

## March for Our Lives

Members of the California Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign gathered together at St. Rose of Lima Park on May 12 to say, "We stand united for economic human rights! Our right to health care is not negotiable! It is a necessity!" This action was part of a series of events throughout California aimed at highlighting violations of our right to health care. Many organizations and individuals throughout California have joined the Campaign and were present at the March for Our Lives gathering, including such organizations as the Women's Economic Agenda Project, Community Homeless Alliance Ministry, SEIU, Covenant House (a recovery home), Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee, Merced Labor Party, UFCW Bay Area Coalition, Education Committee of Richmond, OASIS (a Hep C education group), California Nurses Association, students of Santa Clara University and more...

At St. Rose of Lima Park, speakers from different organizations spoke to the crowd about the plight we face with decreasing funds for the most needy and in particular for health care. In the richest states in the richest country, Ethel Long-Scott (WEAP) reminded us, the 6<sup>th</sup> largest economy, that we still have poverty and homelessness. Ethel announced, "We are here to serve notice that working and poor people are coming together, coming together with a vision for economic rights!"

The gathering created a deep solidarity and its conclusion was only the beginning of a day of activism. All attending formed a single-file line, holding banners and signs, marched from the park to join a legion already assembled at the State Capitol. When arriving at the west steps of the Capitol, another program was underway. The March for Our Lives continued around the Capitol along N Street. When arriving at the east end of the Capitol, low and behold, there were a dozen or more assembled groups, such as the PPEHRC group that joined PPEHRC's march. The much larger march proceeded towards the west side of the Capitol to join the already-in-progress program. As the marchers arrived, they interspersed into the awaiting crowd, and our small, but mighty, groups became a mighty multitude. All together, representing diverse populations, the old and the young demanded in unison our right to health care and were "United for a Fair Budget" (the title of the day's event).

After a wonderful lunch, many went to lobby inside the capitol building. Michael from WEAP reported, "The CA PPEHRC entered the Capitol along with poor people from across the state- many of whom came all the way from the most destitute areas of Los Angeles- as part of a direct action against the cuts that Donna Arduin, the State Finance Director, is making in Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, and every other service that has provided the bare minimum of public assistance to low wage workers and the poor people. She has specialized in cutting the public support system from state governments in Michigan, New York, and Florida. Now, Schwarzenegger has brought her immoral slash-and-burn science to California to eliminate the last remnants of a system intended to guarantee the most basic access to a dignified life. No demands were met but the event furthered the critical process of unifying poor and working people around a common vision of economic human rights. People from Los Angeles, San Jose, Oakland, San Francisco, Richmond, Sacramento, and many other places joined together as we shouted down the halls, 'Donna, Donna, shame shame shame! Stop using the poor for political gain.' We also chanted in her office, 'Economic Human Rights! That's what we're fighting for!'"

Max Biddle of SHOC reports that Schwarzenegger has backed down some on his cuts to health care, seemingly in response to the demonstrations.