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Wisconsin Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival

Media Advisory for: February 12, 2019

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"Wisconsin Poor People's Campaign to Deliver Campaign Demands to State Lawmakers Including a Call to address systemic policies impacting poor and marginalized persons in the state of Wisconsin"

MADISON, WI — The Wisconsin Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival will return to the state capitol to deliver the Campaign's Moral Agenda and hold elected officials accountable to the needs and demands of 2.3 million poor and struggling people in Wisconsin. The National Poor People's Campaign will be taking similar action by delivering the same demands in dozens of states across the country throughout January and February as state legislatures return to session.

The Wisconsin Poor People's Campaign, which is one of over 35 state campaigns, will hold a Legislative Day and demand delivery on February 12, 2019 at the state capitol to set expectations for the legislative agenda in 2019.

"The fight is not over and we will continue to demand an end to the war on the poor and will do it respectfully ... with non-violent direct action." (January 24, 2019, Solo Littlejohn, Kenosha WI).

"Whatever you may think of prisons, they were and still are a social experiment. And it's failing, badly. We think of a returning citizen, a returning person, as having paid their dues and now they can come and try to rebuild lives, if they so choose. I came home and nothing was further from the truth." (October 17, 2018, Carl J. Fields, Racine WI).

"Everybody deserves to take the next steps in their life and have the encouragement they need to face the day." (January 24, 2019, Rev. Jonathan Barker, Kenosha WI).

Across the nation, organizers are demanding a massive overhaul of voting rights, welfare and work requirements, living wages, healthcare, access to clean water, housing, ecological devastation and endless wars, to lift up the 140 million Americans currently living in poverty.

WHO: Participants in Wisconsin Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival ; NAACP Dane County Branch, NAACP Racine Branch, Fight for \$15 Wisconsin, and League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Council 339.

WHAT: A Legislative Day and delivery of demands to Wisconsin's elected representatives for a moral agenda currently nonexistent in our public discourse.

WHERE: Wisconsin State Capitol (Room 400S.E.), 2 East Main Street, Madison WI 53702

WHEN: February 12, 2019 at 10:05 am CT

BACKGROUND:

The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival is co-organized by Repairers of the Breach, a social justice organization founded by the Rev. William J. Barber II; the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice at Union Theological Seminary; and hundreds of local and national grassroots groups across the country.

On October 4, 2018, the Rev. Barber II, a bishop, pastor, author and community organizer, was awarded the prestigious MacArthur Foundation "Genius Grant" (\$625,000) for his dedication to moral-social justice and his work building a grassroots movement grounded in the moral tenets of faith-based communities and the United States Constitution to confront racial and economic inequalities. In December 2018, he received the Humanitarian Service Award by Duke University Chapel in recognition of his commitment to service and simplicity.

The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival (PPC) is building a broad and deep national moral movement – rooted in the leadership of poor people and reflecting the great moral teachings of faith traditions and the U.S. Constitution – to unite our country from the bottom up. Organizing committees have formed in more than 40 states and Washington, D.C., to challenge extremism at the local, state and federal level and to demand a moral agenda for the common good. After an historic wave of non-violent civil disobedience during the summer of 2018, the Campaign seeks to sustain and deepen its organizing work in its current phase of activity.

Led by the Rev. Dr. William Barber II and Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, the PPC is working to challenge the interlocking evils of systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, ecological devastation and the nation's distorted moral narrative. The campaign draws on the unfinished work of the 1968 Poor People's Campaign, reigniting the effort led by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the diverse grassroots leadership of civil rights organizations, labor and tenant unions, farm workers, Native American elders and grassroots organizers to foster a moral revolution of values. Despite real political wins in 1968 and beyond, the original Poor People's Campaign was tragically cut short, both by Dr. King's assassination and by the subversion of the coalition that sustained it.

In April 2018, the PPC released a comprehensive report, *The Souls of Poor Folk*, conducted with the Institute for Policy Studies and the Urban Institute, auditing America 50 years after the launch of the original Poor People's Campaign. The report found that, in many ways, the nation is worse off today than in 1968: There are fewer voting rights today than there were 50 years ago when the Voting Rights Act and Civil Rights Act were passed, and 23 states have passed racist voter suppression laws just since 2010; 140 million people live in poverty; each year more than 250,000 people die in the United States from poverty and related issues; and the share of national income going towards the top one percent of earners has nearly doubled.

Responding to the urgent need to challenge America's political, economic and moral structures, in May and June 2018, the PPC launched the most expansive wave of nonviolent direct action in U.S. history. For six straight weeks beginning May 14, 2018, more than 30,000 poor and disenfranchised people, clergy and moral leaders flooded 35 statehouses from coast-to-coast and the U.S. Capitol, demanding a massive overhaul of the nation's voting rights laws, new programs to lift up the 140 million Americans living in poverty, immediate attention to ecological devastation and measures to curb militarism and the war economy. Nearly 6,000 people engaged in nonviolent civil disobedience as part of the actions.

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