

# THIRD RECONSTRUCTION AGENDA TO HEAL THE NATION: END POVERTY AND LOW WAGES FROM THE BOTTOM UP

## JUNE 18, 2022

**11** Did you know that, over the past 20 years, our government has spent more than \$21 trillion on war, militarizing the border, surveillance and a war economy that kills, incarcerates and criminalizes the poor at home and around the world?

**Therefore, we demand** that our government prioritize peace by reducing military spending by at least 10% now and redirecting those resources towards diplomacy, humanitarian aid and the priorities in this agenda. We demand that spending on mass incarceration, immigration enforcement and policing is redirected towards community-based infrastructure, programs and resources that prioritize communities most impacted by this violence.

**12** Did you know that religious nationalism has been used to justify systemic violence against poor people and people of color and is currently threatening our democracy and fundamental rights?

**Therefore, we demand** that the laws, legislation, policies and budgets of this nation are based on the five key principles of the US Constitution: to establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and future generations.

We demand that social and economic injustices that have enslaved, dispossessed or oppressed entire communities are addressed through the priorities of this agenda. We demand a national commission to study and develop proposals on reparations for African Americans. We demand a national truth-telling that includes recommendations for restorative processes and reparations for Indigenous people and other communities that have suffered systemic harms from unjust policies, including Hispanic, Latino/a, Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian people.

**13** Did you know that fully funded social welfare programs can lift the load of poverty?

**Therefore, we demand** social welfare programs, including direct and regular cash assistance programs, without restrictive means testing or work requirements, that can guarantee adequate incomes for all.

**14** Did you know that poor and low-income people voted in record numbers in 2020, accounting for nearly one-third of all votes? Did you know that, if organized around a moral agenda that takes up these issues, poor and low-income voters hold the political power to change our national priorities?

**Therefore, we demand** a Third Reconstruction agenda that centers the 140 million and revives our economy from the bottom up, because when we lift from the bottom, every rises!

*There are 140 million people who are poor or low-income living in the US, accounting for over 40% of the population. We are of every race, age, faith, gender expression and identity and we live in every region, state and county in the country. We will not be unseen in the face of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation and the denial of health care, militarism and the expansion of the war economy or the false narrative of Christian nationalism.*

*On June 18, 2022, we assemble in Washington DC, alongside moral allies and people of faith and conscience, and make a commitment to organize a broad-based movement that can confront these interlocking injustices with a Third Reconstruction Agenda to Heal the Nation: End Poverty and Low-Wages from the Bottom Up.*

*This is not a day, but a declaration! We will change the narrative on these injustices, build our power, engage our elected officials and REGISTER TO VOTE. Poor and low-income people make up one-third of the electorate. Our votes are not a show of support—they are a demand to be heard! We won't be silent anymore!*

*Bishop William J. Barber, II, D.Min., National Co-Chair  
Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, National Co-Chair  
Shailly Gupta Barnes, National Policy Director*



Visit [poorpeoplescampaign.org](http://poorpeoplescampaign.org) to read the full Third Reconstruction Agenda.

**1** Did you know that there are 140 million poor and low-income people in the US, including people of every race, age, gender identity and faith, who live in every region, state and county of the country?

**Therefore, we demand** that our politics, policies, laws and legislation center and prioritize the poor.

**2** Did you know that nearly one-third of the US labor force earns less than \$15 per hour?

**Therefore, we demand** a federal minimum wage of at least \$15 an hour, a commitment to enact living wages in a timely manner and the right to form and join unions for all workers.

**3** Did you know that in 2021, 19 states passed voter suppression laws that will make it harder for up to 55 million people to vote? Did you know this onslaught follows voter suppression activity that began in 2010 and was unleashed after the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act in 2013? Did you know politicians who benefit from voter suppression often vote against policies like universal health care and living wages?

**Therefore, we demand** the right to meaningfully participate in the decisions that impact our lives by expanding voting rights, restoring the 1965 Voting Rights Act and updating the pre-clearance requirements to fully address historic and contemporary voter suppression activities.

**4** Did you know that 87 million people were uninsured or underinsured leading into the pandemic and up to 15 million people may lose their access to affordable health care when the federal pandemic emergency ends?

**Therefore, we demand** that Medicaid be expanded and Medicare be protected, as public goods, and we demand a universal, single-payer national health care system for everyone, regardless of income, ability, gender expression, documentation, carceral status or pre-existing conditions.

**5** Did you know that millions of people can't afford basic needs like housing, food, water or utilities?

**Therefore, we demand** an end to homelessness, evictions and foreclosures. We demand that food security programs are expanded for all in need. We demand universal access to clean water, utilities, and high-speed broadband. We demand relief for household and rental debt, water debt and utilities debt that cannot be paid.

**6** Did you know that most public-school students are poor and student debt impacts 45 million people?

**Therefore, we demand** quality, equitable and diverse public education from pre-k to college, increased funding for early childhood programs like Head Start and early Head

Start and the desegregation of schools by race, income, ability and language. We demand comprehensive student debt relief, alongside access to free, quality higher education and technical school.

**7** Did you know that although this nation was founded by immigrants, immigrants today face systemic violence and xenophobia?

**Therefore, we demand** that immigrants' rights are respected and protected wherever we live, move and work. We demand adequate documentation to move freely in society and a timely citizenship process for all who seek citizen status, regardless of country of origin, age at entry or years in residence. We demand that immigration policies prioritize family reunification over deportations, detentions and family separation. We demand that federal assistance is extended to all who are in need, regardless of documentation status. We demand that the southern border is demilitarized.

**8** Did you know that the sacred lands of many Indigenous people are at risk of complete devastation by the world's largest mining and extractive companies?

**Therefore, we demand** that the rights of Indigenous people and First Nations are fully protected and respected. We demand that the sacred land of Oak Flats is protected from imminent destruction.

**9** Did you know that poor and low-income counties suffered COVID-19 death rates that were, at times, 5x higher than rich counties? Did you know that poor communities are also hit first and worst by climate crisis?

**Therefore, we demand** equitable and free testing, treating, vaccination and care for COVID-19, including long-term impacts, regardless of income, ability, gender expression, documentation, carceral or insured status. We demand further research on the impacts of poverty and inequality on health outcomes. We demand a robust climate agenda to ensure a swift transition to a green economy that prioritizes poor and low-income front-line communities and builds up public infrastructure, resources and capacity.

**10** Did you know that billionaire wealth surged by over \$2 trillion during the pandemic, but under current tax law, these gains will go largely untaxed?

**Therefore, we demand** fair taxation on the ultra-rich, corporations and Wall Street, including a wealth tax on mega millionaires and billionaires, raising the top individual tax rate, taxing income from investments the same as income from work, strengthening the estate tax, restoring the corporate tax rate to pre-2017 levels and reinstating a financial transactions tax.

*(continued on p. 4)*