

# Poor People's Campaign

A NATIONAL CALL for MORAL REVIVAL

## THIRD RECONSTRUCTION AGENDA TO HEAL THE NATION: END POVERTY AND LOW WAGES FROM THE BOTTOM UP

Since the launch of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival in 2017, we have been steadfastly organizing among the 140 million poor and low-income people in this country. Alongside moral allies and people of faith and conscience, we are confronting the interlocking injustices of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation and the denial of health care, militarism and the expansion of the war economy and the false narratives of religious extremism and white supremacy by changing the narrative on these injustices, building power among the 140 million and influencing elections and policies.

After nearly five years, we have established a vast and growing network of [coordinating committees](#) in more than 40 states, [400 partner organizations](#)—including labor unions, religious denominations, national and local organizations and campaigns, and leading research and policy institutes—and a [prophetic council](#) of thousands of religious and faith leaders. Together, we are connected to and reach over 50 million people.

On June 18, 2022, we convened the “Mass Poor People's and Low-Wage Workers' Assembly and Moral March on Washington and to the Polls.” Over 100,000 people assembled in our nation's capital, with millions more online, to hear directly from those most impacted by the interlocking injustices and make a commitment to building this Campaign, together.

*This was not a day, but a declaration! Too many of us have been suffering for far too long, but we will not be unseen or unheard in the face of these injustices.*

*Indeed, there are life-and-death consequences to this widespread misery: before the pandemic 700 people were dying every day from poverty and inequality and during the deadliest phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, death rates were significantly higher in poorer counties. Even though the costs of basic needs like housing, food and health care are on the rise and over 50 million people are working for less than \$15 per hour, pandemic-era*

*programs that benefit poor people the most have all ended. Violence in our schools and communities is tearing our families apart, while the existential threat of climate crisis is escalating, prompting widespread displacement, death and disease, especially among front-line, poor and low-income communities. Meanwhile, billionaire wealth is on the rise, corporations are price gouging to rake in even greater profits and spending on war and policing are at historic highs. Christian nationalism and white supremacy are finding fertile ground among public figures and public institutions, who are taking advantage of our eroded democracy to implement an extremist political agenda.*

*As a national campaign organized around the needs and demands of the 140 million, we know these conditions are neither inevitable nor immutable. We also know that a broad-based moral fusion movement that centers and prioritizes the needs and demands of the poor can not only redress these injustices, but reclaim our democracy and realize the nation we have yet to be.*

*This is why we are calling for a Third Reconstruction Agenda: End Poverty and Low Wages from the Bottom Up!*

*The 140 million poor and low-income people in this country account for 40 % of the population and nearly one-third of the electorate. We are of every race, age, faith, gender expression and identity and we live in every region, state and county in the country. In the lead up to the November elections, we will engage our elected officials around this agenda and register to vote. Our votes are not a show of support—they are our demands!*

*We will not be silent anymore!*

*We will stand together for a Third Reconstruction!*

*Our deadline is victory!*

*Bishop William J. Barber, II, D.Min., National Co-Chair*

*Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, National Co-Chair*

*Shailly Gupta Barnes, National Policy Director*

*Roz Pelles, Senior Advisor*

REPAIRERS  
OF THE BREACH

  
Poor People's Campaign  
A NATIONAL CALL for MORAL REVIVAL

  
KAIROS CENTER  
FOR RELIGIONS, RIGHTS & SOCIAL JUSTICE

## 1 Did you know that poverty is widespread and commonly experienced in the US?

*"That's how poor people live: we scrape, we scrounge and we do without. And we're tired of it. There is no reason, no sense that this has to keep going like this, not when millionaires are becoming billionaires and telling me I don't need \$15 to live...enough is enough." – Pam Garrison, WV PPC*

*"Being poor ain't got nothing to do with pulling yourself up by the bootstraps. I went out and I found some boots ... And I'm still facing barrier after barrier in the wealthiest nation in the world." – Erica Nanton, IL PPC*

Before the pandemic, there were [140 million](#) poor and low-income people living in every region, state and county of the country. This includes more than half of our children, 45% of women (74 million), 60% of Black non-Hispanic people (23 million); 64% of Hispanic people (38 million); 40% of Asian people (8 million); 59% of Native people (2 million); and 33% of white, non-Hispanic people (66 million). It includes a disproportionate number of LGBTQ+ people and people with disabilities.

Fifty million of the 140 million poor and low-income people live in the South, over 40 million are in Appalachia and another 40 million are in the Southwest.

Although the 140 million account for 40% of the population, we are marginalized in our nation's policies, laws and legislation. This is in part because current [measures of poverty](#) are outdated and inaccurate. Consequently, social welfare programs are underfunded, stretched beyond their capacity, deemed ineffective and then dismantled. Pandemic-era programs that benefited the poor have ended, without ensuring adequate health care, housing or economic security for us all to survive, let alone thrive.

These decisions have devastating consequences, including that [250,000 people die every year—or 700 people a day—from poverty and inequality](#).

**Therefore, we demand that our politics, policies, laws and legislation center and prioritize the poor.**

We demand that poverty is measured in terms of the ability to meet basic needs, regardless of where we live. We demand that our government pass policies that raise wages, expand healthcare, provide housing, secure water and utilities, cancel debt and otherwise ensure that everybody in this country can thrive.

## 2 Did you know that nearly one-third of the US labor force earns less than \$15 per hour?

*"Like most of my coworkers, I'm living paycheck to paycheck. Many of us have second jobs and it's still barely enough to get by. Meanwhile the CEO of Starbucks just got a \$60 million golden parachute. It's our labor that has made Starbucks a multi-billion dollar corporation and all we are asking for is what we deserve." – Stephanie Heslop, Starbucks Workers United NY*

In 2022, approximately [52 million people](#) are working less than \$15 per hour. This includes 47% of Black workers, 46% of Hispanic workers and 26% of white workers, as well as 40% of women and half of working women of color. Nearly nine in ten of these low-wage workers are 20 years old or older. Over 4.3 million of these workers are subminimum tipped workers who earn only \$2.13 per hour.

Alongside these rampant low-wages, the \$7.25 federal minimum wage is at [its lowest point in 66 years](#), worth 40% less today than it was in 1968. Despite this stagnation, the call to raise the minimum wage is being postponed, even though corporate profits and [executive pay](#) is skyrocketing.

Recent victories of low-wage workers who are unionizing their workplaces are building momentum for low-wage worker organizing, even against highly-funded anti-union tactics from their employers. In fact, [unions](#) have been shown to both increase wages and benefits for workers and benefit democracy more broadly.

**Therefore, we demand that every person has the right to work with dignity.**

We demand a federal minimum wage of at least \$15 an hour, a commitment to enact living wages in a timely manner and equal pay for equal work. We demand meaningful and safe work for all workers, with paid family and medical leave, adequate OSHA protections and the right to form and join unions.

### **3 Did you know that the great wealth of this country is being held by a very small number of people?**

*"We are the ones who could not rest during the pandemic. We are the ones who don't have the right to get sick, because we cannot miss work and those who run the risk of getting fired if we miss a day of work...I imagine a world where I don't have to kill myself working so hard to pay my bills, a world where I spend more time with my daughter and less time at work. Such a world is possible. If you don't believe me, ask the millionaires who enjoy this privilege." – **Marcela Ramirez, MILPA***

Over the past two years, billionaire wealth surged by over [\\$2 trillion](#), totaling over \$5 trillion in the hands of just 740 people. The \$2 trillion increase is [more than](#) all student loan debt or the 10-year cost of the expanded Child Tax Credit.

Corporations have, in fact, [used the pandemic](#) to raise prices on consumers, issue stock buybacks to inflate executive pay and lobby to keep their gains untaxed. Although the newest change to corporate taxes will reduce the sense that corporations and the wealthy can get away without paying what they owe, most of their pandemic gains will still go completely untaxed.

Truly fair taxes on wealthy individuals, corporations and Wall Street could generate as much as \$3.3 trillion to meet urgent social and environmental needs, including fully funding early childcare and education for every child, free public college for all and millions of green jobs to expand and repair our public infrastructure.

**Therefore, we demand the ultra-rich, corporations and Wall Street pay their fair share.**



We demand a wealth tax on mega millionaires and billionaires, raising the top individual tax rate, taxing income from investments the same as income from work, strengthening the estate tax, restoring the corporate tax rate to pre-2017 levels and reinstating a financial transactions tax. These additional resources must be directed towards securing our democracy, broadening social welfare spending, a bold climate agenda and the needs listed in this agenda.

#### **4 Did you know that it costs more to *NOT* address poverty and inequality than it does to fully address these injustices?**

*"It's past time for women, all of us— Black, Latinx, Asian, white, Native American, moms, childless, trans, living with disability, immigrant, with or without papers—indeed all of us, to have policies in place that end poverty and enable us to live decent, dignified lives, rather than forcing us into jobs that destroy our health and the environment." – Nell Myhand, CA PPC*

There are [great costs](#) to poverty and inequality. Child poverty alone costs this country \$1 trillion per year in terms of lost productivity, increased health impacts, criminalization and other costs of being poor. Hunger costs another \$160 billion per year. Mass incarceration costs nearly \$90 billion in lost job opportunities and our immigration system costs over \$100 billion in lost contributions to the economy.

On top of these economic losses, there are moral, social and political costs in a society where 700 people die every day from being poor.

This is not how it has to be. Our lawmakers and elected officials decide how to distribute the great wealth and resources of the nation, thereby deciding who has access to health care, childcare, a decent workplace, adequate housing, clean water or good public education. In other words, poverty is a policy choice. We can make different choices.

Fully funded social welfare programs can lift the load of poverty. During the pandemic, resources for health care, child care, housing and food insecurity programs were increased; unemployment insurance was extended; and the Child Tax Credit was expanded in new ways. These programs had economy-wide benefits. In fact, [every dollar](#) of federal aid that supported poor and low-income households generated more economic activity than a dollar in federal aid supporting businesses or the military. New research has shown that investing \$100 billion towards a child allowance (similar to the expanded CTC) would generate [8x as much](#) in current and future society-wide benefits.

Although these programs ended prematurely, they were consistent with the Constitutional call to promote the general welfare and resonant with our deepest moral values. They stand in contrast to the routine practices of tax evasion, subsidies and public contracts that the wealthy, corporations, Wall Street, polluting industries and the military-industrial complex receive, which compromise and destroy our common well-being.

**Therefore, we demand the great wealth, resources and capacity of this nation be directed towards expanded social welfare programs that center the poor, rather than corporations and the wealthy, so we can all fare well.**



We demand that pandemic-era programs be reinstated, including unemployment insurance, food security programs, as well as an expanded Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit. We demand expanded resources for care, including child care and long-term care, to ensure everyone has access to affordable, quality care for our loved ones and dependents. We demand adequate social welfare programs that can guarantee adequate incomes for all, regardless of race, income, ability, gender expression, documentation or carceral status. We demand that these programs are not unduly restricted by means testing, work requirements or other burdensome processes that limit access to these vital resources.

We demand that other social welfare programs like SNAP, CHIP, SSI and SSDI are protected and expanded to meet everyone's needs.

## **5 Did you know that voting rights and democracy are under attack?**

*"In Arizona, there are two and a half million eligible low-income voters. We're a multiracial group. In 2020, less than 40% of us voted. Attacks on voting rights are intended to keep our turnout as low as possible. These attacks disproportionately target and disenfranchise Black and brown voters, but the end result hurts me and my family too. Attacks on voting rights makes it possible to kill programs like the child tax credit, which my three kids need. These racist divide-and-conquer politics are older than the nation itself, and they're an enemy of all poor and low-wealth people in this nation, Black, brown, Asian, native, and white folks alike."*

**– John Wessel McCoy, AZ PPC**

*"I served out a 10-year prison sentence and I stand in the gap for all those folks who made a mistake, but aren't mistakes. Do you know there are over [700,000] Kentuckians, poor and low-income, who could have voted but didn't in 2020? What's hurting me in Kentucky is hurting people in Alabama, it's hurting people in West Virginia, and across the nation. Can you imagine all the poor and low-income people coming to the ballot box? Ok, yeah, it's difficult to go to the ballot box, but what if we did everything we could to make sure our vote counted? We could overturn the madness that's going on." – Tayna Fogle, KY PPC*

It has now been more than nine years since the Supreme Court struck down the preclearance clause (section 5) of the 1965 Voting Rights Act in [Shelby County v. Holder](#). This clause had ensured federal supervision over jurisdictions with a history of racist voter suppression.

Fallout from this decision was immediate and ongoing. [Within hours](#), Texas implemented a strict voter ID law that had been held at bay, with [Alabama](#) and [Mississippi](#) quickly following. By 2016, [14 states](#) had new voting restrictions for the first time in a presidential election—7 of these states had been previously covered under preclearance of the VRA. After the 2020 presidential election, state legislatures introduced over [440 voter repression bills](#) across 49 states in 2021. That same year, [19 states passed 34](#) voter suppression bills that may impact as many as [55 million eligible voters](#). Thousands of polling places have been shut down, millions of voters have been purged from voting rolls, voter ID laws are imposing restrictions that are targeting Black, Native, elderly and rural voters and racist / partisan gerrymandered maps are moving through state legislatures. There are also [5.3 million](#) formerly incarcerated people in this country who have permanently lost their right to vote.



While suppression laws often target people of color, politicians who benefit from voter suppression often go against the will of the people, as can be seen with living wage ordinances, voter re-enfranchisement, health care, reproductive rights, gun laws and more. The worst violence from these policies is always suffered by poor and low-income people.

Restrictions on the right to vote are accompanied by other laws and policies that curtail our democracy. Pre-emption at the state level is undermining democratically elected local leadership and governance. Emergency financial managers who are unaccountable to the people are exercising wide-ranging authority over budget decisions that impact government services and programs. The filibuster is being wielded by a minority to block legislation that has broad public support on voting rights, raising the minimum wage, women's reproductive rights, gun violence and more.

Most recently, in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, the Supreme Court broke with nearly 50 years of legal precedent, taking away a previously recognized fundamental right for the first time in its history. As with the *Shelby* decision, the fallout was immediate and ongoing, with trigger bans designed to take effect as soon as *Roe v. Wade* was overturned enacted in multiple states. And, as with *Shelby*, the longer-term impacts are even more ominous, with the likelihood of greater surveillance, policing and vigilantism directed at poor and low-income women, especially, and others whose rights to privacy are no longer secure.

Now, the highest court in the land is preparing to hear a redistricting case out of North Carolina, [Moore v. Harper](#), that may give state legislatures virtually unchecked power over elections.

Our democracy is under attack on multiple fronts, with poor and low-income people most impacted by these decisions. Despite state-level victories on voting rights, the right to privacy and more, there has been no federal action to quell these threats to democracy.

**Therefore, we demand the right to meaningfully participate in the decisions that impact our lives by expanding voting rights and securing our democracy against extremist threats and violence.**

We demand the restoration of key protections of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, including pre-clearance requirements to fully address historic and contemporary voter suppression activities such as partisan and racist redistricting, racist voter identification laws, poll closures, limits to mail-in ballots and other restrictions on participation in elections. We demand expanded access to registration, including online registration, automatic voter registration, same day registration and early registration for 17-year-olds. We demand Election Day be declared a federal holiday.

We demand that our constitutional rights to assembly, free speech and privacy are protected and that democratically elected leadership is not undermined by pre-emption, partisan commissions or emergency financial managers.

We demand Supreme Court reform, including expanding the number of justices, reforming the process of selection and confirmation and serious public discourse around reconsidering lifetime appointments.



We demand statehood for Washington D.C. There must be no taxation without representation.

We demand an end to the filibuster, especially as a mechanism used against legislation that benefits poor and low-income people, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, women and others.

## **6 Did you know that tens of millions of people are denied adequate health care?**

*"No one should have to bury their child in America, because they don't have health insurance." – Callie Greer  
AL PPC*

Before the pandemic, an estimated [87 million](#) people were uninsured or underinsured in the US, including 45% of Black people, 42% of white non-Hispanic people, 55% of Latinos and 39% of Asian and Pacific Islanders. [LGBTQ+ people](#) face higher uninsured rates and barriers to care.

During the pandemic, [millions of workers](#), and their family members, lost their employer sponsored insurance and access to health care. While short-term policies were implemented temporarily, there has been no meaningful and permanent expansion of health care through the worst public health crisis in a century. In fact, 12 states have still not expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, leaving over 2 million people uninsured; up to [15 million people](#) are at risk of losing their health care as the public health emergency ends; and nearly [25% of rural hospitals](#) (more than 450 hospitals) are at risk of closure. Poor and low-income children, and especially [young black men](#), who receive health care through CHIP often lose their coverage when they turn 18 or 19, without other viable options. The reversal of *Roe v. Wade* will fall hardest on poor and low-income women, [who account for 75%](#) of abortion patients and will now have [less reliable access](#) to reproductive health care.

In fact, the costs of health care [prevent](#) millions of people from receiving adequate and necessary medical attention. Over the past 20 years, out-of-pocket costs have doubled, deductible payments have grown 10 times faster than inflation and medical debt is the number one reason for household [bankruptcy](#). During the pandemic, the average out of pocket spending for COVID-related care was \$788 for privately insured people. Even public health programs like Medicaid and Medicare are increasingly [privatized](#), driving up their costs while reducing resources for patient care.

Therefore, although the US spends [more than twice](#) the amount per capita on health expenditures compared to other rich countries, we have the lowest life expectancy, highest infant and maternal mortality rates, highest chronic disease burden, highest suicide rates and highest rate of avoidable deaths among these countries. [Drug overdose deaths](#) went up 30 % in the first year of the pandemic, with higher overdose death rates among Black and Native people. Opioid deaths alone claimed over [100,000 deaths](#) in 2021.

**Therefore, we demand quality, comprehensive health care for us all.**

We demand that Medicaid be expanded and Medicare be protected, as public goods, and we demand a universal, single-payer national health care system for everyone, regardless of income, age, ability,



gender expression, documentation, carceral status or pre-existing conditions. We demand that rural hospitals are reopened and updated and public health infrastructure is expanded to reach all in need, including for mental health, addiction, recovery and harm reduction.

We demand immediate relief from medical debt.

## **7 Did you know that millions of people can't afford basic needs like housing, food, water or utilities?**

*"At 35 years old, I have spent all of my adult life working low-wage jobs. From the ages of 18 to 26, I worked in the service and hospitality industries where most tipped positions are paid a sub-minimum wage. For several years, I held two jobs working 70 plus hours per week while going to school full-time and still barely made enough to cover my basic needs, let alone any type of emergency." – Britnie Remer WI PPC*

Although housing, water, sanitation, electricity, heating, cooling and broadband are fundamental and basic necessities for us all, they are out of reach for millions of people. This is in part due to the privatization of public goods and utilities and rampant speculation on housing, water and food, which drive up the costs of these basic needs.

Before the pandemic, 8-11 million people were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Even with eviction moratoriums in place, [homeless sweeps continued](#) during the pandemic. These moratoriums have now ended, leaving even more people at risk of losing their homes. Without any federal protections in place—or housing and rental debt relief—eviction hearings are underway and cities in every state of the country are criminalizing homelessness.

Meanwhile, housing costs are [on the rise](#): there is no state, city or county in the country where a full-time minimum wage worker can afford a two-bedroom rental. For the first time, median rent is above [\\$2000 per month](#), requiring household earnings that are out of reach for more than half of the country.

Also before the pandemic, [11% of families](#) and [one in seven children](#) were hungry and over [14 million households](#) could not afford access to water. When [food insecurity rates doubled](#), food security programs were expanded. State and local governments also enacted temporary moratoriums on [water and utilities](#) shut-offs. When these moratoria ended in 2021, disconnections started to increase, leaving millions of people at risk of losing their access to water of high user rates, fees and fines. This vulnerability also puts them at higher risks of eviction, foreclosure, state-enforced family separation, disease and even death.

**Therefore, we demand that everyone's basic needs to housing, food, water and utilities are met.**

We demand that all evictions and foreclosures are immediately ceased. We demand an end to homelessness and the criminalization of unhoused people, including with the immediate provision of existing housing to people who need it, rather than government sponsored encampments and congregate shelters.





We demand the expansion of quality, affordable public housing. These provisions must be made available to all in need, regardless of gender, documentation or carceral status.

We demand that food security programs are expanded to secure the highest nutrition levels for all in need.

We demand that water and utilities that have been shut off be turned back on. We demand a national moratorium on all water and utility disconnections, a national affordability program to ensure access to these basic needs and increased federal funding to expand and update public infrastructure for clean water, utilities and sanitation services to ensure equitable access, including expanded high-speed broadband. We demand a full ban on punitive collections practices.

We demand that policies facilitating the commodification of and speculation in housing, water, food and other basic needs be banned. We demand that public goods and utilities are not privatized, but returned to public control, accountability and management.

We demand that debts that cannot be paid—including household and rental debt, water debt and utilities debt—be relieved.

## **8 Did you know that most public-school students are poor or live in poor communities and districts?**

*“Do you think our students are heroes for bravely going to school each day? Heroes choose to fight, our students didn’t choose. They didn’t choose for standardized tests to label them as inferior. They don’t choose a school budget with no nurses or counselors. If they make it to college, they don’t choose for debt to cripple them financially.” – Jack Gallow, TX PPC*

There are approximately [50 million children](#) in the US public school system, including 22 million white students, nearly 14 million Hispanic students, 7.4 million Black students, 2.7 million Asian students, and 500,000 Indigenous and Native students. Seven million of these students have disabilities.

In 2020, [half](#) of these public school students were eligible for Title 1 funding, meaning that they lived in a poor household or attended a school or district where a large %age of the children were poor. Despite the great need for resources, proposed [funding for Title 1](#) is far less than adequate. In fact, [Head Start](#) only reaches half of eligible children due to limited funding.

During the pandemic, these inequities became more pronounced. Emergency pandemic funding [was far short](#) of closing gaps in remote learning, let alone stabilizing school budgets, securing access to [high-speed broadband](#) or ensuring that schools opened safely, all of which impacted [poor and low-income students](#) the most. Even when schools reopened, staff shortages and rolling school closures contributed to ongoing disruptions in learning, especially for historically disadvantaged students.



At the same time, resegregation continues to impact [Black](#) students, including in states like New York, Illinois, Texas and California. And there are new efforts to eliminate access to public school for [undocumented children](#) and at least [37 states](#) have introduced legislation that limits what students can learn about history.

We are short-changing our children and [poor students](#) are falling further behind.

The costs of higher education are further imposing undue burdens on millions of households. Student debt is over \$1,700,000,000,000 and impacts 45 million people. Before the pandemic, [more than half](#) of all student loan borrowers were unable to make payments on their loans. The most recent student debt relief will benefit millions of households and shows that debt forgiveness is a policy choice.

**Therefore, we demand quality, equitable and diverse public education for all of our students, from pre-k to college and the elimination of student debt.**

We demand increased funding for early childhood programs like Head Start and early Head Start and the desegregation of schools by race, income, ability and language. We demand a broad public curriculum that is rooted in science, history and inclusive of diverse and marginalized experiences. We demand that children have the ability to be who they are—and be safe—in school.

We demand more funding for HBCUs, tribal schools and resources for the Individuals with Disabilities' Education Act.

We demand comprehensive student debt relief, alongside access to high-quality and free higher education and technical school, for everyone who wants to attend, regardless of income, race, ability, gender expression, carceral or documentation status.

**9 Did you know that although this nation was built by immigrants, immigrants today face systemic violence and xenophobia?**

*"Our immigration system has separated more than 2000 children from their parents at the border since 2007. This has failed almost 1.5 million refugees and asylum seekers in the last few years. It has built more than 1000 miles of border walls and sent migrants to isolated deserts and mountains at the border, where they are dying at a rate of 1000 per year. That means 3 migrants die every day. It has pushed 11 million immigrants in the United States to live in poverty and ongoing persecution. All of this is rooted and perpetuated by a distorted narrative and vitriolic, racist white supremacy in our immigration system."* – **Fernando Garcia, Border Network for Human Rights**

*"I'm a Korean American Immigrant. Growing up hearing the words alien, illegal, or go back to where you came from, made me feel unwelcome in the United States....As a Korean Immigrant, I want to say that true advocacy for the AAPI community begins by not only addressing the hate crimes, but by providing mental health resources and universal health care for poor and working class people, and student loan forgiveness for students like*



*me who would like to pursue their dreams without being in debt. Finally, as a teacher I want a better future and planet for our children by addressing gun violence and working together to solve our climate crisis.”*

**– David Lee, WA PPC**

In the years following the attacks of 9/11 and amid fears of economic insecurity, we have been led to believe that immigrants make our society less safe, compete for our jobs and even threaten our culture and democracy. This has contributed to anti-immigrant policies and violence, including heightened militarization and criminalization of immigrant communities at our Southern Border; a broken immigration system that relies on incarceration, detentions and deportations, even of children and minors; and the normalization of vigilante violence against immigrants, which has been fueled by Islamophobia, anti-Asian hate and other racist narratives. Millions of immigrants, especially undocumented workers and their families, are also excluded from public welfare programs and worker protections, even though they contribute trillions of dollars of our economy and pay millions in taxes every year.

Indeed, approximately [12 million immigrant workers](#), including 5 million undocumented workers, were on the frontlines of our pandemic response, in the hardest hit sectors of the economy. Yet, [eligibility restrictions, administration burdens and disincentives](#) to participate in social welfare programs meant that fewer immigrants received pandemic-related public assistance. Millions of immigrants and children in immigrant families were excluded entirely from early pandemic relief.

**Therefore, we demand that immigrants’ rights are respected and protected wherever we live, move and work.**

We demand comprehensive and just immigration policy that secures adequate documentation to move freely in society and a timely citizenship process for all who seek citizen status, regardless of country of origin, age at entry or years in residence.

We demand that the Southern Border is demilitarized and residents are protected, not criminalized.

We demand that our immigration policies prioritize family reunification over deportations, detentions and family separation. We demand the repeal of mandatory detention laws and that child detention centers, private detention centers and shadow detention centers are all closed.

We demand that federal assistance and social welfare programs are extended to all who are in need, regardless of documentation status.

**10 Did you know that Indigenous people and communities are mistreated, tribal institutions are underfunded and sacred Indigenous lands and resources are being destroyed?**

*“I’m the mother of four girls, my job is to pass on religion and spirituality so they can pass it on to future generations. I’m fighting for her. Not only will her spirituality be taken away from her if this foreign mining company*



*can come and destroy our holy site, she will no longer know what it means to be Apache. She will have to fight for her survival on the Earth. If the earth and environment are destroyed we will have nothing...We need to come together and unify. Help me protect my holy site because I'm helping you survive!"* – **Vanessa Noise, Apache Stronghold**

Although treaty obligations have long existed to provide for the health, education and well-being, and protect the sacred resources, practices and traditions of Indigenous people and tribal nations, these obligations have not been kept. Alongside high rates of poverty, unemployment and low-wages in tribal areas and reservations, there is woefully inadequate access to water, sanitation, housing, and health care on many reservations. A [2016 study](#) showed that Native Americans were 5 times more likely than the rest of the US population to lack access to complete plumbing. Federal investment in tribal [housing](#), [education](#) and [health](#) is also chronically underfunded. During the pandemic, these factors contributed to Indigenous and Native communities having some of the [highest COVID-19 death rates](#) in the country.

This systemic neglect is accompanied by higher rates of deaths by [police violence](#), [vandalism](#) and other attacks on Indigenous people, including on their right to [participate in elections and democracy](#). In fact, voter suppression laws have targeted Native Americans in numerous states, including Arizona, Alaska, Montana, Nevada, North and South Dakota and Utah.

At the same time, Indigenous and Native resources and lands—which only cover 2% of the country—are tenaciously pursued by mining and extractive companies, which they often pollute and destroy. [Oak Flat](#) (Chí'chil Bildagoteel) is an Apache holy site in Arizona that is facing imminent destruction by one of the largest mining companies in the world. For thousands of years, generations of Apache have come to pray at Oak Flat, where the waters are understood to be the source of all life. After years of unsuccessful negotiations, Resolution Copper was given the mining rights to the copper ore at Oak Flat as a last-minute rider on the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act. The extraction will pollute the holy ground with sulfuric acid and replace the waters with a gaping two-mile wide crater. The San Carlos Apache have been fighting to protect Oak Flat for years, asserting their right to the free expression of religion in the legislatures and the courts. Their struggle has united the San Carlos Apache with other Indigenous leaders and nations to demand that their religious liberties, lands and institutions are protected.

**Therefore, we demand that the rights of Indigenous people and First Nations are fully protected and respected, including the rights to their lands, resources, free exercise of religion, sovereignty, constitutional guarantees, treaty protections and other beneficial federal legislation.**

We demand that the sacred land of Oak Flats is protected from imminent destruction. We demand that adequate resources are allocated and delivered to tribal and Indigenous institutions to fully meet their needs and all treaty obligations.

**11** Did you know that poor and low-income communities are hit first and worst by the climate crisis and pollution? Did you know they also suffered COVID-19 death rates that were twice as high as rich communities?

*“An invisible and airborne virus has proven to us that we are in an inescapable network of mutuality and has shown us with vivid detail the deadly consequences of systemic poverty and systemic racism in our nation. Even more troubling is our inhumane acceptance of mass death and a rush to return to normal at the expense of equity and justice.” – Dr. Sharelle Barber, UBUNTU Center*

*“I’m a low wage worker. I am formerly incarcerated. I currently live in Jackson, Mississippi. Water is a human right. Clean water is a human right. As of right now, I feel like my life has been violated and taken away from me because the simple fact of it is I can’t even bathe, brush my teeth, wash my hair, do the things people are supposed to do. This has been taken away from us. And it shouldn’t be.” – Penelope Barnes, MS PPC*

Extreme weather conditions caused by the [climate crisis](#) are more damaging when a community lacks the necessary infrastructure or resources to prepare and recover. Poor and low-income communities are always on the frontlines of super storms, floods, drought and fire, without the means to protect themselves or build back what has been lost.

Meanwhile, fossil fuel infrastructure tears through poor communities and First Nations, Native American and Alaskan Native lands, while putting them at greater risk of harm when disasters like oil and gas leaks, pipeline ruptures or oil spills occur. These are more common than we are led to believe: over the past 20 years, there have been 5,000 significant oil and gas leaks or ruptures on U.S. pipelines and more than 2,400 oil spills in US waters. There are also over [700 coal ash units](#) across the country, 95% of which are unlined, and other processing plants for shale, clay and slurry from coal mines. Cancer Alley, Louisiana, is an 85-mile stretch of land which has over 150 petrochemical plants and refineries. Together, they account for 25% of the petrochemical production in the US and some of the highest cancer rates in the country. During hurricane season, many Cancer Alley residents lost everything they had.

There are other “would be” cancer alleys, in the Ohio River Valley, Appalachia and elsewhere, where poor communities are disproportionately close to polluting industries. Poor communities of color are even more greatly impacted by residential segregation.

Pollutants in the air, water and land make these communities more vulnerable to sickness, disease and viruses, including COVID-19. In fact, [COVID-19 death rates](#) were twice as high overall in poorer counties as richer counties. Moreover, at different phases of the pandemic, these death rates were up to 5 times higher in the poorest counties. These counties are home to a disproportionate %age of people of color, including 27% of all Indigenous people, 15% of all Black people and 13% of all Hispanic people. Half of their population is white. There are also twice as many uninsured people living there than in richer counties.

While the long-term effects of COVID-19 are still not well understood, as many as [14 million people and counting](#) are developing years-long or lifelong disabilities from their COVID infection. Our society is not



yet equipped to manage or respond to this evolving health crisis. In fact, employers are [laying off these workers](#) with little to no safety net to catch them.

**Therefore, we demand a robust climate agenda to ensure a swift transition to a green economy that builds up public infrastructure, resources and capacity and an adequate response to the COVID-19 pandemic that centers the poor.**

We demand an end to both fossil fuel subsidies and expanding fossil fuel infrastructure. We demand that corporate actors are prohibited from polluting and poisoning our climate and resources and held publicly and financially accountable for the impacts of their activities.

We demand that poor and low-income frontline communities are prioritized for expanded infrastructure development, sustainable agriculture, land restoration and protection, public mass transit, solar and wind energy and other community-based infrastructure. We demand a public “Green Jobs Corps” to repair our natural resources, reclaim them as public goods and revitalize our communities, prioritizing poor and low-income frontline communities for these jobs.

We demand equitable and free testing, treatment, vaccination and care for COVID-19, including long-term impacts, regardless of income, ability, gender expression, documentation, carceral or insured status. We demand further research on the impacts of poverty and inequality on health outcomes, including from the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis.

## **12 Did you know that we spend more on war than the next 9 high-military spending countries, combined?**

*“I’m a former Marine Corps infantry captain and Afghanistan war veteran. I’ve witnessed firsthand how our national priorities have left millions behind over 20 years. We spent over \$21 trillion, militarizing our nation internationally and domestically. Despite the trillions that we spent everyday veterans and our communities do not see that benefit for years, we’ve been told that 22 veterans commit suicide a day, that pain that leads to that sort of torment does not appear out of thin air.” – Kyle Bibby, Common Defense*

Since 2001, [our government has spent over \\$21 trillion](#) on wars, militarizing our borders, surveillance, incarceration and a war economy. Although experts have identified [\\$350 billion](#) in reasonable reductions to this spending, the military budget in 2022 will be [\\$1.4 trillion](#), with [over \\$800 billion](#) going to the Pentagon. This is more than the next 9 high-military spending countries, combined.

War is always an enemy of the poor at home and around the world: it displaces [millions of people](#), pushes [hundreds of millions more into hunger](#) and raises new threats of [nuclear annihilation](#). [Economic sanctions](#) claiming to target political elites always end up hurting poor people the most.

Our military personnel, veterans and their families carry the moral, physical, mental and emotional injuries of war. Many of them are also poor. Of our 19 million veterans, 5.4 million are on disability, tens of thousands are homeless and 7-18% of veterans and military families receive food assistance.

Weapons of war are often being used against our communities, especially poor communities. The Department of Defense has given [billions of dollars](#) in military equipment to 8,200 police departments across the country.

Alongside this militarization, poor communities are increasingly criminalized, policed and incarcerated. The US accounts for 4% of the world population but holds 20% of the world's incarcerated people, most of whom are poor and the poorest of whom are women and people of color. According to the Department of Justice, [ninety-five %](#) of the growth in the incarcerated population since 2000 is the result of an increase in the number of defendants unable to make bail.

During the pandemic, incarcerated people saw COVID-19 case levels nearly [five times higher](#) than in the general population in the United States.

### **Therefore, we demand that our government prioritize peace in the world and at home.**

We demand that at least 10 % of military spending is immediately redirected to the needs above. We demand that our foreign policy is reoriented towards diplomacy, debt relief and humanitarian assistance. We demand this country lead global efforts for nuclear disarmament. We demand an end to broad economic sanctions that hurt the poor.

We demand that our communities are demilitarized and spending on mass incarceration, immigration enforcement and policing is redirected towards building up non-carceral crisis response, including non-police first responders, as well as community-based infrastructure, programs and resources that prioritize communities most impacted by this violence. We demand an end to cash bail, predatory fines and fees.

We demand that the right to vote for all currently and formerly incarcerated people be reinstated.

### **13 Did you know that religious nationalism has been used to justify systemic violence against poor people and people of color since the founding of this nation?**

*"As a member of the queer and trans community, I know that our rights and well-being are under threat. Anti-trans legislation is at the top of the agenda when extremists take power, and the rhetoric they use is increasing vigilante violence against us, especially Black trans women and other queer and trans people of color. As a parent, I know that the attack on voting rights and our democracy is an attack on our children's futures. And as a faith leader and a member of this moral fusion movement, I know that this tool of voting is a critical one to be able to achieve our whole agenda, to lift from the bottom so that everybody rises, and everybody has a right to live. And so, we have to keep fighting, and we will keep fighting." – Rev. West McNeil NY PPC*

Christian nationalist and white supremacist organizations and networks have always existed in this country. At different times in our nation's history, they have justified abhorrent injustices including: the



genocide and forced removal of indigenous people from their lands, slavery, Jim Crow, gun violence and restricting the rights of the poor, women, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people and others.

Over the past fifty years, these networks have redefined the moral issues of our day as “protecting freedom” in narrow and self-serving ways. Politicians who have been elected on these positions and “moral” issues like gun rights, school prayer and abortion have spent the lion’s share of their time in office blocking legislation that would benefit the poor and the majority of their constituents.

The events of January 6, 2021, revealed the growing influence of Christian nationalism and white supremacist organizations in our social and political institutions. Emboldened with support from high-profile national and religious figures, politicians, celebrities and mainstream exposure, these forces have fundamentally distorted the principles of our Constitution to move forward a racist, sexist, classist and dangerous political agenda.

Indeed, their politics are advancing violence on a startling scale, whether in the epidemic of mass shootings or through policy decisions that deny health care, keep wages low and support war. They are threatening our democracy with a coordinated assault on voting rights in nearly every state. Relying on regressive arguments around [state’s rights](#), they are at the forefront of overturning *Roe v. Wade* and opening the door to even greater assaults on our fundamental and basic rights.

**Therefore, we demand that the laws, legislation, policies and budgets of this nation are based on the five key principles of the US Constitution: to establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and future generations.**

We demand that social and economic injustices that have enslaved, dispossessed and/or oppressed entire communities are addressed through the priorities of this agenda. We demand a national commission to study and develop proposals on reparations for African Americans. We demand a national truth-telling that includes recommendations for restorative processes and reparations for Indigenous people and other communities that have suffered systemic harms from unjust policies, including Hispanic, Latino/a, Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian people.

**14 Did you know that poor and low-income people hold the political power to change our national priorities?**

*“We must organize, organize, organize! If we organize a mass politically independent force of poor and dispossessed people in every county, every city, small towns, suburbs, and rural area across this country—if we build a space of 140 million people bringing them into the Poor People’s Campaign and the organizations of the campaign, we can not only impact elections, but we can change what is politically possible in this country.”*  
– Nijmie Dzurinko, PA PPC

In 2020, there were more than 85 million poor and low-income people who were eligible to vote. [Over 50 million](#) poor and low-income voters cast a ballot in the presidential contest, accounting for nearly one-



third of all the votes in that election. These voters accounted for even higher %ages in key battleground states like Arizona, Michigan, Wisconsin, Texas, Florida, North Carolina. Despite pandemic conditions, poor and low-income voters both registered and voted at higher rates in 2020 than in 2016. Not only were the issues they care about most—health and economic well-being—on the agenda, mail in ballots and other mechanisms ensured greater access to participate in our democracy.

Indeed, an engaged poor and low-income electorate holds unrealized political potential. Even small groups of poor people, united across race in fusion coalitions, can change our nation’s politics. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., recognized this potential in 1965, when he said: “The segregation of the races was really a political stratagem employed by the emerging Bourbon interests in the South to keep the masses divided and southern labor the cheapest in the land. It was a simple thing to keep the poor white masses working for near-starvation wages in the years that followed the Civil War...if [they] became dissatisfied with his low wages, the [owner] would merely threaten to fire him and hire former Negro slaves and pay him even less. Thus the southern wage level was kept almost unbearably low. Toward the end of the Reconstruction era, something very significant happened that was known as the Populist Movement. The leaders of this movement began awakening the poor white masses and the former Negro slaves to the fact that they were being flexed by the emerging Bourbon interests. Not only that, but they began uniting the Negro and white masses into a voting bloc that threatened to drive the Bourbon interest from the command posts of political power in the South.”

Today, nearly six decades later, there are tens of millions of poor and low-income voters who, if organized across race and around an agenda that centered their needs, could end the divisive “Southern Strategy,” redraw our political maps and fundamentally shift our national priorities.

We have seen these transformations in the first Reconstruction after the Civil War and the second Reconstruction of the civil rights struggles in the 20th century. During these historic eras, those most impacted by the injustices of their day found common cause to organize together—across race, gender and other lines of division—and change what was politically possible.

**Therefore, we demand a Third Reconstruction that unites the 140 million poor and low-income people in this country to realize their political power.**

Together, we demand moral policies to fully address systemic racism, poverty, the denial of health care and ecological devastation, militarism, and the distorted moral narrative of religious nationalism.

Together, we will usher in a new era of moral revival and build an equitable, thriving, and resilient economy from the bottom up.

When we lift from the bottom, everybody rises!

