



Poor People's Campaign

A National Call for Moral Revival

*Woe unto those who make unjust laws,
to those who issue oppressive decrees,
to deprive the poor of their rights
and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people,
making widows their prey
and robbing the homeless child.*

- Isaiah 10

At this time of intensifying political, economic, and moral crisis, with the lives of the most vulnerable and the spirits of all under vicious attack, people in growing numbers around the country are fighting back for their lives, communities and deepest values.

There is a resounding call to the very soul of this nation: We need a new Poor People's Campaign for a Moral Revival in America.

50 years ago, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and others called for a "revolution of values" in America, inviting people who had been divided to stand together against the "triplets of evil"--militarism, racism, and economic injustice--to insist that people need not die from poverty in the richest nation to ever exist. He joined with people across the country like Myles Horton of the Highlander Center, Loretta Two Crow of National Welfare Rights, Cesar Chavez of United Farm Workers, Al McSurely of the Appalachian Volunteers, Phillip Bernstein of the Council of Jewish Federation and Welfare, Tillie Walker of the United Indian Scholarship Fund, and John Lewis of the Southern Regional Council. Together with poor people in communities across America--black, white, brown and Native--they responded by building a Poor People's Campaign. We draw on the history, vision and unfinished work of the 1968 Poor People's Campaign and take as our task reigniting that campaign to unite the poor, disenfranchised, and marginalized across difference to take action together and become what Dr. King called "a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life."

The call for a Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival has emerged from more than a decade of work by grassroots community and religious leaders, organizations and movements fighting to end systemic racism, poverty, militarism, environmental destruction & related injustices and to build a just, sustainable

and participatory society. The Campaign aims to build a broad and deep national moral movement – rooted in the leadership of poor people and reflecting the great moral teachings – to unite our country from the bottom up.

For years we have seen a kind of attention violence towards issues of systemic racism, poverty, and militarism. There was a time when our nation was fighting a war against poverty; now it seems we are waging a war on the poor. Our social fabric is stretched thin by widening income inequality while politicians criminalize the poor, fan the flames of racism and xenophobia to divide the poor, and steal from the poor to give tax breaks to our richest neighbors and budget increases to a bloated military.

The twin forces of white supremacy and unchecked corporate greed continue to gain more power and influence, both in statehouses across this nation and at the highest levels of our federal government. Today, one in every two Americans are poor or low-income while millions of children and adults continue to live without access to healthcare, housing, clean water, or good jobs.

At the same time, the issues of poverty and racism have been forced to the margins of our moral narrative and claims that a limited focus on personal morality should overshadow and supplant a commitment to public morality rooted in a critique of greed, racism, and injustice.

The Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival will strategically connect and grow different struggles and lift up and deepen the leadership of those most affected to transform the political, economic and moral structures of our society. The Campaign will push forward concrete demands, build unity across lines of division, and draw on art, music, and religious traditions to challenge the dominant narrative that blames poor people for poverty.

The Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival will necessarily be a multi-year undertaking. The Summer of 2017 through the Spring of 2018 will be used as the public launching of the Campaign. By engaging in highly publicized civil disobedience and direct action over a 6-week period in at least 25 states and the District of Columbia during the Spring of 2018, the Campaign will force a serious national examination of the enmeshed evils of systemic racism, poverty, militarism and environmental devastation during a key election year while strengthening and connecting informed and committed grassroots leadership in every state, increasing their power to continue this fight long after June 2018.

At such a time as this, we need a new Poor People’s Campaign for Moral Revival to help us become the nation we’ve not yet been.