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The Poor People's Campaign: Marching for Human Rights and Economic Justice

Contributed by:

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Monday, May 20, 2013 - 00:00



This year marks the 45th Anniversary of the 1968 Poor People's Campaign, led by Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, where participants set-up a 3,000-person tent city on the Washington Mall. The goal of the action was to advance the cause of economic and human rights for poor blacks, native americans, chicanos, and whites.

The Baltimore Chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and People's Power Assembly organized a 2013 Poor People's Campaign and March, which was kicked-off on Friday, May 10. The demands of this campaign were many. They include: stopping police terror, ending poverty, jobs not jails, workers' rights, immigrant rights, ending racism, ending homophobia, stopping school, rec center, post office and hospital closings, and preventing cuts to social security, Medicare and Medicaid.

The 2013 Poor People's Campaign was joined by about 200 people from around the country, including the family of Anthony Anderson Sr. Anderson, who was brutally murdered by the police last September. The families of Alan Blueford and Oscar Grant, both of whom were murdered by police, joined in this year's Poor People's Campaign. The Freedom Fighters joined from Selma, Alabama. Occupy Baltimore, Occupy DC, Occupy Wall Street, Occupy Guitarmy and Occupy Houston were all represented. Worker's World Party members rallied with us from all over. Others came from Chicago, Detroit, Philly, Boston, North Carolina, Atlanta and DC.

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Poor People's Campaign marching to DC. Photo by T.C. Hall Media

On Friday, May 10 there was a community party at Montford & Biddle Streets to kickoff the campaign. Brooks Long and Donna Simone Plamondon provided music for the event. CD Witherspoon rallied the crowd and turned it over to a community open mic. Edith Fletcher, mother of the murdered Anthony Anderson Sr., thanked us all for all what we were doing. I would personally like to thank Ms. Edith for all she's done and for being a very courageous sweet lady throughout all this. The evening wrapped up around 7:30 pm.

Saturday May 11, 2013 was March day. We met back on the lot at 10 am. After an opening rally, the march to DC was on. Marchers took to the streets of Baltimore, followed by a car caravan. We stopped at the main post office for a brief rally led by Tom Dodge.

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Tom Dodge getting the postal workers truck ready the morning of the march. Photo by Bonnie Lane

As the march went on, Doug Boone passed out flyers and engaged the community. Doug Boone recently walked from California to DC.

Day 1 started fairly peaceful. A few people were upset because the march was creating traffic jams. It wasn't until we got to the Burger King at Washington Boulevard and Monroe Streets that it got crazy. The manager on duty, Monica Jackson, refused to serve us. I was there as she told her employees to lock the doors. One of our marchers, Caleb Maupin was locked in the bathroom by employees. A group decision was made not to spend money there. (I was part of this group.)

I was part of the car caravan. Bruce Emmerling of Occupy Baltimore drove our car. His sister, Beth called Monica Jackson, manager of that Burger King, to ask why were denied service. Jackson's response was that we were dirty and looked strange. I called stating that I was a member of the press and was hung up on.

The March continued as the rain came and went. If you thought the Burger king incident was something, wait for Walmart! We arrived at Walmart in Lansdowne with the intent of protesting. Some of us made it. The rest, myself included, were blocked from the driveways by Baltimore County Cops.

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Protestors at Walmart encounter police. Photos by T.C. Hall Media

We were directed to a lot, across the street, in the parking lot of The Beltway Motel, as more police arrived on the scene. We rallied amidst threats and racial slurs uttered by Beltway Motel Employees, who were not thrilled about us being on their private lot.

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Photo by Bruce Emmerling

The march continued into College Park. A People's Power Assembly was held that night.

Day 2

The march began around eleven a.m. It was led by women, in the same way that Coretta Scott King led the first march in 1968. Protestors marched to Freedom Plaza in DC.

Another People's Power Assembly was held that evening in DC. We are looking forward to the next campaign.

Here is a letter regarding the march by Barbara Bridges. "But, for right now, I just want to sincerely thank every person who showed up from the bottom of my heart. I am so grateful to all of my sisters and brothers and revered elders in this struggle, because meeting you, sharing stories with you, and taking a stand beside you is what gives my utterly insignificant life meaning. And, I want to remind everybody who's feeling angry or cheated or disrespected right now of something that Rev. Witherspoon has reminded me on many occasions - that there is more that unites us than divides us. I'll say it again. There is more that unites us than divides us. For those of us who've been in this struggle for decades, this is not a slogan or a cliché or a sound bite. It is the only truth that I have found in a world full of lies.

So, please, my dearest comrades, let's not be too hard on ourselves. Let's not feel discouraged. More importantly, let's not be too hard on each other. No matter what diverse experience we may bring to the table, we are all learning and growing and changing day by day. We're in the process of creating a world that has never existed before, and that is no small task. Each of us should be proud of what we've accomplished, just as we should be proud of each other. I have no doubt that each and every one of us in this for the long haul.

It's been an honor to stand in solidarity with you all.

"The people, united, will NEVER be defeated!" I couldn't have said it better myself.

Until next time, this is Bonnie Lane live from the 2013 Poor People's Campaign.

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