

Stolen Hands, Stolen Lands: A People's Observance for a Just Future



Reverend William J Barber II

This text is a sermon delivered by Reverend William J Barber II on October 20th, 2019 at The Riverside Church in New York City.

The event was organized by 400 Years of Inequality in observance of the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first Africans to be brought to the land that is now the United States and sold into bondage at Jamestown, Virginia.



"These are the Seven Sins we must reckon with if we are to take seriously the systemic racism we have inherited borne out of a system of slavery..."

1. Bad Biology:

Some folk are made like this.



2. Sick Sociology:

These people cannot exist together with us.



3. Political Pathology:

Inequality is the result of individual failure.



4. Corruptible Courts:

We uphold the laws, we do not make them.



5. Evil Economics:

The accumulation of wealth justifies the means.



6. Militia Madness:

We are patriots. We suppress rebellions & oppose the welfare state.



7. Heretical Ontology:

The poor will always be with us; God meant it this way.



REVEREND BARBER:

“ Stolen Hands, Stolen Lands: from 1619 to a just future.

Learning from the sins of the past so that we might embrace a better future. As we gather here tonight to mark and to mourn that 400 years ago, race-based chattel slavery began. And with its beginning, it birthed an even deeper form of systemic racism that already existed in the way our native and indigenous brothers and sisters had faced, our first-nation people who were here when Columbus said he discovered something.

I want to lift the text from the first Book of the bible, from the Genesis account, which proceeds the exodus, the 15th chapter of the first book of scripture. We read: *“Then the Lord said to Abraham, know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs and they shall be slaves there and they shall be oppressed for 400 years, but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve.”*

Hebrews 11:23 says: *“Moses, when born in slavery, was hid for three months because he was a proper child.”* Then the 24th verse says: *“Moses refused to become the son of Pharaoh and he chose rather to suffer affliction with his people and the people of God, rather to enjoy or accept sin for a little while.”*

Though the haughty purveyors of injustice have always laid claim to absolute authority and maintained the pretense of the permanence of systemic racism, the Bible is clear that no lie can live forever. And after four centuries of oppression, a nation must be judged. Must be. As in a court of law, the sins must be laid out for all to see and examine them for what they are. A God who is just promises such judgment. Not that the nation may be condemned, but so that we may have the opportunity in the light of justice to decide who we want to be.

America is at a deciding time right now. Four-hundred years is the appointed time for a reckoning, Dr. Forbes. And my

brothers and sisters, we have seven sins, or if I might be like the writer of proverb, “six things, yea seven,” that we must reckon with, if we are to take seriously the systemic racism we have inherited borne out of a system of slavery.

If indeed, this is our long-awaited day in court, let the charges be read. All seven counts. Your Honor, the United States stands accused today of bad biology, sick sociology, political pathology, evil economics, corruptible courts, militia madness, and heretical ontology. These are the seven sins that undergirded the system of slavery. And to name our sins is to tell the story of how we got here, but also like the Bible says of Moses, it is to say we refuse to go along with sin even for a little while. Judgment is also an opportunity to ask honestly whether we’re going to repent and rebirth America again.

Your Honor, the United States stands accused today of bad biology, sick sociology, political pathology, evil economics, corruptible courts, militia madness, and heretical ontology.



Four-hundred years ago, a Dutch warship, the White Lion, sailing under a Dutch flag but with an English captain and crew, sailed from the Netherlands as profiteers licensed by their governments to plunder Spanish vessels. They robbed a Portuguese slaver of roughly 60 of its human cargo, Angolans from West Africa. The profiteer sailed the twice-stolen Africans to the English colony at Jamestown, Virginia and their reported local leader, John Rolfe, the White Lion traded the settlers 20-and-odd Africans in exchange for food and provision.



The Africans who disembarked at Jamestown landed among colonists who had no cause to regard themselves as white. The Virginia colony had defined at that time neither slavery nor race, that summer day in 1619. The Africans that arrived on the White Lion may not have been ordinary indentured servants, but they did not fold neatly into an existing institution. Most Europeans in Virginia arrived as indentured servants, bound for seven years where upon the colony rented them a plot of land. If the legal status of the Africans as they clambered from the ship that day remained uncertain, their color was not yet laden with the meanings of race that slavery would inscribe upon the bodies of their descendants. Race was not yet necessary. Their biology wasn't yet needed to explain a system that would call some people black.

In Jamestown, in the early 17th century, unfree labor was both black and white and had yet to be cleaved by color and clotted into the peculiar institution of slavery. But the energy and ingenuity of that bound workforce represented the very survival of the English colony when its prospect seemed dim. In the first few decades, the African and European servants did not see each other decisively different. They, no doubt, saw color, as so many today claim not to, but those hues did not define the power to subdue, humiliate, and destroy. Children of many colors bore witness to the array of relationships these human beings, black and white people, living and working together, falling in love, starting families, having children and regardless of color, held in servitude that's subject to the master's whim.

The Virginia colonies muster in 1621 list 23 Africans and a single Indian, all of them counted merely, not as slaves, but as servants. But then, we read on. The life of one of the Angolans, a servant named Antonio traces the evolution of racial identity in colonial Virginia in 1635, 16 years later. He completed his indenture and settled on a plot of land on the eastern shore. Johnson married a woman of African descent, obtaining her freedom as well from indentured servitude and



later, bought other African indentured servants as laborers. The couple lived as Anthony and Mary Johnson. They reared four children and by 1650 they owned a 250-acre farm. But when Anthony Johnson died in 1677, he had tried to leave his land to his children. But, by then, the colonial regime granted his farm to a white settler. And the judge ruled that Johnson was not a citizen of the colony because of his color. Sick sociology was now taking its root in this land.

Still the law and custom vacillated for decades on the status of African servants in colonial Virginia. In 1640, a black servant named John Punch, fled his bondage, accompanied by two white servants. When their founders caught and tried them for the theft of themselves. That was the trial; they were tried for the theft of themselves. They white men had their terms of indentured servants lengthened for several years, but courts ordered John Punch, the black man, to serve his master for the rest of his natural life. Here and elsewhere, that court's decision reveals that Punch's servitude had not been regarded as permanent, let alone hereditary. But now bad biology, sick sociology, evil economics, and corruptible courts were developing to justify a political pathology. The colony had begun to force black servants into lifelong service of race-based chattel slavery, all for evil economics that says, as long as you make the money, the means justifies the end.

In 1661, the Virginia legislature reversed centuries of common law in a measure that makes it clear that racialized and hereditary bondage was their intent. In English common law, the status of a child followed the child's father, but in Virginia, the new law ruled a child's status would henceforth follow the child's mother. Virginia's population included many person's whose skins came in various shades of brown, their fathers free and white, and therefore, his children were free, even though not visibly white. This, though, was overturned. And a racialized water of hereditary bondage clearly required that that structure and more be put in place.

In the first years of the involuntary importation of African



servants, Christianity served as a pretext for bringing them here; Christianity, or a false form of Christianity. It was said that English civilization could elevate their souls. But if the elevation worked and the Africans accepted the faith, that raised the question of their legal status, for there had been the Doctrine of Origins pushed by the judge, it said that whatever white men basically conquered, it was there and all others were there servants. The acceptance of Christian baptism was a powerful symbol to white Virginians who saw it as crucial evidence of the development of civility and rationality. Since these qualities were seen as incompatible with slave status, conversion sometimes brought ammunition or at least some degree of greater personal freedom. And that left open the question as to whether their baptism altered the African's legal status. That was a serious theological question: If we baptize them, does this baptism in any way change their status as slaves?

The colonial legislature resolved the issue. The legislature resolved the issue by Act number three: "Whereas some doubts have risen, whether children that are slaves by birth and by the charity and piety of their owners may be partakers of the blessed sacrament of baptism and should by virtue of their baptism be made free, it is enacted and declared by this grand assembly and the authority thereof that conferring of baptism does not alter the condition of a person as to his bondage or freedom." The legislature overrode what Christ had said and what Paul had said about Christ: "To be in Christ, is to be free and to be free indeed."

Here we see this political pathology mixing with the heretical ontology that basically says: "This is the way God ordered things." The legislation added that slave owners, thus freed from the worry that propagating the gospel among the enslaved would sacrifice their workforce, could now be even better advocates of the faith by admitting enslaved children for the sacrament of baptism, secure in the faith that these children and their children after them would be forever enslaved. In other words, you can make them Christian now



because Christian is not going to make them free, according to our law.

This heretical ontology became the basis of what my brother, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, who happens to be white, calls “slaveholder religion.” As a matter of faith, white Christians came to believe that the economic and political systems they were building on the stolen labor and stolen land was God’s work and that to be Christian was to be white. And to be baptized Christian as a slave was to make your soul white, but to still keep your black body in bondage. Wilson-Hartgrove writes: “By giving its God’s blessing, they aimed to make it a sin to oppose slavery and to oppose their political pathology.”

But they had not converted everyone in the Virginia colony to this heretical ontology. In 1676 and 1677, Virginia settlers rebelled against the colonial government, led by a white man, Nathaniel Bacon. His rag-tag army was drawn from Virginians of all socio-economic classes and shades of color. First attacking the nearby Indian nations to take their land, which is a problematic part of Bacon’s Rebellion. But Bacon’s men ran Governor William Berkley from Jamestown and burned the capitol. This was a black and white militia. Having forced the government flee to the ships in the harbor and then back to England, Bacon’s forces – black and white – ruled the colony. It took the English military several years to win back royal control of the Virginia colony. Black and white servants had long conjoined and conspired. But this was a new and dangerous level of cooperation. Crossed the color line. Militia madness would become a necessary component then of systematic racism in America. We cannot allow them to fight together and we cannot let them work together. Later on, this militia madness would also be the basis of the second amendment, and the second amendment was really put into the Constitution to ensure that white men would be able to raise militias against slave rebellion.

But it took more than English soldiers to rebuild the hierarchical society that Bacon had finally overthrown. White



supremacy provided the ideology necessary to undo his dangerous coalition. It flourished a rationale for the unfolding robbery of racialized and hereditary slavery – legal structures, now, after this Bacon Rebellion – legal structures around color and status changed sharply. After this rebellion, race became white supremacists' citadel. Racial disparity is the indelible mark of its deepest violence. The Virginia Slave Code of 1705 fully consolidated the system of racial and hereditary bondage. Bad biology, sick sociology, political pathology, evil economics, militia madness, and heretical ontology were all written into law. Sick sociology: These people cannot exist together. Bad biology: Some folk are made like this. There are political pathologies when politics is used to enforce and make real the promises of evil. Evil economics: Along as the end results in wealth for the oppressor, the means does not matter. Militia madness: We got to keep our guns because we might have to kill some of these folk if they start organizing a rebellion. And heretical ontology: God meant it this way.

Americans tend to believe that race is something real, an undeniable assignment by the natural world. Racism, we assume, stems from this bleak, but biological condition. Ta-Nehisi Coates explains that, "This delusion renders white supremacy as the innocent daughter of mother nature." This confusion leads men to bemoan the death machine of the Atlantic Slave Trade and lament the Trail of Tears in the same way that we mourn a tornado, without a twinge of remorse. It was just supposed to happen. But Coates reminds us, "race is the child of racism and not the father." The father of racism is the need to justify the brutal and hereditary bondage of child slavery. It is far less convenient and uplifting for white Americans to acknowledge that the reason for the racial caste system was not bad white people's personal animosity toward the Africans, as opposed to good white people's opposition to slavery. The reason was stable crop agriculture: tobacco, rice, sugar, coffee, and cotton. Enslaved labor was the oil of the 18th and 19th century. As Ibram Kendi has argued so convincingly, "Racism isn't an idea that led to a system of oppression. No. It is instead, a story we told ourselves to



explain why the use and abuse of black people was good, just, and even righteous.” Racism is a way for this country’s far too many to soothe their consciousness about chattel slavery.

If in Virginia, colonial elites invented race to defend their property and privilege, then why can’t we shine the light of truth today and make it go away? The reason, the late historian Ira Berlin instructs us, is that, “Race is a particular kind of social construction.” It has, and I say, this undergirding foundation that makes race not merely a political problem, but a religious problem. For some people, race is their ultimate concern. And race is bound up with pathology, sick sociology, evil economics, corruptible courts, and heretical ontology. Race has lumbered and lurched forward through time with all the weight of the past as its power driver. History furnishes no do-overs, so race keeps reconstructing itself, “Refitting the old ship for new journeys,” as Tim Tyson says. Race does not hang there, timeless, as an unchanging fact. It is not an inherent trait that we present. Instead, race is a relationship that occurs and reoccurs from people and we keep teaching it to succeeding generations. Without the politics of domination, without our terrifying history, what we call race might become only culture. It hardly calls for hostility.



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I’m not black, white or Tuscaroran by detectible biology. Instead, these are my people and they remain so because

I walk through the world with them and they with me: my Tuscaroran ancestors, my white ancestors, my black ancestors. I walk through the world with them. I walk through the world with their songs, their stories, their food ways, their folkways, all of that rides comfortably kind of in my pocket. Still others, like my faith traditions, like my family's love, like the aspiration for justice and democracy that certain visions of American history harbored within me gives me hope. But other artifacts that are in me, like the institutions all around me that white supremacy built in its own image and buttressed to preserve itself, they weigh like a thick, invisible chain around my neck and some days, render me paralyzed almost by despair.

White supremacy has a history too: bad biology, sick sociology, evil economics, corruptible courts, political pathology, militia madness, and heretical ontology. These seven sins have conspired to prop up a system that has robbed black Americans throughout the history of this nation and robs black Americans to this day, and robs America. These seven sins. White supremacy is the social structure that became both the pillar and the signpost of these evil arrangements. It is a political program devoted to white domination that resides in our state houses and in our White House and it didn't just get there.

White supremacy is the unconscious array of assumptions of inferiority and superiority that we carry in our heads, whatever their hue. But let us be clear. White supremacy is as poisonous to white people as it is to people of color. I thought I might not say that. White supremacy is not just anti-black, it's anti-democracy. It's anti-humanity. It's anti-truth. It's anti-love. It's weaponized legacy, one writer says, "can transform this blue-green jewel that we inhabit into a cold and empty stone, spinning in space." White supremacy had a beginning and it will have an end either in that eternal silence or it will have an end when we decide that the judgments of God are just and it's time to end it. God's judgments are just, but they're not always pretty.

Our long delayed day of reckoning has come and, truth be told, we are both the accused and the jury, America. And we must decide our own fate in the light of the truth that justice reveals. And if we are to be honest about our past, we cannot overlook how the idea of liberty progressed alongside the racist ideas that were used to justify the murderous sin of chattel slavery. America was hardly unique in its practice of enslavement. But what is unique about the plantation economy that emerged in eastern Virginia four centuries ago was neither its violence nor its devaluation of human lives. That's not what was unique. What was unique was its dual claim, its dual claim that every human being has inherent rights while some are damned to perpetual servitude. They are not even human, they are three-fifths, they are chattel, they are animals, they are property, and simply because of the color of their skin.

Racism was the only thing that could reconcile America's excruciating contradictions and hypocrisy. You had to come up with race as a way to justify the system of slavery. Democratic dreams and systemic racism are our legacy. Both heroism and hypocrisy are tangled in our birthright. Visions of universal love and heresies of slaveholder religion walk hand-in-hand throughout our history. It is increasingly clear, however, that democracy cannot endure if we don't dismantle systemic racism.

God's judgments are not all just about assigning fault. God wants to illuminate reality. When we review the record on all seven charges, this much is clear: White supremacy is not human nature. Human freedom is a merciless fact. As James Baldwin says: "We made the world we're living in and we have to make it over again."

The legacy of America's fledgling democracy, the question of whether we have anything more than a trillion tons of plastic to offer the world – all these matters are bound up in our capacity to change. We can stop believing that we or anybody else is white. We can stop believing in supremacy

or we can perish together as equals in the truly perfect equality of planetary destruction, which is the ultimate end of systemic racism born out of slavery. Ultimate for America, Dr. Forbes, God's judgment is today. 400-years later, I set before you, life ending. Choose life if you put away racism. Choose death and it will destroy you.

If we are to choose life in the light of the judgment of God, it will mean understanding that the moral prices we see is not a new thing. And it did not start with Trump. Now, I did not say he wasn't in moral crisis, I just said, it did not start with him. What we see today is an extension of the seven sins that have stained our history. The political pathology that undergirded slavery is still alive in the cost and assault on democracy we're witnessing. Twenty-three states since 2010, six years before Trump was running anywhere, had passed racist voter suppression law, racist gerrymandering law. That is political pathology. Mitch McConnell and his enablers in the congress, long before Trump ever came on the scene, refused to restore the Voting Rights Act after the Supreme Court gutted Section 5 in 2013. That's the result of political pathology and corruptible courts.

We must be clear. The sins of our past are still with us. Twenty-five states have passed laws that pre-empt cities, most of them are large black cities, from adopting their own local minimum wages; that's political pathology and evil economics. 6.1-million people who have been disenfranchised due to felony convictions, including 1 in every 13 adults, that is a form of sick sociology and political pathology. We see pathology and sick sociology in the demonizing of some immigrants as "illegal aliens," while many refuse to acknowledge that Texas, Mexico, and California were taking from the Mexican people in the Mexican-American War. That's bad biology, that's sick sociology, and that's political pathology. Look at how our legacy of evil economics continues. Undocumented immigrants contributed \$5-trillion to the U.S. economy over the last 10 years and they paid \$13-million in social security



that they will not be able to receive. That's a form of evil economics.

Re-segregation or our public schools is rooted in sick sociology and political pathology. All these years after Brown, re-segregation is happening faster than it did in the 1970s and it's not just the re-segregation of bodies, it's the re-segregation of budgets and books and bodies and brain-power. Mass incarceration represents the remnant of sick sociology and political pathology when you make prisons private to make money. This is a remnant of the evil economics that undergirded slavery. When in the book entitled, *The Incarcerated God*, someone said: "Why are you alright with more money going into prisons than going into schools?" Somebody said: "Oh, that's an easy question, because we can't live like we want to live with some people around us, so we create ghettos, but the ghettos fill up and we have to have somewhere to put people, so we can keep more people in the ghetto, so that they're not around us, so that we can live like we want to live." That is the same sick sociology and bad biology that undergirded slavery, indigenous people, and tribes. When corporations are allowed to drill on sacred lands and reservations and when they will bring casinos onto those reservations but will not bring housing and schools on those reservations, that is the representation of the remnants of the same sick sociology and political pathology and evil economics that helped to undergird slavery.

When we look at poverty, we see the remnants of the same things that undergirded slavery and we see how we gave trillions of dollars to bail out crooks on Wall Street and trillions in tax cuts to the wealthy and trillions going into a war economy. But we refuse to address the fact that 140-million people live in poverty and low wealth, 39-million children, 21-million seniors, 65-million men, 74-million women, 26-million black people, 38-million Latino people, 8-million Asian people, and 66-million white people. To have a system that would reward the crooks and say that banks are too



big to fail, but then we allow people to fall and fail in poverty and low wealth is nothing but evil economics. Half of our children are in poverty and low wealth. The vast majority are people of color, but in the raw numbers, white women and white people are more poor and low wealth than any other demographic.

Four-hundred years after slavery, the remnants of evil economics isn't just hurting black people, it's hurting and killing us all because racism is like cancer, it spreads. When working people, 62-million work every day for less than a living wage, while CEO's make 300-times the average worker, that's a form of evil economics, the same kind that helped to undergird. That's a remnant. Think about it, it took black people 400 years to get from zero to \$7.25. That's minimum wage in most place, \$7.25. Zero to \$7.25 and yet, we, powerful forces today, still fight living wages when we know that a federal \$15.00 minimum wage, if it was enacted immediately, would raise the pay of 49-million workers by \$328-billion a year and that money would go directly back into the economy, building up our nation. What hinders us? The same kind of political pathology, and the same remnants of the kind of evil economics, that undergirded slavery.

The Mailman School of Public Health said, "Two-hundred-and-fifty people die each day from poverty, 684 people a day." Seven people die from vaping and we call it a national emergency. Six-hundred poor people die every day because we racialize poverty. We made folk think it's something over there just affecting black folk and brown folk, when in reality it's affecting everybody. The unwillingness to deal with these issues are the remnants of the same political pathology and evil economics that undergirded slavery. A black woman with a doctorate degree in America today, has a higher rate of infant mortality and maternal morbidity than a white woman with a high school degree. We have a public health system that still carries some bad biology within it when black women are four times more likely to die in childbirth today.

In the 13 former confederate states that believed in holding their slaves, 52-million people are poor and low income and one-third of all the poor people in this country live in the south. The number of poor whites in those states is more than a third of all the poor whites in this country and the same politicians that use race to divide, once they get elected through racist voter suppression, they use their power to block living wages, health care that affects everybody and mostly whites around this country, more blacks in terms of percentages.

How can they do that unless they are using the remnants of a political pathology and evil economics and a sick sociology that undergirded slavery? Do you know if we would repeal the Trump tax cuts and establish fair taxes on the wealthy, we could generate \$886-billion a year to go into roads and schools and health care? Just an annual wealth tax on the \$75,000 wealthiest households could generate \$275-billion a year, more than enough to put 2.5-million people to work, fixing our infrastructure. Why can't we do that? The remnants of evil economics. The remnants of a political pathology. And then, we can't overlook this militia and military madness that was necessary to put down Bacon's Rebellion.

Did you know in 2018, just one company, Boeing, received \$27-million in military contracts? Just one contract to one military contracting company could have paid for Medicaid expansion in 14 states that didn't expand. Just one. Why don't we do that? Why are we so deeply committed to a military that primarily is only engaging in wars against people of color? It traces back to this militia and military madness, its evil economics that undergirded slavery. Why is it that we're so bound by the gun lust of the NRA? It grows out of the same militia madness that was a part of the early foundings of this country. And some say, "Well, the bible says the poor will be with you always," and in that, we see the remnants of slaveholder religion, heretical ontology.



When we refuse to deal with ecological destruction, something is pathologically wrong when you know your planet is being destroyed and your children will suffer, but for money, you refuse to address it. That's a sickness. When you would rather have the wealth now and the greed now, than life for your children's children, that is a sick form of pathological politics and evil economics. 4-million people in this nation can buy unleaded gas but can buy unleaded water every day. And we could fix the ecological devastation from our inner cities to where I'm headed tomorrow, Cancer Alley, in Louisiana. Cancer Alley is where former plantations have become chemical plants that poison and the sons and daughters of the formerly enslaved and the sharecroppers



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alike and the poor white folk that staying around. The same lands that were once plantations now is making money, leasing that land to chemical companies that are poisoning black, brown and white people. The existence of that Cancer Alley reveals the remnants of political pathology, evil economics, and sick sociology. When 400 years after slavery, six to eight-percent of African-Americans live within 30 miles of a coal-firing power plant, the distance within which the maximum effects of smokestack plumes are expected to occur, the sins of our past are still with us. African-Americans are 79% more likely than whites to live where industrial pollution poses the greatest health danger and they are

overrepresented in populations who live within a three-mile radius of the nation's 1388 super-fund sites. Those are sites that were so poisoned that they had to be designated "super-fund" to be cleaned up.

And when, finally, we see this religious nationalism run amuck, white evangelicals or so-called Christian nationalism talking about their religious liberty while saying nothing about the injustices of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation in a war economy. What we are seeing even now is the remnants of the same heretical ontology that justified the slave system. "God meant it this way," and it is a damnable lie from the very pit of hell itself. When we see all of this, in the light of God's justice and judgment, when our past and our present are laid bare in the highest court, it is not only clear that the sins of our past are still with us, but it also becomes clear that we are heirs to a diverse program for restorative justice. From Bacon's Rebellion to the abolitionist's struggle to the women's suffrage struggle to the fight for indigenous people to the stance against the way Chinese immigrants were treated, the way Frederick Douglas involved himself in that, from the Civil Rights Movement to the labor movements, the women's movement, our Monday Movement, Poor People's Campaign to fight for 15 – there's always been a fight against these seven sins. Somebody has stood up and cried loud against these seven sins.

And my friends, 400 years later, if we are to truly mark the four centuries of history that we have gathered here to mourn and to remember, there's only one way to do it: we must have a movement. We cannot have some triumphant celebration that acts as though everything is all right. Instead, what we need is a movement that is committed to fighting for the dignity of every human being and saying that we will never give in to the remnants of bad biology, sick sociology, political pathology, evil economics, corruptible courts, militia madness, or heretical ontology that justify and undergird racism. We will never give in to those realities, not even for a little while. Not even for a little while.



That's why - Liz is here somewhere - the Poor People's Campaign and National Call for Moral Revival, we're on a 25-state tour entitled, "We Must Do More," and on June 20th of 2020, we are calling of you to join us in Washington D.C. for a mass Poor People's Assembly and Moral March on Washington because there comes a time when those who have known slavery and oppression and those who've known history and know the hard trials and tribulations, we must become the cornerstones of a new world.

And in this moment, we must rise and fight because we are clear about the seven sins that keep trying to hold us back from doing the things we ought to do.

In this 400th year, the ancestors of those whose hands once picked cotton must join the hands of Latinos and join the hands of progressive whites and join faith hands and labor hands and Asian hands and Native hands and poor hands and wealthy hands and gay hands and straight hands and trans hands and Christian hands and Jewish hands and Muslim hands and Hindu hands and Buddhist hands and when all these hands get together, we can honor our ancestors. When all of these hands get together, we can revive and rebirth and make sure that the promises of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and equal protection under the law and care for the common good will never be taken away or forfeited for anybody, any time, anywhere.

By 2040, in the United States, white people will be one of many minority groups. This demographic reality is the driving force, my friend, behind a tax on immigrants, voter suppression, and the corporate and foreign influence campaigns of the American life. From the U.S. to the UK to Brazil to Russia to China to Israel, a global economy that was built on the sugar and cotton that enslaved people harvested, is threatened by a radical democracy, a Poor People's Movement that are coming to fore, even in this nation. Nationalist leaders are responding with reactionary

populism that appeals to racism and xenophobia, deploying the same divide and conquer tactic that King noted about what happened in the south to keep black and white people from working together. And we must resist what has been resisted in the past.

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I choose to believe that on this 400th anniversary, that the America which has never been yet, may nevertheless still be. Together with people from every race, creed, color and sexuality, I am committed to working with you all to build a moral fusion coalition in the 21st century. Is there anybody else in here ready to build?

We must rise, just like those slaves got up every morning singing "Up Above My Head." I hear music in the air. There must be a God somewhere, just how they got up every morning in the midst of slavery, but with the hope of freedom. We must rise like they did. We must rise together for voting rights. We must rise together for immigration reform. We must rise together for indigenous rights. We must rise together to fight poverty, not the poor. We must rise together for living wages and housing for all and health care for all and clean and affordable water for all. We must rise together for free, diverse, high-quality public education for all. We must rise together for tax fairness and an end to wealth inequality. We must rise together to end the new Jim

Crow and mass incarceration. We must rise for peace and the end of militarism and the war economy. We must rise together for real domestic security: jobs, income, housing, education, health care, and water. And we must rise to stand against the seven sins that still trouble the heart of our democracy.

Hozier, oh my God, Hozier and Mavis Staples, in tribute to that prophetic singer, Nina Simone, told us that, “being woke is not enough.” They sung a song tribute to Nina Simone and they say:

It's not the wakin', it's the risin'
It is the groundin' of a foot uncompromisin'
It's not forgoin' of the lie
It's not the openin' of eyes
It's not the wakin', it's the risin'
It's not the shade we should be cast in
It's the light and it's the obstacle that casts it
It's the heat that drives the light
It's the fire it ignites
It's not the wakin', it's the risin'
It's not the song, it is the singin'
It's the heaven of the human spirit ringin'
It is the bringin' of the line
It is the bearin' of the lie
It's not the wakin', it's the risin'

Touch your neighbor and say, “Neighbor, it's all right to be woke. But you can be woke and still in bed. It's time to rise.” The slaves got out of bed. They rose up every morning. Freedom! All freedom! And before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave, going home with my Lord to be free.

It's time to rise, y'all. We've got to rise.” And then that song said: Nina “Power!” Harriet Tubman “Power!” Ella Baker cried, “Power!” Martin Luther King cried “Power!” Rosa Parks cried “Power!” Rabbi Herschel cried “Power!” It's time for us to cry, “Power!” Power over injustice. Power over racism. Power over

inequality. Power! We have the power!

And I'm reminded of a son of Harlem who used his pen to take on these seven sins. And in the midst of the Harlem labor protests in 1935, this son of Harlem, Langston Hughes, he wrote:

For all the dreams that we have dreamed
And all the songs that we have sung
And all the hopes that we have held
And all the flags that we have hung,
The millions who have nothing for their pay –
Except the dream that's almost dead today.
O, let America be America again
The land that never has been yet
And yet must be – the land where every man is free.
The land that's mine – the poor man's, the Indian's, the
Negro's, ME
Who made America,
Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain.
We must bring back our mighty dream again.
Sure, call me any ugly name you choose –
The steel of freedom does not stain.
From those who have lived like leeches on the people's
lives,
We must take back our land again.
America has never been America to me,
But I swear this oath – that America will be!

Power!

It's time to rise and make this nation what it ought to be. "

Power! It's time to rise and make this nation what it ought to be.



Join the movement: learn your local history, observe the past, and organize for a more just future by forming a People's Platform in your community.

Learn more about forming a People's Platform for Equity at www.400yearsofinequality.org

400 Years of Inequality is a diverse coalition of organizations and individuals calling on everyone - families, friends, communities, institutions - to plan their own solemn observance of 1619, learn about their own stories and local places, and organize for a more just and equal future. We are dedicated to dismantling structural inequality and building strong, healthy communities.

1. Sign up for our newsletter at www.400yearsofinequality.org
2. Follow us on social media:
 - Facebook: 400 Years of Inequality
 - Twitter: @400yrs
 - Instagram: @400yearsofinequality
3. Contact us for a workshop at 400yearsofinequality@gmail.com

JOIN 400 YEARS OF INEQUALITY AT THE

MASS POOR PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY & MORAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON

SATURDAY, JUNE 20, 2020
WASHINGTON D.C.

WHO

The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival is made up of people of all backgrounds, racial, gender, ethnic, and sexual orientation identities, faith and non-faith communities, abilities, and places. We are a cross-class movement led by poor people.

WHAT

A generationally transformative gathering to demonstrate the collective power of poor and low-wealth people to demand that the Poor People's Campaign Moral Agenda be implemented.

www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/about/our-demands/

WHY

To dramatize the pain and prophetic leadership of the poor and dispossessed.

To build power to enact our demands.

To wake the nation to the interlocking injustices facing 140 million poor and low-wealth people.

To Rise Together – It's not the waking, it's the rising.

HOW

March, ride, bus, drive, fly, walk, run, train, bike and more to Washington, DC on June 20, 2020! Go to www.june2020.org to let us know you're coming, find a bus from your community, and register your delegation. Spread the word in your networks and social media.

Get connected to your state's coordinating committee at www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/take-action/

