

Thu, Apr 11, 2024

# CALIFORNIA



*Last week, the CA PPC family took part in the Beyond Vietnam readings and a UNITE HERE rally for hotel workers—the latter featuring a rousing speech from Senator Sanders. Recaps of both below, plus a declaration from Bishop Barber and other faith leaders and an article on the PPC's election year work. Whether or not you were able to participate last week, there's a lot more great work for us on the horizon. Forward together!*

## Recaps



### **Beyond Vietnam readings draw crowds and defy downpours**

Last Thursday, on the 56th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., groups around the state gathered for participatory readings of his prophetic [speech](#) “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence,” originally delivered exactly one year before his death.

The **Oakland** reading, co-sponsored by CA PPC and Western States Legal Foundation, took place in front of City Hall. Patricia St. Onge (Haudenosaunee and Quebeoise; adopted Cheyenne River Lakota) opened the reading with a land acknowledgement. Participants endured a downpour and hailstorm early on, but the skies cleared and they completed the 16-part reading, closing with a song led by theomusicologist Virginia Hollins-Davidson.

In **Los Angeles**, PPC supporters gathered with the [Alexandria House](#) community, including people from around the world, the city and the block. After reading the speech, PPC activist Jacqueline Johnson recited a poem she wrote honoring Dr. King; this was followed by lively conversation and refreshments. People were especially appreciative of the opportunity to come together in such troubling times.



Later in the day, the **Santa Cruz** Resource Center for Nonviolence sponsored “A Revolution of Values,” a reading that included voices from across their community and inspiring [music](#). They noted that their decades-long tradition of reading Dr. King’s speech is not just an event; “it’s a call for introspection, dialogue and action.”

In the evening, over 70 people joined our **online reading**. Rev. Monica Cross offered opening remarks to center us and express why we gather to read this speech every year. Readers included Jessica Chairez from Pitzer College and 10-year-old Melany Escobar — important reminders of our responsibility to work toward a more peaceful and just world for the generations to come.

In the speech, Dr. King declared: “I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values.... When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.”

The Poor People’s Campaign has picked up Dr. King’s unfinished work, weaving the interlocking injustices of systemic racism, systemic poverty, environmental devastation, militarism and the war economy and a distorted moral narrative of Christian nationalism that blames poor people for their own poverty, into one “moral fusion” campaign.



### **Senator Sanders joins hotel workers at UNITE HERE rally**

LA PPC activists walked the picket line around Hotel Figueroa on a chilly afternoon last week. They joined over 100 hotel workers, mostly Latinas, plus supporters from schools and other allied groups to amplify workers’ demand for fair contracts and safe working conditions free from sexual harassment. At the rally following the picketing, they heard from tourism workers, local elected officials and Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt), who received cheers as he praised the workers and echoed their calls for higher wages, job security and improved working conditions.

As usual, loud drums, horns, noisemakers and voices raised in chants made sure the action couldn’t be missed among the rush-hour traffic.

The rally was widely reported, including in [Common Dreams](#), which quoted Sen. Sanders: “You are an inspiration, because of your courage, to millions of working people throughout this country. You are working hard, you are what keeps these hotels going.

You deserve decent wages, you deserve decent benefits, you deserve decent healthcare, you deserve decent schedules, you deserve decent pensions."

Later, Sen. Sanders posted about the event on [social media](#). "I was proud to join the courageous UNITE HERE Local 11 hospitality workers on the picket line yesterday in downtown LA," he wrote. "They're part of a growing movement of workers who are standing up to corporate greed across this nation. You are an inspiration to us all. Solidarity forever."

## Meetings

### Statewide organizing meetings

**Wednesdays, 6:30pm | [RSVP](#)**

Our Wednesday meetings are a time to meet activists from around the state and take part in educating, registering and mobilizing our communities for these historic actions and the November election. It's a place to lend a hand and to learn from one another.

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## Support the California PPC!

*When over 140 million Americans are poor or living with low-wages, it's time for systemic change. We are building a movement led by poor and impacted folks, building across all lines of division, in order to topple the interlocking pillars of racism, poverty, militarism, environmental destruction and this country's distorted moral narrative. Please help us achieve this goal by clicking below and chipping in whatever you can.*

**DONATE**

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## PPC in the media



### **Bishop Barber co-signs "Declaration of Moral & Spiritual Issues in the 2024 Presidential Election"**

Sharing a [Religion News](#) article, Bishop Barber encouraged faith leaders and their communities to read, sign and share the [New Haven Declaration of Moral & Spiritual Issues in the 2024 Presidential Election](#)—a document that lays out the heightened threat of Christian nationalism in an election year.

“From the top of the ticket to local state house and judicial races, it is not the job of pastors to tell anyone for whom to vote,” they write. “But preachers do have a responsibility to make clear how the tradition of Jesus and the prophets speaks to the world today. We must challenge our congregations and the wider public to choose carefully and wisely which candidates for public office best represent our true moral values.”

**“Can the Poor People’s Campaign change the outcome of the 2024 elections?”**

A recent [Truthout](#) article explores in depth the concept of structural violence, the history of the PPC and the current 42-week voter education and mobilization drive. Recognizing that poverty can be harder to grasp as a form of violence than, say, police brutality, the author asks, “How can structural violence be made visible?”

Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis is quoted throughout the piece. “I have a love-hate relationship with ‘the poor you shall have with you always’ from Matthew 26, verse 11,” she says. “It has been used more than any other Bible verse to justify poverty. It is actually saying the exact opposite. It actually means poverty will only exist if we are being disobedient to God. It reminds people that when you cancel debt, pay workers a living wage, lend money knowing you might not get paid back and organize society around the needs of the poor, then you will never have anyone poor among you. Therefore, if poverty exists it is because we are out of sync with God.”

Rev. Theoharis shared the article on social media: “If the campaign succeeds, it will position the poor as a force in politics. Workers saving democracy from right-wing authoritarianism can make it possible to dismantle the structural violence of poverty that kills roughly 800 citizens per day in the U.S.” We urge you to read the [whole article](#).

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*Thanks for reading. If you have any questions, you are welcome to reply to this newsletter or email [california@poorpeoplescampaign.org](mailto:california@poorpeoplescampaign.org).*