**The Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival and the June 18th Moral March on Washington, DC**

**David Jolly**

Good morning. First, I want to thank Pastor Lisa for relinquishing her sermon time so we can talk with you today about the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revival. Linda Homer and Haydee Foreman, my friends and co-leaders of the Washington-Hancock County hub of the Maine Poor People's Campaign, are joining us to tell you about the campaign and the Moral March on Washington held on June 18th. Haydee is going to get us started.

**Haydée Foreman**

I first heard about then Rev. Barber and the Moral Mondays movement on the Bill Moyers' show. I was very intrigued and inspired by the images of peaceful protesters sitting in at the state house in North Carolina. They did this every Monday during the legislative session they got arrested while protesting voter suppression.

Then one day a few years later Rev. Sara from my church talked about an upcoming North Carolina march for voting rights commemorating the March on Selma. I immediately signed up!

There Reverend Barber spoke about how he and his team had gone to churches, synagogues and mosques, visiting community organizations that were focused on peace, justice, the environment, LGBTQ rights, immigration and unions, listening to their concerns. He attended many meetings with each group. They agreed that that without voting rights we can’t get anything done! He and his folks (at the time he was head of the North Carolina chapter of the NAACP) built relationships and built coalitions; it took seven years leading up to that one march of thousands for voting rights. There were 1000 Unitarian Universalists there. It was a sea of goldenrod yellow side with the love T-shirts! Since then Barber co-founded repairers of the breach and the Poor People’s Campaign with Rev. Liz Theoharis.

To my surprise, my 89-year-old aunt called me a few months back asking if I was going to the Poor Peoples Campaign March on Washington because as a member of Massachusetts Peace Action, she wanted to participate. Together we went to DC and stayed with a friend. Immediately upon arriving at the rally, we ran into her Peace Action colleagues. In fact, there were 150 different groups there due to the continuing efforts to build a fusion coalition. As is the practice for the Poor people's Campaign, the rally primarily featured individuals who themselves have been impacted by poverty. There were also more professional speakers such as Civil rights leader Dr. Cornell West who started his talk with “Let the word go forth here and now that the Poor People’s Campaign is on the move! No matter what color, no matter what gender, what sexual orientation or religious identity. We decide to love folks, and when you love folks, you hate the fact that they are treated unjustly!”

Recently when the Roe v. Wade decision was overturned, Bishop Barber and other PPC members marched for reproductive rights with Planned Parenthood, and he was among those who got arrested. That’s what a fusion movement looks like. We show up for each other because together we have much more power.

The Poor People’s Campaign is demanding that our elected representatives address poverty, low wages, and low wealth in the wealthiest nation in the world.

**David Jolly**

Before moving here full-time in 2016, I lived in North Carolina for 35 years, and there I came to know Rev. Barber, his inspiring oratory, and his amazing work to lift up poor people. I was able to participate in some of his Moral Monday protest rallies at the North Carolina Legislature. (Full disclosure: I did not get arrested.) When I moved to Maine, Rev. Barber moved to the national stage, and a couple of years later I signed onto the Hancock-Washington county hub of the Poor People’s Campaign.

I’d like to take a minute to tell you why I’m drawn to the Poor People’s Campaign:

* It’s a fusion movement - one that recognizes America is suffering under a set of interlocking injustices, prime among them poverty, racism, environmental devastation, militarism, and lack of access to quality, affordable health care.
* It recognizes that poor/low wealth individuals and communities suffer the most from these injustices.
* As a fusion movement, PPC knows that we must get out of our enclaves, tribes, and silos and instead work together across issues, across classes, races and ethnicities, genders and sexual orientations, geographic regions, and the urban/rural divide to address the root causes of these injustices.
* It recognizes that these injustices are primarily sustained by a relatively small group of wealthy and powerful individuals and corporations that are determined to protect their wealth and power by installing elected officials who will adopt policies that put property rights above civil rights, profits above people and the environment, and freedom (as they define it – freedom to do whatever they want to maximize their wealth and power) above democracy.
* It knows that we are at a critical point in the history of our nation (and our world), that we must proceed with urgency and not let ourselves be distracted by our anger, resentments, and fears nor paralyzed by feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.

Thoughts about the march

* I was somewhat disappointed by the size of the crowd – there were thousands, but not tens or hundreds of thousands as we had hoped.
* But I was encouraged by our geographic range – California, Indiana, Florida, New York, North Carolina, Montana, West Virginia, and Maine!
* There were lots of old people – probably many of us veterans of civil rights demonstrations, Viet Nam War protests, and women’s liberation marches - a sense of “just one more time.”
* But there were also lots of youth. In fact, the most inspiring moment for me came near the end of the march when representatives from many unions from across the country were on stage with Rev. Barber and Rev. Theoharis, I was standing next to a multi-racial group of very young (18-25 year-old) people who had just successfully organized a Starbucks in Baltimore. The person closest to me was a pink-haired young woman, whom I congratulated and whose excitement and enthusiasm for their work was palpable and contagious.
* I’ll end by sharing with my two favorite signs from the march. The first walloped me upside the head with its hopeful reflection on these very difficult, often depressing times:

What if this darkness is not the darkness of the tomb but the darkness of the womb?

Let’s hope that something big, kind, generous, and loving is gestating in that dark place.

My other favorite sign was light-hearted, down-right funny, I thought, but I was probably drawn to it more than anything by what it conveyed about the young man carrying it. The sign was a big check-list, a to-do list that read as follows:

* Eat breakfast
* Kiss my bride
* Work in the garden
* Oust the oligarchs
* Celebrate with ice cream (cone or sundae?)

That light, bright spirit, that hope, that sense of agency is what is needed today, what the Poor People’s Campaign is all about, and what also draws me to it.

**Linda Homer**

I became involved with the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival when a Maine activist friend sent me a text and said Rev. Barber and Rev. Liz Theoharis and the PPC were coming to Portland and that I … HAD TO GO! No explanation.. just.. BE THERE – I PROMISE YOU WON'T REGRET IT! So I got on the internet and did a little sleuthing and thought, “How have I missed this? How have I never heard of the PPC?”

That specific event I attended was very powerful. We congregated at Lincoln Park and then walked through the streets of Portland to the Unitarian Universalist church that was hosting the PPC.

Reverend Barber and Rev Liz really resonated with me. I had never really heard anyone speak that way – it literally captivated me. I was hanging on to every word. There was singing and dancing and an immense feeling of being exactly where I was supposed to be at that moment.

There were people at the podium in the church speaking about how they were impacted by poverty, racism, lack of healthcare, housing, and food, etc. and telling their very personal stories. We were all moved and started clapping … but Reverend Barber stopped us from clapping and said “we don't clap – we say... “Somebody's been hurting our people – and it's gone on FAR TOO LONG – and we WON'T be silent anymore.” We heard thatover and over again that evening. And it stuck with me.

So did what Rev. Liz said: “**When you lift from the bottom – everybody rises!**” OF COURSE! Why aren't we hearing this from other people??

I left the church that evening humming and singing and thinking that this was the movement for me!!

When I got home, I started putting all the pieces together. I couldn't stop thinking about the concept of FUSION MOVEMENT that they were talking about!! It made so much sense! It felt like the only way to go.

I tried to bring that concept back to some of the groups I was working with but they either didn't get it … or, didn't want to get it. And that spoke volumes. I was committed to working for universal healthcare, but my resistance group wasn't interested in it. One person said “I like MY health insurance. It's not fair that I would have to lose it.” And it really got me thinking...that we have A LOT of work to do!! How can you say you are working for racial justice if you don't work to lift people out of poverty, or give them adequate housing, or healthcare, or clean water????

One part of the Poor People’s Campaign that I’ve been passionate about is the MORE Tour: Mobilizing, Organizing, Registering and Educating people for a movement that votes. That's where I put a lot of time and energy in 2020 and will again this year.

There are 140 million poor people and people of low wealth, MANY of whom do not vote. BUT if they did – and if they voted in their own best interests – Rev Barber says they could change the political landscape of this country.

So I did a LOT of textbanking and phone banking.

I spoke with many folks who don't vote because they NEVER HEAR politicians speak about their issues. Because they don't think it matters. Because they don't have a ride to the polls. Because they can't get off of work to vote....MANY reasons. Voting rights are being severely restricted in many states...voter suppression everywhere we look - and we need to help as many people as we can get out and vote. The Poor People’s Campaign is NON-PARTISAN, but it is very political. We will vote for politicians who support the policies the Poor People’s Campaign supports, and then, when they are elected, we will maintain pressure to hold them accountable. And we will teach others to do the same - not just VOTE, but VOTE AND HOLD ACCOUNTABLE.

If you’re interested in helping with the MORE component of the PPC - or any other PPC activities or you’d like to be added to our email list (we promise you won’t be inundated with emails), let us know after the service or complete one of these interest cards.

SO, I am in the Poor People’s Campaign for the long haul. I understand Martin Luther King and the initial Poor People's Campaign better. I understand its connection to today’s PPC – A NATIONAL CALL FOR MORAL REVIVAL. **MORAL** REVIVAL!!! Economic policy can – and should be MORAL policy!! There is no reason why it can't be.

We HAVE the resources! We HAVE the will! And we HAVE the people!

Thank you.