

★ Call to Justice ★

Disciples Justice Action Network

Summer 2020

From Our Director:



Greetings DJAN family and colleagues in the struggle for justice, peace, diversity, inclusion, and the integrity of creation. I hope that you, your family, your loved ones, and your friends are all safe and well. If any are in need of prayer, please let us know: info@disciplesjustice.net

Together we have struggled to deal with a number of crises: the COVID-19 pandemic, the social pandemics of poverty and racism, the growing destructive power of a dictator wannabe, and a Senate that has caved in to this dangerous demagogue and also watered down bills designed to help the majority of people at this time of combined health and economic crises.

DJAN has certainly been affected by our “new normal” situation. Physical presence at major events is no longer possible. Congregational trainings are on hold or being planned online. And, unfortunately, we are facing decreased funding by our partners, investors, and stakeholders, both individuals and congregations.

And so, we’ve had to adjust by making changes in the way we do things. We’ve had to rely much more on social media, online events, zoom meetings, and internet fundraising. We still actively participate in marches, rallies, and vigils, but now with masks and social distancing. We’ve had to speak out more forcefully through Facebook and Twitter about both the evil of systemic racism (institutionalized white power) and the fascist tendencies of our authoritarian and divisive President. And, in order to promote greater self-care among activists, we’ve added times of care and prayer to our overall social justice ministry.

Remember: social distancing does not mean social disengagement. So please stay with this network, pray for one another, and keep on supporting our shared ministry: www.djan.net/support.htm Together we will promote a passion for justice in our churches, we will provide prophetic Disciples leadership, and we will work with other Disciples, other Christians, other people of faith, and all persons of conscience to build the Beloved Community envisioned by Dr. King.

Blessings,

Rev. Dr. Ken Brooker Langston

Current Priorities

2020 Election Year Advocacy

Poor People’s Campaign

Support of Black Lives Matter Movement





Poor People's Campaign

A big thank you to all of our activists who participated in the digital Mass Poor People's Assembly & Moral March on Washington on June 20th. While it was initially a disappointment to not be able to march on Washington physically, this experience showed how powerfully we can come together even during COVID-19. Millions joined the livestream and watched remotely. Nothing can stop the voices of the 140 million people living in poverty in this country. In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic has only magnified the need to act on the devastating disparity of wealth. Each year 250,000 Americans die from issues related poverty and inequality and this year an additional 130,000 have died from the novel coronavirus which disproportionately impacts poor people. With the COVID-19 economic crisis leaving many in uncertain housing and food situations, it is more imperative than ever to secure access to healthcare, good nutrition, and safe housing.

With that in mind, our partners at the Poor People's Campaign have launched the Moral Policy Agenda to Heal America: The Poor People's Jubilee Platform, a full statement of morally and economically sound policies to center the lives of poor people in the building of a new future for our nation.

Jubilee Platform Principles:

The Poor People's Jubilee Platform is organized into five sections:

Part I. Establish Justice and End Systemic Racism: The Right to Democracy and Equal Protection Under the Law

Part II. Promote the General Welfare: The Right to Welfare and an Adequate Standard of Living

Part III. Ensure Domestic Tranquility: The Right to Work with Dignity

Part IV. Secure the Blessings of Liberty: The Right to Health and A Healthy Environment

Part V. Provide for the Common Defense: Reprioritizing our Resources

The Platform is grounded in five principles:

We need a moral revolution of values to repair the breach in our society. This platform abides by our deepest Constitutional and moral commitments to justice. Where harm has been done, it must be acknowledged and undone.

Everybody in, nobody out. Too many people are hurting and we can't be silent anymore. Everybody is deserving of our nation's abundance.

When you lift from the bottom, everybody rises. Instead of "trickle-down," we start with the bottom up.

Prioritize the leadership of the poor, low-income and most impacted. Those who are on the frontlines of these crises must also be in the lead in identifying their solutions.

Debts that cannot be paid must be relieved. We demand freedom from servicing the debts we cannot pay.

How can I get involved in the Poor People's Campaign?

1. If haven't already, watch the digital March on Washington! Go to www.June2020.org
2. Check out your local state campaign at www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/take-action/
3. Read the Moral Agenda and Jubilee Platform and share with your local and Washington representatives <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/about/jubilee-platform/>
4. Follow Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to stay updated on their work

The 2020 Agenda

1. Take the 2020 Census – if you have not already and encourage everyone in your community to respond as well at www.2020Census.gov. There is NO citizenship question. Everyone needs to be counted for accurate representation and allocation of resources in the coming years.
2. Register to Vote – it is imperative for the 2020 election to be true picture of what the people of the United States want for their government. Make sure everyone you know is registered to vote and assist them if they need it. <https://www.rockthevote.org/>
3. Advocate for Vote by Mail for Everyone – COVID-19 has made voting by mail for a significant number of people a necessity. Each person, in every state, should be able to request a mail in ballot for any reason. Contact your representatives to support universal vote by mail, which requires both new regulations in many places and a functioning postal service. Check your options at www.healthylvoting.org
4. Stay tuned for more info on our live virtual August 20th, 2020 Election Event
5. Faithful Decision 2020, an election year project with Disciples Center for Public Witness, which includes resources for voter registration, turnout and education for the contentious voter. Coming soon to <https://www.facebook.com/DisciplesJAN> and www.disciplesjustice.net

HITLER and TRUMP



Many Trumpists get very upset when you compare their “Great Leader” with Hitler. Given his close friendship with the dictators of Russia and North Korea, perhaps we should also compare him with Stalin. But the comparison with Hitler is more instructive.

Some will argue that this authoritarian leader with strong fascist tendencies who shamelessly manipulates religion for partisan political purposes, appeals openly to racial bigotry and regional resentments, and now uses paramilitary forces to suppress constitutionally guaranteed peaceful protest is not, technically speaking, a dictator. But we have to remember this: Hitler was not born a dictator; rather, he became one as the situation became more hospitable for him to do so.

Wide-spread unemployment, weak democratic institutions, political apathy, racist attitudes, and public fear of retaliation were all combined with a political situation in which the Left did not have its act together, and large portions of the Right caved in or remained silent as Hitler increased his power. Sound familiar?

Fortunately, in our case today, there is some hope that the situation might be different: the Left seems to be getting its act together; more and more people on the Right are speaking out against the risks to our democracy posed by this dangerous demagogue; and genuinely grassroots movements against racism and poverty and police violence are challenging everyone to rethink our personal actions (or inaction), and especially our institutional relationships, in light of our stated national values and ideals: shared inalienable rights, the general welfare, and equal justice under the law.

Hitler’s successful rise to total power was called a “triumph of the will.” Trump has defined his commitment to institutional racism and his overall approach to political leadership by insisting “we must dominate”—something that he is now attempting to do by invading Portland and other U.S. cities with unidentified storm troopers who are beating and abducting peacefully protesting citizens even though their right to protest peacefully is guaranteed by the Constitution.



Trump’s die-hard fans, supporters, and worshippers are in a sense right: Despite his racist worldview, fascist tendencies, and brutal authoritarian tactics, Trump is not yet a Hitler. Whether or not he or anybody else actually becomes one depends on all of us: whether we can work together to demand and ensure a different kind of leadership from all our public officials, and whether we can transform our racist institutions and violent patterns of behavior in constructive and creative ways that make of us a better nation and a more authentic democracy—one that truly promotes “liberty and justice for all.”

BLACK LIVES MATTER

“At it’s core, it is a spiritual movement.” said Melina Abdullah, co-founder of the Black Lives Matter-Los Angeles, in conversation with activist Patrisse Cullors, co-founder of the Black Lives Matter movement. Cullors spoke of this spiritual work, “Part of our calling as people who do this work for Black lives is to lift our people up, both in their living, but also in their death. The need to lift our folks up feels so incredibly spirit-driven for me.” At DJAN, as people of faith, we are committed to honoring that spirit work. It has become practice at protests to invoke the names of the murdered black victims, which is not simply a catchy chant or a hashtag. By saying their names, Cullors say we become “personally connected and responsible and accountable to them, both from a deeply political place but also from a deeply spiritual place.”

So DJAN invites you to say their names, not just at protests, but every day in our work for justice.

George Floyd
Breonna Taylor
Tony McDade
Ahmaud Arbery
Rayshard Brooks
And More



Prayer March (Oliver Contreras for Washington Post)

In Minneapolis, DJAN ally, Disciples Public Presence, joined with other progressive white allies, taking their lead from and lending support to clergy of color in their public actions against police brutality after the murder of George Floyd in that city.



Clergy lead prayer at George Floyd Memorial

In the Washington, DC area DJAN joined other people of faith in demanding an end to the deadly pandemics of institutional racism and poverty.

More "troublemakers" that need to be "dominated"? OR faithful Christians who are making a witness against racism and for a better, more united America "with liberty and justice for all"? Trump emphatically says the former. But many Christians and other people of faith, through prayer and protest, participation and support, emphatically say the latter.



- **Defund** the police and divest from incarceration
- **Invest** in new approaches to community safety
- **Provide** resources to build healthy, sustainable, equitable communities for all
- **Enhance** the self-determination of all Black communities

“The BREATHE Act will divest our taxpayer dollars from brutal, discriminatory policing and invest in a new vision of public safety—a vision that allows all people to BREATHE FREE.”

Policing in this country has a long history of discrimination and abuse in communities of color. DJAN is committed to breaking this system and starting a new chapter of informed, community based safety. In addition to participating in the current protests, we invite you to support the Breathe Act, which was announced in the House of Representatives by Rashida Tlaib of Michigan and Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts. While there have been smaller policing and criminal justice reforms in the past, black communities deserve sweeping radical reform. Learn more and become a community co-sponsor at www.breatheact.org and contact your representatives to voice your support today.

If there was any more proof needed that our law enforcement system and our democracy are broken, the recent brutal response to the protests in Portland, Oregon would be it. Since the death of George Floyd peaceful protesters have been demonstrating and while there was a disproportionate response from the local Portland P.D. initially, it is the deployment of federal authorities by executive order from the Trump Administration which has escalated the situation to an egregious and violent breach of civil liberties. Heavily armed, unidentified federal officers roam the streets, forcing protesters into unmarked vans, and unnecessarily employ tear gas and non-lethal weapons. This is public safety. This is not keeping the peace. This is the start of paramilitary secret police. No one should be detained without probable cause. No President should be allowed to incite violence for political gain. Our democracy and our lives depend on holding our leaders accountable – in the streets, in the courts, in the legislatures and at the ballot box.

Another good way to change law enforcement systems is to research your local budget. How much does your city/town spend on law enforcement vs other social programs? Let your local officials know what you want to see in the next budget!



GOOD TROUBLE

“We were beaten, we were tear-gassed. I thought I was going to die on this bridge. But somehow and some way, God Almighty helped me here. We cannot give up here. We cannot give in. We must keep the faith, keep our eyes on the prize.”

-John Lewis on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, AL



At DJAN we mourn the loss of the indomitable Congressman John Lewis. Lewis spent his entire life dedicated to the fight for justice and equal rights. He spoke at the March on Washington. He stood strong against violence on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, AL. He served as a congressman since 1987. Throughout his long career Lewis never lost his faith in the power of collective action and our ability to bring about a just future for our nation. His philosophy of “Good Trouble” is one we admire and strive to live out in our Network. While he may have passed on, John Lewis’ spirit will live on in all who march for justice and equality.

DJAN relies on you!

Donate to support our unique Justice
Ministry

Online:

www.djan.net/support.htm

or

mail your contribution to

DJAN

PO Box 35887

Tulsa, OK 74153

Keep in Touch!

We need the voice every person of faith and conscience in 2020 to echo strongly. Make sure to stay tuned for ways to educate and get involved.

Visit our website at disciplesjustice.net

Visit and like us on Facebook facebook.com/DisciplesJAN

Follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/DisciplesJAN

Contact us by email at djan@verizon.net