

Poor People's Campaign - Washington D.C. June 4, 2018
Week Four – Healthy Planet and Health Care
Rally Remarks - Rev. Dr. Beth Johnson, final

The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival is the movement for our time. This nonviolent moral fusion coalition is empowering those most affected by systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation to lead us into a vision of what we can be.

Rally Opening Remarks:

Good afternoon. I bring you greetings from your siblings in the California Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. It is so good to be with you today as we join our voices and our bodies with those around this nation who, today, are demanding the right to a healthy planet and to health care for all bodies...

We do this, beloved ones, because bodies count. And because everything is connected. And everything is at stake. And everything we do matters. And everybody has a right to live.

Here in DC you have just been drenched with too much rain, while we in California long for the blessing of such a thirst quenching balm. Across our land there is evidence of climate change and the ecological devastation that targets first, and most severely, the most vulnerable.

I give thanks for the thousands of you, here and around the country, who are using their bodies as moral witnesses –especially those most affected, with much to risk – to demonstrate the way of interconnectedness and the power of this moral fusion movement.

Beloved friends, in this interdependent web, our actions matter and bodies count – black and brown bodies, the earth body, all the bodies who dwell upon the earth.

We live from the legacy of the white supremacist Doctrine of Discovery and Manifest Destiny that caused the genocide of our indigenous siblings, the enslavement of our black siblings. It sought to obliterate the ancient knowledge of how to live on this earth in harmony with Life, and has driven policies that privilege pipelines, extraction, and fossil fuels over the preservation of precious lands and sacred lives.

Water is life – we say this even as the water we need to live is being commodified, privatized and denied as 13.8 million U.S. households cannot afford water. Nearly 12 percent of U.S. households face unaffordable water bills.

Water is life, yet private water utilities charge 59 percent more per unit of water than publicly owned water systems.

And now over 200,000 of which Native Americans and Alaskan Native Americans lack access to complete plumbing.

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Corporate interests profit off of pillaging.

Since 1998, there have been 5,712 major oil and gas leaks or ruptures on U.S. pipelines. The Deepwater Horizon “BP” oil spill accounted for 95 percent of oil spilled in the past 50 years. There are more than 1,100 coal ash sites throughout the country. The Department of Defense accounted for more than 70 percent of U.S. total greenhouse gas emissions in 2016. At least 4 million families are being exposed to high levels of lead from drinking water and other sources.

This has made us sick and it is killing us all.

It has made us – humans and others – sick in body, suffering from the effects of the despoliation of the earth, the pollution of lands and waters, with the effects of climate change most devastating to the poorest among us.

In the meantime, sick bodies among us go untouched and unhealed for lack of health care. It's wrong and it's immoral.

To place a death-dealing economic system above lives of people and the living systems of Earth betrays the sacred trust to care for Life and the moral responsibility to care for each other. It's wrong.

There are more than 32 million people who lack health insurance in the U.S., including 4.6 million Black people, 10.2 million Latinx and 13.6 million Whites. 10,002 people died while waiting for a judge's decision about their disability benefits application in 2017.

Those bodies count – Everybody's got a right to live!

U.S. spends more per capita on health care than any other country, at approximately \$10,348 per person per year.

Medical debt is the number one cause of personal bankruptcy.

These policies have made us sick in our bodies and they have made us sick in our souls.

It causes soul sickness to split from the source of Life...to betray our Mother...to betray the most vulnerable...

It causes soul sickness to disregard and to betray our interdependence.

And so here we gather at our nation's capitol - our parched and drenched and empowered voices calling out our thirst for justice for all people and for all the earth – to be an army rising up...

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Beloved ones, today we will hear the voices of those most affected – these brave and bold and passionate ones who are leading us in a good way.

Going forth remarks

What powerful witnesses we have heard – we have heard the power of our resistance, the integrity of our resilience and strength of our determination to heal the sicknesses that have taken hold in our nation.

We have heard testimony that breaks *our* hearts, even we need to soften the hardened hearts of those who will not or cannot care...and everybody has a right to live...

As we consider the facts of environmental injustice and ecological devastation we know that the Earth is not an externality - it is the context for all we do and the home everything we will ever know and everyone we will ever love.

We demand care for our earth body and those bodies most affected by the disregard of our interdependence...

We demand a ban on fracking, mountaintop removal coal mining, coal ash ponds, and offshore drilling.

We demand a ban on all new pipelines, refineries, and coal, oil, and gas export terminals.

We demand the protection of public lands and the immediate cessation of opening up public lands for polluting and extractive industries.

We know that we are interconnected and that what effects one effects all, and so
We demand the expansion of Medicaid in every state and the protection of Medicare and single-payer universal health care for all.

We demand equal treatment and accessible housing, health care, public transportation, adequate income and services for people with disabilities.

We demand this because bodies count...and we will not sit by while the body count rises, while those affected by ecological devastation and lack of health care die. No. We won't sit by.

We insist that legislators here in DC and across this country move forward on our demands and that they "do it now!"

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Somebody's hurting our earth and our people and we won't be silent any more!

We will keep on moving forward, because everything is connected and everything is at stake.
And everything we do matter –

and, my friends, it is our very interconnectedness that not only makes us vulnerable, but is
source of our empowerment....

we are connected to each other here and now.

We are an army rising up...to break every chain

To break the chains of white supremacy...

To break the chains of poverty

To break the chains of corporate greed

To break the chains of voter suppression

To break the chains of militarism

To break the chains of trans and homophobia

There's an army rising up – to break every chain

Beloved ones, we will break the chains that have been designed to divide us and we will defend
Earth and the most vulnerable with our bodies as if our lives depend on it – because they do,
and so do our souls.

This is soul work right here.

This is soul healing work right here...can you feel it...

And I want you to know, there is a love at work right here, right now. Look around – can you
see it? Can you feel it?

Beloved ones, don't lose sight of that –

This love will empower and sustain us all in this good work as justice flows down like water, and
righteousness like a mighty stream.

Forward Together!