



# Poor People's Campaign

## A NATIONAL CALL for MORAL REVIVAL

### COVENANT OF NONVIOLENCE

*"Nonviolent resistance is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people."<sup>1</sup>*

*-- The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival (PPC) is launching a long-term, multi-year campaign to unite the poor and disenfranchised and to challenge the interconnected evils of systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation. We believe that a moral revival is necessary to save the heart and soul of our democracy. By lifting up the leadership of the people who are most directly impacted and by building power through state-based organizing, we seek to reclaim the moral narrative and agenda; transform our nation's political, economic, and social structures; and demand justice for all.

The PPC is firmly rooted in nonviolence as a philosophy, practice, and, for some, spiritual discipline that aligns with the values of the campaign. We believe that nonviolent struggle is a way of life for courageous people — that it has the power to eradicate structural violence and inequities, and offers a path for personal and collective transformation. We also believe that nonviolent moral fusion direct action is an important tactic to strategically advance the organizing goals of the PPC in shifting the moral narrative and achieving structural social change.

The PPC is preparing to launch 40 days of moral action in the spring that will include education, organizing, religious and movement cultural arts events, nonviolent moral fusion direct action, and fusion coalition building that builds unity across diverse issues and geography. As we prepare for the 40 days and for building a moral fusion movement over the long term to concretely improve the lives and conditions of the poor and disenfranchised, the PPC establishes the following Covenant of Nonviolence ("Covenant") to guide and strengthen our personal and collective commitment to organizing in a manner that creates a beloved community and mirrors our deepest moral and constitutional values and convictions.

We, as members of the PPC, each commit to upholding our shared Covenant of Nonviolence in every aspect of the campaign, including all communications, activities, events, and actions related to the PPC, and to adhere to the following guidelines as we embark on this transformative campaign together:

- I will embrace and uphold my responsibility as a member of the human race to honor and respect the inherent worth and dignity of every human being. Recognizing that the sanctity of life flows in each and every one of us, I will act with respect towards all.
- I will arrive and be present with a clear mind and centered spirit, committed and ready to contribute my gifts to building a long-term moral fusion movement that will challenge the evils of systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation, and reclaim the moral narrative and agenda in our nation.
- I will actively support the leadership of people who are most directly impacted by systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation, recognizing the moral imperative that those of us

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., "My Trip to the Land of Gandhi," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 25.

who are most impacted must be able to exercise our agency in speaking our own truths and actively shaping decisions that affect our lives.

- I will actively build fusion unity across lines of division often used to try to divide us, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, class, geography, sexual orientation, immigration and documentation status, and gender and gender identity, and to lift up the interconnectedness of issues that impact the poor and disenfranchised. In forming inclusive and diverse fusion coalitions, we will increase the strength and power of the PPC while forming long-lasting, transformative relationships built on mutual trust and respect.
- I believe that by maintaining nonviolent discipline, I will contribute to upholding the integrity, vision, values, and goals of the PPC. Consistent with our commitment to honor and respect the dignity and humanity of every human being:
  - I will not use hostile language, swear, use insults, or engage in any aggressive, threatening, or intimidating behavior.
  - I will not use violence (verbal or physical) and I will not threaten violence in any manner. I stand for avoidance of violence and against the making of threats of violence.
  - I will not carry, possess, or use any weapons or anything that could be construed as a weapon.
  - I will not throw debris, waste, trash, or other items, and I will not harm, damage, or destroy any life or property.
- In order to promote an environment where people feel welcome and respected and to affirm my own humanity and dignity:
  - I will walk with dignity, and not run, if I wish to leave an event or action.
  - I will not bring, possess, or use alcohol, marijuana, or illegal drugs at an event or action.
- Given the power and importance of being our authentic selves and sharing our stories, I choose and commit never to wear a mask so that I can tell my story and my truth about why the PPC is important to me in a public and accessible manner that promotes honesty and trust.
- As we engage in nonviolent moral fusion direct action, others present may try to disrupt and weaken the nonviolent foundation of the PPC. It is imperative to the strength and success of the PPC that we maintain nonviolent unity, discipline, and rigor – tapping into a power and soulforce that exists within each of us. Accordingly, at all times, I will be firmly grounded in nonviolence as a philosophy, practice, and discipline and will strive to embody values of courage, inclusion, pursuit of justice, and love for all humanity.
- As we organize to build a long-term moral fusion movement, I will actively invite others to join us in this journey of nonviolent struggle in the PPC to challenge the evils of systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation; reclaim the moral narrative in our nation; achieve systemic change that concretely improves the lives and conditions of the poor and disenfranchised; and revive the heart and soul of our democracy.

*Signing this Covenant also means that you are committed to the Fundamental Principles of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival (printed below).*

Signed:

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Print Name

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Signature

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Date

## **Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival Fundamental Principles**

1. We are rooted in a moral analysis based on our deepest religious and constitutional values that demand justice for all. Moral revival is necessary to save the heart and soul of our democracy.
2. We are committed to lifting up and deepening the leadership of those most affected by systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation and to building unity across lines of division.
3. We believe in the dismantling of unjust criminalization systems that exploit poor communities and communities of color and the transformation of the "War Economy" into a "Peace Economy" that values all humanity.
4. We believe that equal protection under the law is non-negotiable.
5. We believe that people should not live in or die from poverty in the richest nation ever to exist. Blaming the poor and claiming that the United States does not have an abundance of resources to overcome poverty are false narratives used to perpetuate economic exploitation, exclusion, and deep inequality.
6. We recognize the centrality of systemic racism in maintaining economic oppression must be named, detailed and exposed empirically, morally and spiritually. Poverty and economic inequality cannot be understood apart from a society built on white supremacy.
7. We aim to shift the distorted moral narrative often promoted by religious extremists in the nation from issues like prayer in school, abortion, and gun rights to one that is concerned with how our society treats the poor, those on the margins, the least of these, LGBTQIA folks, workers, immigrants, the disabled and the sick; equality and representation under the law; and the desire for peace, love and harmony within and among nations.
8. We will build up the power of people and state-based movements to serve as a vehicle for a powerful moral movement in the country and to transform the political, economic and moral structures of our society.
9. We recognize the need to organize at the state and local level—many of the most regressive policies are being passed at the state level, and these policies will have long and lasting effect, past even executive orders. The movement is not from above but below.
10. We will do our work in a non-partisan way—no elected officials or candidates get the stage or serve on the State Organizing Committee of the Campaign. This is not about left and right, Democrat or Republican but about right and wrong.
11. We uphold the need to do a season of sustained moral direct action as a way to break through the tweets and shift the moral narrative. We are demonstrating the power of people coming together across issues and geography and putting our bodies on the line to the issues that are affecting us all.
12. The Campaign and all its Participants and Endorsers embrace nonviolence. Violent tactics or actions will not be tolerated.