

# POOR PEOPLE'S MORAL JUSTICE JUBILEE POLICY PLATFORM

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Legislative and Policy Priorities  
of the Poor People's Campaign:  
A National Call for Moral Revival

Executive Summary

June 20, 2020

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OF THE BREACH



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# Poor People's Moral Justice Jubilee Policy Platform

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 and militarism into a powerful moral fusion movement. A society sick with these injustices and infirm with the distorted narrative of Christian nationalism needs a moral voice, rooted in our deepest Constitutional and moral values, to remind us of who we are and who we must be.

We have seen the brutal murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks and untold others at the hands of state violence. We have witnessed the death of more than 115,000 people from the novel coronavirus in the United States, more than one-quarter of all cases globally. But in addition to these losses which have made headlines, an unseen 700 people continue to die from poverty and inequality each day. Poverty kills 250,000 people every year in America and it is still not frontpage news. For every day we choose not to address systemic racism, systemic poverty, ecological devastation, militarism and the war economy, and the distorted narrative of religious nationalism that justifies these evils, 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 people who are poor and struggling in the richest country in the world. For years we have been shifting the narrative and building power among the poor to create a compelling force for broad and bold systemic change.

As we approach the July 4th birthday of the United States and as we rise together for the Mass Poor People's Assembly and Moral March on Washington on June 20, 2020, we launch the Poor People's Moral Justice Jubilee Policy Platform.

The Poor People's Moral Justice Jubilee Policy 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. **Everybody in, nobody out.** Everybody is deserving of our nation's abundance.
2. **When you lift from the bottom, everybody rises.** Instead of "trickle-down, we start with the bottom up.
3. **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.
4. **Debts that cannot be paid must be relieved.** We demand freedom from servicing the debts we cannot pay.
5. **We need a moral revolution of values to repair the breach in our land.** This platform abides by our deepest moral and Constitutional commitments to justice. Where harm has been done, it must be acknowledged and undone.

## Poor People's Moral Justice Jubilee Policy Platform *(cont.)*

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 bold, 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, but instead 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, more than a dozen unions and 150+ national partner organizations, we are demanding voting rights, living wages, guaranteed incomes, 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 had evolved over the past 50 years since the 1968 Poor People's Campaign. In 2019, we released the Poor People's Moral Budget, which revealed that if we implemented all of the demands we've been making—cutting military spending, implementing fair taxes, relieving the debts of those who cannot pay and investing our abundant resources into the needs and demands of the poor—we could fundamentally revive our economy and transform our society.

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!*

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[Read the Souls of Poor Folk Moral Audit here: https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/resource/the-souls-of-poor-folk-audit/](https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/resource/the-souls-of-poor-folk-audit/)

[Read the Poor People's Moral Budget here: https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/resource/poor-peoples-moral-budget/](https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/resource/poor-peoples-moral-budget/)

# **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 development of 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. End voter suppression after the polls by securing resources for state and local governments**

- Protect against emergency management by establishing automatic stabilizers that will infuse federal resources into state / local governments that are in fiscal distress.
- Return local governance to elected persons, rather than appointed emergency managers.

## **3. 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 the 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.

## **4. End police violence and mass incarceration. Establish a National Truth Commission on these injustices.**

- 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.

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- Stop locking people up for non-violent crimes and misdemeanors and issue renewed sentencing guidelines that are proportionate to the crime and reduce jail time.
- 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.

**5. Protect immigrant communities and recognize their 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, 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.

**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, including for online and remote learning.
- Establish federal resources to support substantive efforts to desegregate schools and school districts by race, income and ability.
- Increase resources for school infrastructure and programs, as well as teachers and administration.
- 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 college for all**

- 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.
- Provide federal resources to ensure that public colleges and technical programs can be free for everyone who wants to attend.

## **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, saving, 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. Redefine welfare as a right, not a burden**

- Repeal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

### **3. 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 can ensure an adequate standard of living.

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**4. Secure housing for all**

- Acknowledge the full extent of housing insecurity in this country and establish housing as a legal right.
- Stop all evictions.
- Increase federal rental assistance.
- Identify vacant properties and prepare them to be housing for the housing insecure.
- Build new public housing units as part of the Green Jobs Corps of the Jubilee Jobs Program.
- Minimize the use of shelters.
- Cancel rents and mortgages that have not been paid during pandemic.
- Establish a penalty on Wall Street, real estate corporations and other institutions that profited from the housing crisis of 2007-8 to fund increased rental assistance and expansion of affordable housing.

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

- Raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 / hour.
- Enact a housing wage, currently estimated at \$22 / hour, in no less than 2 years' time, and index to inflation on an annual basis.
- 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. .

### **4. Establish the Jubilee Justice 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 Justice 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) Together We Thrive that will focus on education and schools; (4) Jubilee Arts and Justice Corps that will focus on cultural production; (5) Universal Tech Corps that will focus on training and placement in ICT, R/D and automation sectors; and others.
- 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.

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**5. 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 single-payer universal health care system.
- Expand Veterans health care to make sure it meets the needs of our veterans.
- Increase resources for Indian Health Services to make sure it is adequately funded.
- 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. End Medical debt**

- Establish a medical debt relief fund that is resourced by the past and future profits of insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, device manufacturers, and other health care companies.

### **3. Expand our health care infrastructure and capacity**

- Nationalize production of health care equipment and use government infrastructure, capacity and resources to strengthen and expand the health care system.
- Move federal resources and capacity towards re-opening hospitals that have been closed over the past 10 years.
- Establish a Community Care Corps within Jubilee Justice 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.

### **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.

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**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.
- Redirect wealth that was wrongfully gained from climate crises towards establishing a 100% renewable and climate resilient economy and other social programs indicated in this platform. Target the wealth of polluting industries, agribusiness and other large GHG emitters (including military contractors), financial and asset management firms, insurance companies and others.

**6. Establish a Green Jobs Corps within the Jubilee Justice 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.
- Projects will include: expanding water, utilities and sanitation services; infrastructure development (roads, bridges, broadband and communications); expanding public housing that is climate resilient and energy efficient; retrofitting existing housing to be 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.

## **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 \$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 foreclosure/mortgage crisis, water scarcity and profiteering from multiple health crises.

### **4. Relieve the debts of those who cannot pay**

- 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 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.

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**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 provide bonds for each American child, regardless of race, valued at between \$500 and \$50,000, depending on the parents’ wealth level.