

50 Years Later, We Still Need MLK, Jr.'s Call for Economic Justice by the Rev. Jay Lawlor

An important part of MLK, Jr.'s legacy came in the final years of his life as the Rev. Dr. King increasingly turned his attention toward economic inequality.

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, US, April 4, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The Rev. Jay Lawlor](#) remembers the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and MLK, Jr.'s work to end economic inequality.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968. As we remember the tragedy of that day fifty years ago, we also observe MLK, Jr.'s life and legacy. An important part of his legacy came in the final years of his life as the Rev. Dr. King increasingly turned his attention toward economic inequality. At a rally for sanitation workers in Memphis, the Rev. Dr. King remarked, "What does it profit a man to be able to eat an integrated lunch counter if he doesn't earn enough money to buy a hamburger and a cup of coffee?"



MLK Memorial Washington, D.C. - Photo credit: Ron Cogswell (Creative Commons License).

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We can honor the legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by doing all we can to bring about real and lasting economic justice.”

The Rev. Jay Lawlor

In December 1967, the Rev. Dr. King announced a plan for a new march on Washington. This march was to demand better jobs, better homes, and better education. The Poor People's Campaign would unite poor African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and whites in a movement for economic justice.

Fifty years later, we still need MLK, Jr.'s call for economic justice. The economy does not work equally or equitably for everyone. Decades of reporting on poverty, wage inequality,

wealth inequality, disparities based on race and gender, and a shrinking middle class offer ample evidence of economic distress for millions of Americans.

While the unemployment rate for African Americans is at its lowest point in history, African American unemployment is double the white unemployment rate. And African American wages and wealth are still significantly lower than wages and wealth of whites. Contributing factors are massive inequalities in opportunity in the areas of education as well as the mass incarceration of African Americans.

In the spirit and tradition of the 1967-68 campaign, moral leaders today have launched a new Poor

People's Campaign: "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, ecological devastation and the nation's distorted morality."

Today's Poor People's Campaign recalls how King and other leaders asked fundamental questions about the inequalities of their day:

"We are called upon to help the discouraged beggars in life's marketplace. But one day we must come to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. It means that questions must be raised. And you see, my friends, when you deal with this you begin to ask the question, 'Who owns the oil?' You begin to ask the question, 'Who owns the iron ore?' You begin to ask the question, 'Why is it that people have to pay water bills in a world that's two-thirds water?' These are words that must be said."

MLK, Jr. exemplified what would be needed to inspire the movement and end poverty when he said, "I choose to identify with the underprivileged. I choose to identify with the poor. I choose to give my life for the hungry. I choose to give my life for those who have been left out...This is the way I'm going."

Along with the Poor People's Campaign are America's Goals for 2030: "A community-based approach to a vibrant economy, opportunity for all, and a healthy natural environment." Goal 5 of the seven goals is Equal Opportunity for All: Equal pay for equal work regardless of gender or race; End mass incarceration; and Freedom from ethnic and racial profiling for everyone.

We can honor the legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by doing all we can to bring about real and lasting economic justice. To do this we need to get involved. Join the Poor People's Campaign. Pledge to support America's Goals. Hold our elected officials accountable to pass economic policies which promote justice.

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