

NBA Stands with the Poor People's Campaign

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"As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus, was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'"

(Mark 10: 46-47)



On Monday, May 14, 2018, the [Poor People's Campaign](#) kicked off in Washington, D.C., and the National Benevolent Association (NBA) was there. Our NBA President and CEO, [Mark D. Anderson](#), showed up to be in solidarity with more than 40 million Americans who subsist below the poverty line, according to the [report, the Souls of Poor Folk](#), issued by the Institute of Policy Studies.

Drawing on the unfinished work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1968 Poor People's Campaign, which called for a "revolution of values," advocacy organization Repairers of the Breach is working in partnership with the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights, and Social Justice and the Popular Education Project, as well as hundreds of local and national partners, to lead today's [Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival](#).

The Poor People's Campaign is designed to change the dominant narrative of poor people through non-violent civil disobedience in D.C. and across 40 states for 40 days. Last Monday, Anderson and General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Rev. Terri Hord Owens were arrested, along with several hundred others, for civil disobedience at the national rally to launch the Poor People's Campaign. The campaign is primarily a narrative campaign designed to offer a new moral vision around the campaign action themes: Systemic Racism, Poverty, War Economy/Militarism, Ecological Devastation, and National Morality.

The story of blind Bartimaeus illustrates the gathering and testimony of week one: poor women, children, and people living with disabilities and how our lack of care can often lead to economic distress and devastation. Anderson reports: "I was most moved by the stories of two women who tragically lost their children. One mother shared that the family did not have a car, which required her son to walk to and from his job. When walking home from his job one day, he was shot down in the street. Another mother shared that in her home state, her family did not qualify for healthcare, and her daughter was unable to receive the critical medical services she needed. Her daughter died a premature and preventable death."



For more than 130 years, the NBA has always tried to hear those shouting, “have mercy on us.” Sarah Matilda Hart Younkin and her fellow Disciples women who started the NBA could hear those cries in St. Louis in 1887, cries of the “orphan and the poor.” Today, this mission of compassion and care continues with our ministry partners. Ministries such as [Christian Services for Children in Alabama](#) (CSCA), offering support to children who have experienced abuse and neglect as well as supportive professional care aimed to reunify and reconnect families; [Hiram Farm](#), an agricultural setting that serves adults with developmental disabilities; [Oklahoma Family Empowerment Center](#) (OFEC), which supports families and youth who are trying to navigate poverty and oppression, including juvenile justice and disproportionate minority contact with law enforcement. The NBA has always been “called to care,” and we will always stand with the poor. This is our legacy.

We invite you to participate in the [Poor People’s Campaign](#). Actions and community rallies are being organized weekly in Washington, D.C., and state capitols. Disciples leaders working with the Poor People’s Campaign include Rev. Dr. Peter Heltzel and myself, who are co-hosting weekly conference calls for Disciples across the country. Additionally, Rev. Steve Knight serves as the Disciples National Organizer with the Poor People’s Campaign. Conference calls are every Thursday at 7:00pm (CST): (515) 739-1034 and code 635943. All are invited to share your involvement with the campaign using #NBAPPC!

As the health and social services general ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the National Benevolent Association partners with congregations, regions, general ministries, and a variety of Disciples-related health and social service providers to create communities of compassion and care. Founded in 1887 by six women responding to the needs of the day and on their doorsteps, for more than 130 years the NBA has continued to serve “the least of these.” Learn more at www.nbacaes.org.