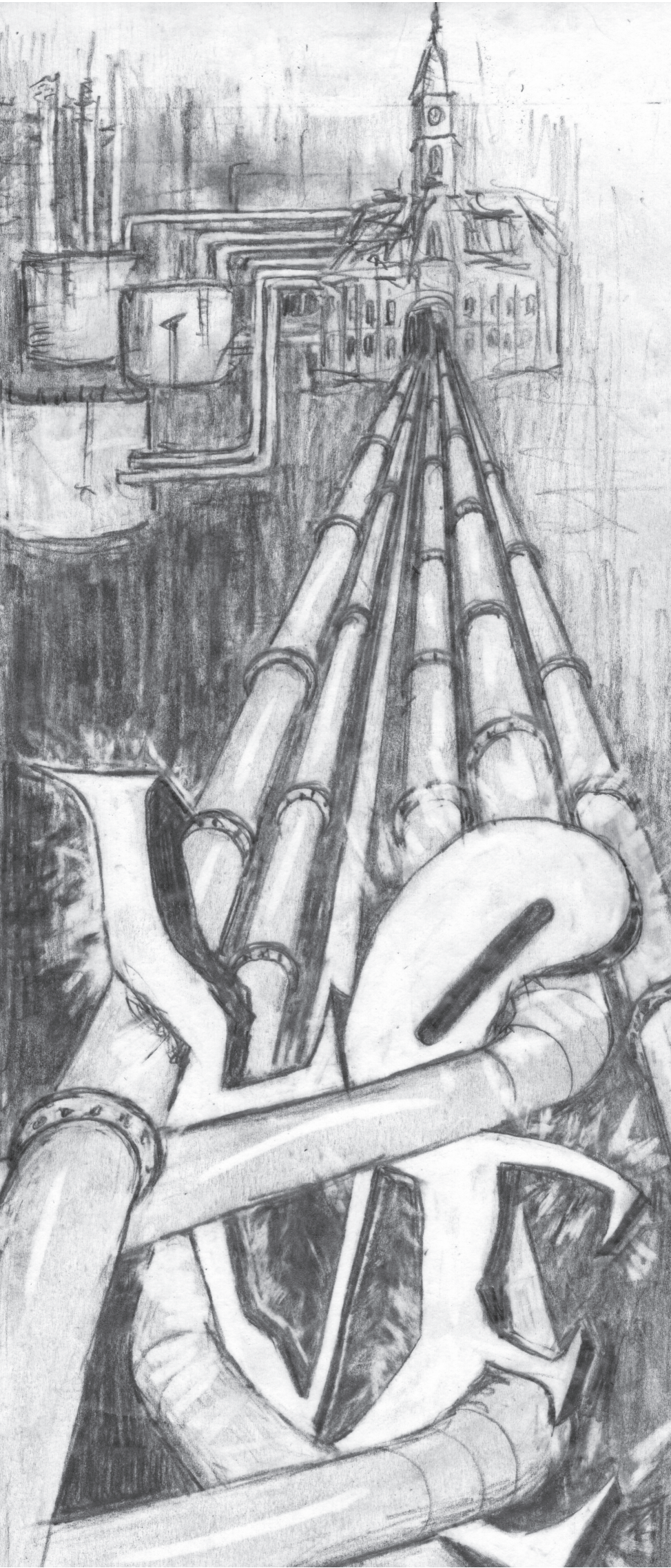
Fencing used during the Pope’s 2015 visit. According to The Declaration, the Secret Service has said they will use similar semi-transparent fencing to separate designated “protest zones” at FDR Park from the Wells Fargo Center. Photo by Dustin Slaughter.

Obama’s Veto of the Keystone XL Pipeline

President Obama used the veto for the first time in 5 years to reject this proposal for a tar sands oil pipeline that would have caused a lot of pollution. What made him do it? 4 years of tactics such as activists living in trees in the path of the pipeline construction and locking themselves inside the pipeline.



Protest. It Works.



Artwork by Beth Pulcinella.

What’s That Smell?

The refinery that spews poisonous air—and that the Democrats want to expand

By Wrecks Tillerson

On the drive from the airport into Center City, you’ll notice a sea of glittering orange lights, flaring towers and steel. It’s the largest oil refinery on the East Coast. It was built in 1866. That means it was already running before cars were invented or environmental rules were written.

These days, the Philadelphia Energy Solutions (PES) refinery pumps out more than 350 tons of dangerous chemicals each year. That’s 350 tons of toxic air pollution released into the air of the fifth-largest city in America — so lots of people have to breathe in that dirty air.

PES is responsible for 97% of the toxic releases in South Philadelphia tracked by the federal government in 2012. Here’s how that toxic pollution breaks down:

- 47% of what was released was sulfuric acid, which causes acid rain
- 20% was hydrogen cyanide, dangerous enough to be used in chemical warfare
- 9% was benzene, which can make people sick at a single part per million

Philly’s got an unusually serious asthma problem, and PES is a major cause. Their toxic releases hurt kids worst. A kid from Philly is twice as likely to get asthma as the average American kid. In some Philly neighborhoods, the risks of asthma for kids are triple — not double — the U.S. average.

Yet Democrats like Pennsylvania Representative Bob Brady and other politicians want to expand PES’s refinery. Just as the global climate crisis reaches a boiling point, they want to make Philadelphia an “energy hub” like Houston.

Energy companies have drilled for shale oil and gas across Pennsylvania since 2008. They use a process called “fracking” to break up rocks underground and release trapped fossil fuels. Fracking makes the air more toxic and has poisoned drinking water many times across the U.S.

A few years ago, the federal government said the water pollution around Pittsburgh was “one of the largest failures in US history to supply

clean drinking water to the public,” according to The New York Times — and those problems happened because of fracking waste.

Democrats and Republicans won’t hear that. They’ve allowed energy companies all over the country to keep fracking. State and federal loopholes have given these companies legal shelter for decades.

The result? The oil and gas industry is one of the nation’s most dangerous industries. At the same time, it’s one of the least regulated.

Oil and gas drillers say these problems are worth it because the industry will give people jobs. But layoffs wrack the industry when oil and gas prices drop. For every boom, there is a bust.

People who live near the shale fields have been offered royalties like the ones on the Beverly Hillbillies. But in real life, many of these royalties have since vanished. Some property owners were even sent bills by fracking companies when the costs of taking the gas from their land were bigger than the money the companies earned selling the gas.

The cash disappeared. Health impacts won’t.

One South Philadelphia resident voiced their related fear of long-term health problems to a reporter with The Philadelphia Inquirer last year.

“[L]iving in the shadow of an unregulated refinery and raising a kid frankly scares the crap out of me,” they said. “I think making South Philadelphia an ‘energy hub’ is a step back into the 19th century.”

That resident asked to stay nameless for fear of losing their job.

Climate change that fracking and oil refineries cause is another long-

term problem. And it doesn’t just threaten Philadelphia. It threatens everyone.

Scientists for years thought coal power plants would make climate change happen faster than gas power plants. But some have recently begun to look closer, and they discovered the damage methane gas leaks cause. It turns out these leaks could make gas more of a threat than coal when it comes to global warming.

Climate change has been a big topic in this presidential election. Analysts report that Greenland’s ice sheet will melt away if we can’t slash 80% of the air pollution we make by 2020. That’s around the same time the next President’s term ends. Whoever gets elected this year will be running the government during that crucial time.

If the ice sheet melts, sea levels rise. And then PES’s refinery and most of South Philadelphia will eventually be under water.

Clinton and Trump have ignored this danger and continue to back the fracking industry.

As Secretary of State, Clinton launched the Global Shale Gas Initiative, which promoted fracking internationally. Trump’s top energy advisor is “one of America’s most ardent drilling advocates and climate change skeptics,” according to Reuters.

If we fail to deal with climate change, the earth will heat to temperatures not seen since pre-history. This will cause mass extinctions of both animals and people.

Yet both U.S. political parties offer short-sighted policies that ignore this real and clear danger. If we leave the decisions to them, we could easily wind up killing off almost all life on earth.

March for a Clean Energy Revolution!

Sunday July 24, Noon
City Hall

Check cleanenergymarch.org for updates

Protecting Children and Moms from “Child Welfare”



Carolyn Hill speaks at a 2012 protest at the Philadelphia Department of Human Services.

by Phoebe Jones

Carolyn Hill knows the pain of living in Philadelphia, the city with the highest rate of both extreme poverty and child removal when it comes to large U.S. cities. In 2012, the Depart-

ment of Human Services (DHS) took her two nieces from her care with no warning. All agreed that the children were doing well with her. The only true reason DHS gave: Ms. Hill didn't have a high-school diploma. Children are often placed in foster

care not because of abuse or neglect, but to feed an industry. While only 13% of children in Pennsylvania are Black, they are 49% of those in foster care. According to the National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, 30% of children would be home tomorrow if their parents just had decent housing. Safety for many children is not improved by taking them from parental protection and fostering them with strangers. One-third of former foster children say they were abused by an adult in a foster-care facility.

Ms. Hill says she was profiled as a low-income Black woman. She took her case all the way up to PA Superior Court, gathering the support of family, neighbors, church, elected officials and women's groups. But the court rubber stamped what DHS had done, which was to put the girls with more distant relatives in a higher income bracket.

“In the eyes of DHS, children are dollar signs,” says Ms. Hill. There is a financial incentive for agencies to take and keep kids. “And the children who really do need protection get lost in the sea of kids unjustly taken.”

Ms. Hill fights back by campaigning with the Global Women’s Strike for a living wage for mothers and other caregivers. They also advocate for the RISE Out of Poverty Act in Congress to undo former President Bill Clinton’s welfare reform that eliminated welfare as an entitlement.

She asks, “Why not help impoverished families stay together by paying mothers the \$38,000 it costs to put a child in foster care?”

Find out how you can get involved: everymothernetwork.net globalwomenstrike.net

Four More Wars?

Continued from front page

Drone Bombings

Democratic politicians like to pledge that they will not put “boots on the ground,” meaning they will not commit large numbers of ground troops to a war. The thousands of U.S. troops who have been deployed to Iraq and Syria over the past few years show this is a lie. It also covers up the fact that the Democrats are still willing to kill our sisters and brothers in other countries.

President Obama dramatically increased the use of drones, which are remote-controlled planes, to drop missiles and bombs. U.S. drone strikes

have hit Yemen, Somalia, Libya, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria in the past few years.

In a July 1st email to supporters of the RootsAction Education Fund explaining his decision to speak out against drones, former U.S. Air Force technician Cian Westmoreland wrote: “My system was a key component used in bombings from drones and other aircraft that killed at least 359 innocent civilians. This was a number derived from a UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan report for the year 2009. Knowledge of my ‘life’s work’ at that time took me down a painful path of tre-

mendous guilt, hopelessness, isolation, and nightmares to what ultimately culminated in me looking over a bridge at the Rio Grande, with the plan of taking my own life in October 2015. It was news of a bombing—using my equipment—of a [Doctors Without Borders] hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan, that brought me there that day.”

A Future of Endless War?

As bad as it has been under the Obama administration, Hillary Clinton will be worse. When she was in charge of the Department of State, she pushed hard for the war on Libya and wanted the administration to be even more aggressive in its efforts to overthrow the government of Syria. We can see the consequences: hundreds of thousands of civilians killed in the two countries, and fertile ground created for the group that calls itself the Islamic State (also known as Daesh, ISIL, and ISIS). We can only expect it to get worse if she is elected president—more poor people in the United States tricked into killing and dying, and more people around the world suffering.



Illustration by Robin Markle.

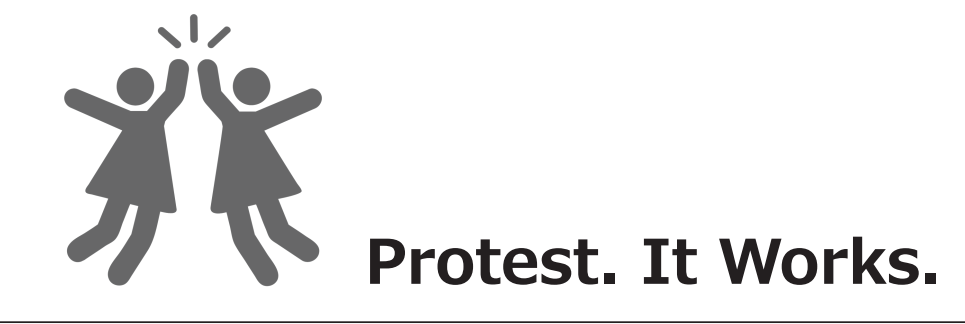
The School-to-Prison Pipeline



Excerpt from “A Piece on the Youth and Adult Prison Systems” by M. Papadopoulos, a member of the Philadelphia Student Union.

Fight for \$15

Strikes by fast food workers have led California, New York state, Washington, DC and more than a dozen other cities and counties to raise their minimum wage to \$15 an hour within the next 4 to 6 years.



Pushing People Out

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A little history

Gentrification is the process where developers, business owners, and the government invest in a low-income neighborhood, drive rents and property taxes up, and replace the neighborhood’s residents with wealthier ones. In the 1950s, Philly Democrats’ goal was to make Philly compete with the suburbs. The mostly white middle class had been moving to them, lured by new government subsidies for (white) people who bought homes.

The city and the University of Pennsylvania began a major re-engineering of West Philadelphia in the 1950s. They set the goal of removing “non-academic lower-income families settling in concentrated groups” and replacing them with “campus-type families.” They succeeded. Over the course of a decade-long battle in the 60s, the government and Penn uprooted the entire neighborhood of Black Bottom, 4,500 mostly African-American people.

Penn still offers generous incentives for its employees to move into West Philly. They’ll give you \$7,500 you can put toward buying a home, they’ll help out with repairs, and even help reduce the costs of closing on the sale. Penn also sank \$150 million into commercial development and a business-improvement district that lobbies for more tax breaks and has its own security service. All this has helped reduce West Philly’s African-American population by 29% and increase its white population by 76% since 2000.

The rich who don’t pay taxes

Meanwhile, Penn pays no property taxes to the city. That’s because this \$10 billion university is “non-profit.” Penn doesn’t even pay “Payments in Lieu of Taxes” (PILOTs) to help support the city services it uses. Our new Democratic Mayor Jim Kenney said while he was campaigning that he wanted to get Penn to start paying these. But once he was elected, his spokesperson said it wasn’t realist-

ic to get Penn to do it “right away.”

That Kenney thought the soda tax was more important than getting Penn to pay PILOTs is typical of how Philly’s Democrats work. They find new ways to give breaks to big businesses and the wealthy while shifting the tax burden onto working people. It’s not just Penn that doesn’t pay property taxes: Drexel, Temple, Jefferson, and La Salle don’t either. Comcast received \$29.3 million in tax breaks from the city’s politicians when it moved here.

In 1999, under Democratic Mayor Ed Rendell, the state and city created 12 “Keystone Opportunity Zones” in Philly. These are areas where businesses don’t have to pay any taxes for 10 years. Of course, those businesses’ workers have to pay their wage taxes.

In the 2000s, under total Democratic party control, the city created a slew of “tax abatements” for condo builders and homeowners new to Philly. Transplants can avoid paying taxes, while long-time residents are stuck with rising property tax bills. This encourages new, mostly white, people to move in, and encourages long-time residents, primarily people of color, to move out.

Now’s the time to fight back

Gentrification in Philly isn’t as far along as it is in cities like San Francisco, Boston, New York, or Seattle. That gives us the chance to fight back now, before the Philly we know is gone. But we in the Philadelphia Tenants Union don’t think we can ever get working-class people the share of development benefits we deserve unless we fight the kinds of policies Democrats have forced on Philly for decades. We’ve got a lot to do. Unfortunately, we won’t get much help from the Democrats.

To join the Philadelphia Tenants Union, call (267) 753-9637 or visit: facebook.com/phillytenantsunion

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