

A MORAL POLICY AGENDA TO HEAL AMERICA: The Poor People's Jubilee Platform

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



REPAIRERS
OF THE BREACH



KAÏROS
THE CENTER FOR
RELIGIONS, RIGHTS,
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

JULY 2020

A MORAL POLICY AGENDA TO HEAL AMERICA

We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States. – Preamble to the U.S. Constitution

No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. – 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches? – Isaiah 10:1

From Alaska to Arkansas, the Carolinas to California, Mississippi to Maine, Kansas to Kentucky, the Bronx to the Border, Appalachian hollers to Apache sacred lands, people are coming together to organize their moral outrage against systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, militarism and the war economy and the false narrative of religious nationalism into a powerful moral fusion movement. There are 140 million people who are poor and struggling against these injustices in the richest country in the world. A society sick with these interlocking injustices needs a voice rooted in our deepest Constitutional and moral values to remind us of who we are and who we must be.

We know that poverty and inequality kill 250,000 people every year in American and it is still not frontpage news. Alongside these unseen deaths, we have seen more than 130,000 deaths from the novel coronavirus. We have also witnessed the brutal murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks and untold others at the hands of state violence. For every day that we choose not to address the five interlocking injustices, there is a death measurement.

In 2018, the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival set forth a comprehensive Moral Agenda based on the needs and demands of the 140 million. For years we have been shifting the narrative and building power among the poor to create a compelling moral force for broad and bold systemic change. On June 20, 2020, millions of people tuned into the Mass Poor People's Digital Assembly and March on Washington to hear the reality facing the 140 million. Hundreds of thousands of people took action and forwarded these moral policy priorities to Congress and their state governors.

We now launch a Moral Policy Agenda to Heal America: The Poor People's Jubilee Platform. This platform proclaims that moral policy is also economically sound policy, because the 140 million are not only the hope of the poor. The least of these, who are, in actuality, most of us, can lead this country out of the pain we have been suffering. The rejected are leading a moral and economic revival to save the heart and soul of this nation.

The Poor People's Jubilee Platform is organized into five sections:

Part I. Establish Justice and End Systemic Racism: The Right to Democracy and Equal Protection Under the Law

Part II. Promote the General Welfare: The Right to Welfare and an Adequate Standard of Living

Part III. Ensure Domestic Tranquility: The Right to Work with Dignity

Part IV. Secure the Blessings of Liberty: The Right to Health and A Healthy Environment

Part V. Provide for the Common Defense: Reprioritizing our Resources

The Platform is grounded in these five principles:

1. **We need a moral revolution of values to repair the breach in our society.** This platform abides by our deepest Constitutional and moral commitments to justice. Where harm has been done, it must be acknowledged and undone.
2. **Everybody in, nobody out.** Too many people are hurting and we can't be silent anymore. Everybody is deserving of our nation's abundance.
3. **When you lift from the bottom, everybody rises.** Instead of "trickle-down," we start with the bottom up.
4. **Prioritize the leadership of the poor, low-income and most impacted.** Those who are on the frontlines of these crises must also be in the lead in identifying their solutions.
5. **Debts that cannot be paid must be relieved.** We demand freedom from servicing the debts we cannot pay.

Throughout our history, it has always been the role of moral movements to turn pain and righteous anger into a transforming force. From Abolition to Reconstruction and the organized outrage of the labor movement, women's movement, Civil Rights Movement and more, fusion movements have compelled governments to take transformative action. This happened when those movements brought diverse people together, resisted efforts to divide their members against one another and refused to narrow demands to what was seen as politically possible. Instead, they pushed for what was necessary and made that possible.

In the early 20th Century, roaring inequality and the Great Depression brought about mass unemployment, hunger and homelessness. Millions of people demanded government action to secure jobs, labor protections and the general welfare. The unemployed councils of the 1920s and 1930s and widespread popular resistance sowed the seeds of the Social Security Act, Federal Housing Administration, Works Progress Administration and the Tennessee Valley Authority. Some decades later, the Great Society of the 1960s reshaped the federal budget: it reduced military spending and increased funding for social welfare and entitlement programs, created Head Start, established Medicare and Medicaid and passed the National Environmental Policy Act. All of these programs redefined the role of government and harnessed the wealth of this country towards the needs of the poor. This did not happen haphazardly, but was brought about by the power of poor people taking action together.

We know that poor and dispossessed people will not wait to be saved. Instead, people are taking lifesaving action borne out of necessity to demand justice now. This is the force that is coming together in the Poor People's Campaign. In 46 states across the country, and together with 19 national faith denominations and more than 200 national partner organizations, we are demanding voting rights, guaranteed incomes, work with dignity, living wages, health care, clean air and water and peace in this violent world.

In 2018, the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival released the Souls of Poor Folk Moral Audit, which looked at how the injustices of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, militarism and the war economy have evolved over the past 50 years. In 2019, we released the Poor People's Moral Budget and showed that if we implemented the demands of this Campaign, we could fundamentally revive our economy and transform our society.

The Poor People's Jubilee Platform now identifies legislative and policy priorities to heal this country. We have been investing in punishing the poor; we must now invest in the welfare of all. We have been investing in systemic racism and voter suppression; we must now invest in expanding democracy. We have been investing in killing people; we now must invest in life. We have been investing in the wealthy and corporations; we must now invest in the people who have built up this country and make it run every day, the 140 million and more who have been abandoned in an era of abundance.

*Somebody's been hurting our people, and it's gone on for far too long,
and we won't be silent anymore!*

Rev. Dr. William Barber II

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PART I. END SYSTEMIC RACISM AND ESTABLISH JUSTICE: THE RIGHT TO DEMOCRACY AND EQUAL PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW

1. Protect and expand the right to vote.

- Reinstatement of key protections of the Voting Rights Act, specifically Section V, and develop a preclearance formula to include jurisdictions that were covered by the Voting Rights Act as well as all jurisdictions that have passed voter suppression laws since 2013.
- Enact all of our voting rights demands, including: securing online registration, automatic voter registration, same day registration, and early registration for 17-year-olds; establish verifiable paper records; make sure judges who are nominated to the federal bench have a clear history of decisions that support voting rights; grant the right to vote for people who are currently and formerly incarcerated; make Election Day a National holiday; grant statehood to Washington D.C.
- Establish the right to participation as an indicator of democracy and a federal authority to monitor the registration and participation of minority, poor and low-income voters.

2. Protect and honor the rights of first nations, indigenous and native people.

- Protect the rights of indigenous people to their lands and resources, the free exercise of their culture and religion, sovereignty for first nations and secure their human rights, Constitutional guarantees and treaty protections.
- Direct adequate federal resources towards Indian Health Services and tribal schools, as well as towards indigenous and tribal housing, water, sanitation, utilities, cultural and other needs.
- With the meaningful engagement of impacted communities, cease all mining and extraction on indigenous and native lands.
- Establish a pre-requisite that assesses harms to the free expression of the right to religion for any federally authorized projects on native land.

3. End police brutality and mass incarceration. Redirect resources towards impacted communities. Establish a National Truth Commission.

- Demilitarize the police: end the 1033 program that sends military equipment to local law enforcement, end all military training for law enforcement; ban the use of force as a punitive measure or means of retaliation.
- Hold police, law enforcement and local governments accountable under federal law as well as state law for abuses of their powers to kill; enforce the duty to intervene.
- End cash bail, predatory fines, fees: stop criminalizing the poor to raise state and local revenues.
- Stop locking people up for non-violent crimes and misdemeanors; issue renewed sentencing guidelines that reduce jail time and the incarcerated population.
- Redirect resources from policing and mass incarceration towards building up impacted communities.
- Work with frontline communities, impacted people and families to establish a National Truth Commission on Mass Incarceration and Police Violence; lift up their pain and identify their solutions to these crises to shape and inform federal policy.

4. Protect immigrant communities and recognize their place and role in our society.

- Move immigration out of the Department of Homeland Security.
- End the 287G program and the collaboration between ICE and local law enforcement.
- Redirect CBP, ICE and resources for the border wall towards reuniting families and securing appropriate documentation for and meaningful assistance to border communities.
- Repeal mandatory detention laws, close child detention centers, private detention centers and shadow detention centers; draw down the population of people who are currently detained.
- Institute a moratorium on deportations and roll back the expanded deportation provisions of the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act.
- Extend eligibility of federal assistance, social welfare programs and CARES Act provisions to include immigrants.
- Repeal the Public Charge rule that threatens the immigration status of immigrants who receive public benefits.

5. Protect democratically elected leadership from being undermined by unelected emergency financial managers who are brought in to resolve budget shortfalls.

- Implement a federal moratorium on emergency manager / emergency financial manager laws that are often applied to minority majority cities to take over local budgets and resources. Remove emergency managers who have been appointed, dissolve takeover boards and return governing responsibilities to elected officials
- Secure the fiscal health of cities and states facing budget crises by establishing automatic stabilizers that will: infuse federal resources into local and state governments; institute moratoriums on municipal and state debt servicing, evictions, rent hikes, utility shut offs and family separation; and increase taxes on corporations and financial institutions.
- Establish local oversight systems to ensure that resources are being used to resolve the fiscal crisis, rather than serving financial interests

6. Secure quality, equitable and diverse public education for all and protect public education.

- Increase federal funding for Head Start and Early Head Start so these programs can enroll all eligible children.
- Increase federal funding for pre-K-12 education that enhances public education.
- Establish federal resources to support substantive efforts to desegregate schools and school districts by race, income and ability.
- Increase resources for school infrastructure and the development of teachers / administrators.
- Establish a technology infrastructure that can provide reliable and secure online and remote learning options to support public education, rather than replace it.
- Identify specific resources for tribal schools and institutions and HBCUs.
- Make public school salaries in poor and low-income communities competitive; expand loan forgiveness programs for public school teachers.
- Protect and expand the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

7. Relieve student debt and provide free higher education for all.

- Provide federal resources to ensure that public colleges and technical programs can be free for everyone who wants to attend.
- Establish 100% debt forgiveness for households with incomes under \$50k; up to \$50k debt forgiveness for households with incomes under \$100k; and proportionally less debt relief for those earning up to \$250,000.
- Allocate federal resources to higher education programs and institutions to train poor and low-income students for the Jubilee Jobs Program.

PART II. PROMOTE THE GENERAL WELFARE: THE RIGHT TO WELFARE AND AN ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING

1. Change the poverty measure to reflect current conditions

- Redefine poverty in terms of economic security and the ability to meet basic needs. At a minimum the official poverty line must be pegged to the median cost of living and include expenses for: housing, utilities, food, transportation, childcare, personal and household items, health care, education, debt and tax burdens, savings and access to financial services.
- This new measure will determine eligibility and the level of assistance for federal welfare, assistance and entitlement programs. All of these programs—including unemployment insurance, guaranteed adequate income, direct cash assistance, SNAP, WIC, social security, SSI, SSDI or others—must ensure an adequate standard of living that is measured by this new threshold.
- During the interim period until a new definition is implemented, the appropriate measure will be at least 2x the Supplemental Poverty Measure poverty threshold.

2. Establish a universal and guaranteed adequate income.

- \$2k per month for adults, \$1k for children / dependents.
- Provide an opt-out option at 400% of the poverty line.
- Include a care income to recognize the economic contribution of routine housework, childcare, tending to the elderly and other household or non-household members and other unpaid activities related to household maintenance.

3. Redefine welfare as a right that strengthens our society.

- Establish a guaranteed entitlement of the poor to a direct cash-assistance program. Payments must go to primary care givers and be commensurate with an adequate standard of living today.
- Repeal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
- Prohibit the use of any funds allocated towards welfare spending to go towards family separation or child removal.
- Expand SNAP and other programs that work for the poor, like the EITC and the CTC.
- Eligibility for welfare programs must be based on an income threshold using the new poverty measure. Eligibility cannot be limited by imposing work requirements or lifetime limits.
- Expand childcare and development block grants to meet childcare and early child development needs for poor and low-income families.
- Expand eligibility to include immigrants and the formerly incarcerated. Anyone in need must be able to access these entitlements.
- Index funding of these programs to inflation on an annual basis.
- Establish participatory oversight at all levels of governance.

4. Protect and expand Social Security, Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance.

- Ensure that SS, SSI and SSDI payments secure an adequate standard of living as measured by the new poverty measure.
- Protect these critical sources of income from economic crisis, fiscal crisis or any other public health crisis.
- In the case of an economic downturn, the Treasury must transfer the necessary funds to offset in full any losses to ensure that these payments continue to be made and provide for an adequate standard of living.

5. Secure housing for all.

- Acknowledge the true extent of homelessness to establish housing policies that can account for all the homeless.
- Establish the Housing First program within the Jubilee Jobs Program to end homelessness by providing housing for all: Mobilize public resources and capacity to turn vacant units into affordable public housing. Build new public housing. Protect and expand housing and rental assistance for poor and low-income households. Minimize the use of shelters.
- Prevent further homelessness: Ensure that the costs of housing are within the income abilities of every household. Stop all evictions. Prohibit rent increases and the imposition on any late fees on mortgages and housing payments. Curb speculation in housing markets.
- Impose penalties on Wall Street, real estate corporations and other institutions that have profited from the housing and financial crisis of 2008-9. These penalties will be directed towards the Housing First program and rental assistance.

PART III. ENSURE DOMESTIC TRANQUILITY: THE RIGHT TO WORK WITH DIGNITY

1. **Update the unemployment measure and expand unemployment coverage.**

- Establish the U6 measure of unemployment as the standard measure of unemployment.
- Make COVID-19 unemployment provisions permanent: Expand unemployment insurance coverage to include all who were eligible for the expanded coverage during the COVID-19 pandemic, incentivize work sharing and extend the number of weeks that unemployment insurance is available.

2. **Institute living wages and economic security for all workers.**

- Raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 / hour.
- Make concrete plans to raise the minimum wage from \$15/hour to a real housing wage (\$23/hour in 2019) in no less than two years; index the real housing wage to inflation and adjust annually.
- Legislate equal pay for equal work and make it mandatory under federal law.
- All workers must have paid family leave, paid sick leave, hazard pay, personal protective equipment and living wages.

3. **Establish the Jubilee Jobs Program, a federal jobs program to secure full employment as a right.**

- Prioritize socially beneficial industries, with massive investments in caregiving, education, health care, mass transit, water / utilities / infrastructure jobs and cultural production in poor and low-income communities, deindustrializing communities, small towns, rural areas and indigenous areas.
- Within the Jubilee Jobs Program, establish: (1) Community Care Corps that will focus on expanding health care training, capacity and resources; (2) Green Jobs Corps that will focus on environmentally sustainable infrastructure jobs; (3) Housing First that will focus on converting vacant property into affordable public housing and building new affordable public housing; (4) Together We Thrive that will focus on education and schools; (5) Jubilee Arts and Justice Corps that will focus on cultural production; (6) Universal Tech Corps that will focus on training and placement in ICT, R/D and automation sectors; and others.
- Include job training and placement programs to support employment of poor and low-income students and workers who have been displaced in these socially beneficial industries.
- All jobs within this program will provide living wages, worker protections and give workers the right to form and join unions. They will also give workers in these programs a leading voice in their design and implementation.

4. **Secure the right to free association and the right to form and join unions.**

- Ensure the vast majority of workers are able to form and join unions.
- Establish sectoral and geographical forms of bargaining.
- Establish the NRLA as a floor, not a ceiling, and allow states to go above and beyond its protections.
- Extend NRLA, FLSA, OSHA protections to include all workers: informal workers; so-called independent contractors; self-employed workers; undocumented workers; workers with disabilities; incarcerated workers; and workers designated as “essential” workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Expand protections for workers who organize.

PART IV. SECURE THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY: THE RIGHT TO HEALTH AND A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

1. Protect and secure health care for all.

- Expand Medicaid and Protect Medicare.
- Establish a universal, single player health care system that provides health care to all, regardless of income, disability, prior health conditions, employment status, immigration status or any other characteristic that is used to deny eligibility for health care coverage.
- Increase resources for Indian Health Services to make sure it is adequately funded.
- Expand Veterans health care to make sure it meets the needs of our veterans.
- Allocate specific resources for COVID-19 vulnerable populations, including people who are homeless, incarcerated, detained and those in congregate care at nursing homes and other care facilities.

2. Expand our public health care infrastructure and capacity.

- Move federal resources and capacity towards re-opening hospitals that have been closed over the past 10 years, prioritizing hospitals in poor, low-income, rural and native communities.
- Update hospitals in these communities so they are equipped to provide the best possible modern medical care.
- Nationalize production and distribution of critical health care equipment.
- Establish a public health communications infrastructure to share resources, learn and communicate with hospitals and health professionals across the country and world.
- Establish a Community Care Corps within Jubilee Jobs Program to train community health service providers and expand health care resources in poor and low-income communities, rural areas and small towns.
- Expand resources for CDC and NIH to study health impacts of poverty, inequality and ecological devastation.

3. End medical debt.

- Establish a federal relief fund to end all medical debt, especially for poor and low-income people.
- Resource the relief fund by imposing penalties on the past and future profits of insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, device manufacturers and other health care companies.

4. Secure access to water and utilities for all.

- Institute a moratorium on all shut-offs; turn the water and lights back on; and relieve water and utilities debt.
- Implement a national water affordability program that is funded in part by past and future profits from water bottling companies.
- Restore federal funding to local water systems. Funding must be conditioned on ending water shut offs and turning water / utilities back on.
- Direct national resources and capacity to rebuild water, sanitation and utilities infrastructure.
- Return private water and utilities to the public sector.

5. Declare climate change a national emergency.

- Redefine critical infrastructure as infrastructure necessary for a 100% renewable and climate resilient economy. This includes a modern smart grid that can manage and support 100% renewable energy use.
- Prohibit the construction or expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure, including all new pipelines, refineries and coal, oil and gas export terminals. Ban fracking, mountaintop removal coal mining, coal ash ponds and offshore drilling. End federal fossil fuel subsidies.
- Expand and strengthen the EPA, reinstate environmental rules and regulations that have been rolled back and prohibit rule-making that weakens federal policies on climate protections.
- Allocate federal resources to climate research and climate crisis mitigation strategies that are working and that can be scaled up.
- Rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement and become a global leader on climate reduction goals

6. Establish a Green Jobs Corps within the Jubilee Jobs Program.

- Target poor and low-income communities that have been reliant on fossil fuels, extraction and polluting industries and/or experienced ecological devastation and climate crisis. These jobs will provide pension support and early retirement support for those who choose / can no longer work, especially for workers who are being transitioned from fossil fuel jobs.
- Projects will include: expanding water, utilities and sanitation services; infrastructure development (roads, bridges, broadband and communications); updating and retrofitting public housing to ensure that it is climate resilient and energy efficient; recycling/composting; sustainable agriculture, land restoration and protection; expanding and strengthening public mass transit; installing solar panels; building wind turbines, advanced batteries and the hardware and software of smart grids, and more.

7. Make a full, financial assessment of the environmental damage knowingly caused by fossil fuels and extractive industries.

- Target fossil fuel companies, agribusiness and other large GHG emitters, including military-industrial contractors; asset management firms with significant fossil fuel holdings; financial institutions with significant loans to fossil fuel companies; insurance companies with significant coverage of fossil fuel companies' risks; consulting companies, software companies and retailers who have contracted services with fossil fuel companies; and households that constitute the top 0.01% of wealth holders in the United States.
- Redirect this wealth towards the clean-up costs and responsibilities of establishing a 100% renewable and climate resilient economy, including the Green Jobs Corps, and other social programs indicated in this platform.

PART V. PROVIDE FOR THE COMMON DEFENSE: REPRIORITIZING OUR RESOURCES

1. End the culture of war.

- Cut military budget by \$350 billion: close foreign bases, cut unnecessary weapons, dismantle nuclear weapons, close unnecessary domestic bases, cut overhead costs, cut foreign military aid, cut resources for overseas contingent operations and more.
- Do not reauthorize the Budget Control Act when it expires in 2022, instead, delink military spending from social welfare spending and redirect military resources that have been cut towards securing basic needs here at home, as indicated in this platform.
- Shift emphasis in foreign policy towards diplomacy, foreign debt relief and humanitarian assistance.
- End economic sanctions that are hurting poor people, including in Iran, Venezuela, Cuba, North Korea, Sudan and Syria.

2. Demilitarize our communities.

- Implement policy priorities under Part I, End Systemic Racism and Establish Justice, to end police violence, mass incarceration and to demilitarize the US-Mexico border.
- End the easy access to firearms that are militarizing our communities.

3. Implement fair taxes and penalties on the wealthy, corporations and Wall Street.

- Fair taxation will raise nearly \$8.9 trillion over the next ten years that will be used to support the programs in this platform. Taxation includes: wealth tax on ultra- millionaires and billionaires, raising the top individual tax rate, taxing income from investments the same as income from work, strengthening the estate tax, taxing capital gains appropriately, restoring the corporate tax rate to 35%, repealing tax breaks for fossil fuels, reinstating a financial transaction tax and more.
- Implement additional penalties on wealth that has been wrongfully gained through the climate crises, 2008-9 foreclosure crisis, water scarcity and profiteering from multiple health crises.

4. Relieve the debts of those who cannot pay them.

- End payments on crushing individual and household medical debt, housing debt, water / utilities debt and relieve student debt, especially for poor and low-income families. Waive all interest payments.
- End payments on municipal and other bonds for cities and states that are in fiscal crisis. These bonds funnel public resources towards servicing debt—rather than meeting critical public needs—and must be relieved. Waive all interest payments.

5. End the practice of profiteering from crisis.

- Federal resources to address economic, social or public health crises must first be directed towards the needs of the poor and most marginalized and cannot go to lobbyists, insurance companies, financial institutions, pharmaceutical companies, wealthy corporations or otherwise be used to increase the wealth of Wall Street, corporations and the wealthy.
- Stop banks from freezing accounts and garnishing payments from poor and low-income individuals.
- Increase federal protections from predatory lending.

6. Work to close the racial wealth divide.

- Establish a “Baby Bonds” program that provides bonds for each American child, regardless of race, valued at between \$500 and \$50,000, depending on the parents’ wealth level.