

A Reflection: The Poor People's Campaign

CAC DONOR FRANK SASINOWSKI

An initial reaction to Rev. William J. Barber's Poor People's Campaign could be something like, "That's generally fine, but does not express all my issues or the way I feel about them." This visceral reaction may be one of a thousand other rationalizations for not responding to this call to action.

As a resident of Washington, DC, since the 1970s, my privilege of proximity has allowed me to participate in calls to action from Jesse Jackson's 20th anniversary of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech in

could have dreamed. By participating in the Poor People's Campaign, we get to recognize the other right in front of us and alongside us, in the workplace, grocery store, or our favorite coffee shop.

This practice of being present to Presence gently awakens us, whispering a suggestion in our suddenly attentive ear to act in new and wholly unexpected ways. How are you called to be physically present in Rev. Barber's Poor People's Campaign?

Through contemplation, Love will beckon us to action in places and ways we never could have dreamed.

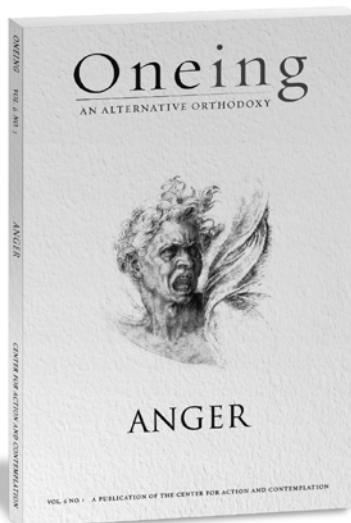


1983 to the 2017 Women's March on Washington. Yet the call to action of the contemplative heart does not depend upon proximity.

Like Rev. King, Rev. Barber exposes the false understanding that wealth offers: to believe that the *other* is a threat to our security. No matter how sated we are, living for material wealth can never lead to happiness or security. The contemplative heart learns that "just this" is enough and that the present bounty is overflowing in cosmic generosity.

By becoming grounded in the heart space, turning ourselves over to Presence through contemplation, Love will beckon us to action in places and ways we never

FRANK J. SASINOWSKI, MS, MPH, JD, assists drug companies and patient organizations in developing new medicines and has helped secure FDA approval for hundreds of new drugs, including more than sixty-five new molecular entities, often for serious and/or rare diseases. Since 2014, he has been an Adjunct Professor of Neurology at the University of Rochester Medical School. An alumnus of the first cohort of the CAC's Living School for Action and Contemplation, Frank serves on the board of Sr. Ilia Delio's Omega Center.



There is much about which to be angry these days. How do we hold the tension of anger so that it can do its important work in us and the world?

This issue of CAC's journal, *Oneing*, features articles by Richard Rohr, Barbara Brown Taylor, Walter Brueggemann, Joan Halifax, Barbara Holmes, Brian McLaren, Mirabai Starr, and others.

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THE MENDICANT

Contemplation *and* Action

RICHARD ROHR, OFM

People have liked and affirmed the CAC's long name, Center for Action and Contemplation, since the beginning. We hoped it would keep us honest and force us toward balance and ongoing integration. However, I have reason to believe that some might attach to contemplation or action for the wrong reasons. Introverts can use contemplation to affirm quiet time, not working, and leisure-class navel-gazing while activists can see action as an affirmation of their particular agenda. Neither is the delicate balance and art that we hope to affirm.

By *contemplation*, we mean the deliberate seeking of God through a willingness to detach from the passing self, the tyranny of emotions, the addiction to self-image, and the false promises of the world. Contemplation is the "divine therapy" and the perennial clearinghouse for the soul.

Action, as we are using the word, does not mean activism, busyness, or "do-goodism." Action does mean a decisive commitment toward involvement and engagement in the social order. Issues will not be resolved by mere reflection, discussion, or even prayer. God "works together with" all those who love (see Romans 8:28).

It is important that we continue to clarify and hold to these two pivots of our lives. Rightly sought, contemplation and action will always regulate, balance, and convert one another. Separately, they are dead-ended and trapped in personality. The clear goal is to meet people *where they are*. For all of us, it is an endless, rhythmic dance. The steps change now and then, but Someone Else always leads.

Adapted and edited from "Not the Center for Activism & Introspection," by Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM, Radical Grace, Vol. 4, No. 6, December 1991–January 1992.

An Invitation from Living School Alumna Holly Roach Knight

The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival is uniting tens of thousands of people across the country to challenge the evils of systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation. It's been fifty years since Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. The Poor



People's March was the work in which Dr. King was engaged when he died. Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, architect of the Moral Monday Movement in North Carolina, has partnered with Rev. Dr. Liz

Theoharis from the Kairos Center, along with hundreds of organizations, denominations, and faith traditions, to

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An Invitation [continued from page 1]

take up the mantle that cost Dr. King his life and courageously carry it forward.

This strategy, the first of its kind in the United States, will involve thousands of people simultaneously gathering to take direct actions across the country, risking arrest, in order to shift the media narrative to focus on these systemic evils. While the campaign has ambitious goals for participation in moral, nonviolent, direct action in approximately thirty state capitals and Washington, DC, there are many other ways for people to be involved in the campaign. (Fundamental principles of the campaign can be found at poorpeoplescampaign.org.)

The campaign will begin on Mother's Day, Sunday, May 13, 2018, and will continue through Thursday, June 21, 2018. The event will include Sunday meetings, followed by moral, nonviolent, direct action on Mondays, and will culminate on Saturday, June 23, 2018, with a national mass rally in Washington, DC.



The Poor People's Campaign will involve thousands of people simultaneously gathering to take direct actions across the country.

To participate in this event, complete the online pledge on the Poor People's Campaign website and you will be connected to the coordinating committee in your state. You will be trained in moral, nonviolent, direct action, which will prepare you to participate in campaigns in your state and/or in Washington, DC.

Follow Living School alumni stories from the campaign on CAC's social media.



HOLLY ROACH KNIGHT is a cultural organizer and contemplative activist who works at the intersections of faith and justice. She is a board member and co-founder of Transform Network, one of the national faith partners in the Poor People's Campaign, and is an alumna of the first cohort of the Living School for Action and Contemplation. Holly is currently working on two master's degrees, one in contemplative education and one in social justice and community organizing.

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Richard Rohr, Barbara Holmes, Mirabai Starr, Barbara Brown Taylor, Brian McLaren
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From Contemplation to Action

POLLY BACA

Fifty years ago, I was motivated by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. to participate in the 1968 Poor People's March. The march was in keeping with Matthew 25:35: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in."

This scripture verse inspired me to become involved in the civil rights movement and then to join the staff of the 1968 Robert F. Kennedy for President campaign. As the National Deputy Director of Viva Kennedy, I met with key Mexican American community leaders who were working with Dr. King to involve the Mexican American community in the Poor People's March. The assassination of Dr. King on April 4th was a devastating blow to these efforts. Nonetheless, the planning for the march persisted.

In the meantime, the campaign sent me to California to work with Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta to register Mexican Americans in East Los Angeles and encourage them to vote. I wasn't that far from Senator Kennedy when he was shot on that fateful early morning following the California Democratic Primary. I was overwhelmed with grief, disillusionment, and despair when he died on June 6th.

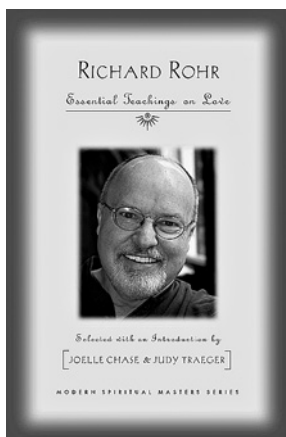
We are again being challenged to become fully engaged to save our democracy by participating in the 2018 Poor People's Campaign.



The devastation of these two deaths led many of us to question our democracy, but the leaders of the Poor People's March challenged us to respond by getting engaged in the march. I returned to DC to help with the Senator's funeral and then volunteered to help with the march. On June 19th, the day of the march, I joined the Crusade for Justice marchers from Colorado. It was a beautiful day where we could feel the power of people coming together to demand justice for the poor and support one another in this quest.

We are again being challenged to become fully engaged to save our democracy by participating in the 2018 Poor People's Campaign. I am still inspired by Matthew 25:35, and that inspiration has been deepened by my daily practice of contemplative prayer. It is because of my contemplative practice that I know I must once again respond to the call to support the least among us and encourage participation in this year's Poor People's Campaign.

POLLY BACA, a former Colorado state senator, served on the board of the Center for Action and Contemplation and attended the Center's Living School for Action and Contemplation. She currently serves as volunteer staff for Contemplative Outreach of Colorado.



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Contemplation in Action

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

JOAN BROWN, OSF

We live in challenging times. Throughout the ages, many holy people, rooted in deep traditions of prayer, meditation, and servanthood, met their own challenges with radical responses as reformers. St. Francis of Assisi, St. Clare, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dolores Huerta, Sr. Dorothy Stang, Dorothy Day, and Archbishop Oscar Romero are just a few who offered spiritual leadership in addressing oppressive structures in need of change.



We live in a time when social justice and environmental justice are inseparably linked.

At a moment when we daily hear people bemoan the lack of ethical and moral leadership, growing poverty, dehumanization, and the abuse of Mother Earth, we stand in a new historic moment. The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival arises as a clarion call, surfacing from the suffering soul of earth and humanity. On this 50th anniversary year of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Poor People's March on Washington, Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II and Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis have sounded the trumpet for justice, inviting reflection upon four injustices of our time and urging people to undertake prophetic action for the common good.

The moral revival initiated by these two spiritual leaders grows from a foundation of prayer and reflection that can collectively sustain people for a long-haul walk toward transformation. Fifty years ago, a social analysis by Rev. King, rooted in the spiritual tradition of the African-American Church, lifted up three interlinking evils which prevented justice and the realization of a collective dream of the beloved community: "the problem of racism, the problem of economic exploitation, and the problem of war." He also stated that "a nation that will keep people in slavery for 244 years will 'thingify' them."¹

Today, we live in a world facing catastrophic climate change and consumerism that threatens the sacred in favor of financial gain at all costs. Pope Francis echoes the concern about *thingifying* humans, creatures, and the earth

by speaking of a "throwaway culture."

To the three evils, a fourth has been added for the 2018 Poor People's Campaign: environmental degradation. The pope's encyclical *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home* states that we live in a time when social justice and environmental justice are inseparably linked.

The moral revival is an intentional reach into the hearts of people troubled in soul, whose very lives are threatened by the current political landscape. The Poor People's Campaign is an opportunity for each of us—all people of faith and conscience—to push beyond apathy, fear, and

feeling overwhelmed in order to create a new landscape of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Where Do We Go From Here?" (Speech, Southern Christian Leadership Conference Convention, Atlanta, GA, August 16, 1967). http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/where_do_we_go_from_here_delivered_at_the_11th_annual_sclc_convention/.

JOAN BROWN, OSF, is a Catholic Franciscan who serves as the Executive Director of New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light. Her farm background, passion for the sacred earth community, and many years of experience in the non-profit and social justice sectors inform her work. She holds a master's degree from California Institute of Integral Studies and is inspired by Fr. Thomas Berry and Teilhard de Chardin.

Thank you!

We recently paused Father Richard's Daily Meditations to ask for our readers' support. Thousands of people around the world responded, allowing us to continue sharing these free, daily emails even when the message may be challenging or uncomfortable. We're grateful for the freedom and courage your support gives us to speak truth!

Donations also help us grow our contemplative community by offering scholarships to the Living School, online courses, and events; improving the accessibility and impact of our current programs and creating new ones; and expanding our reach.