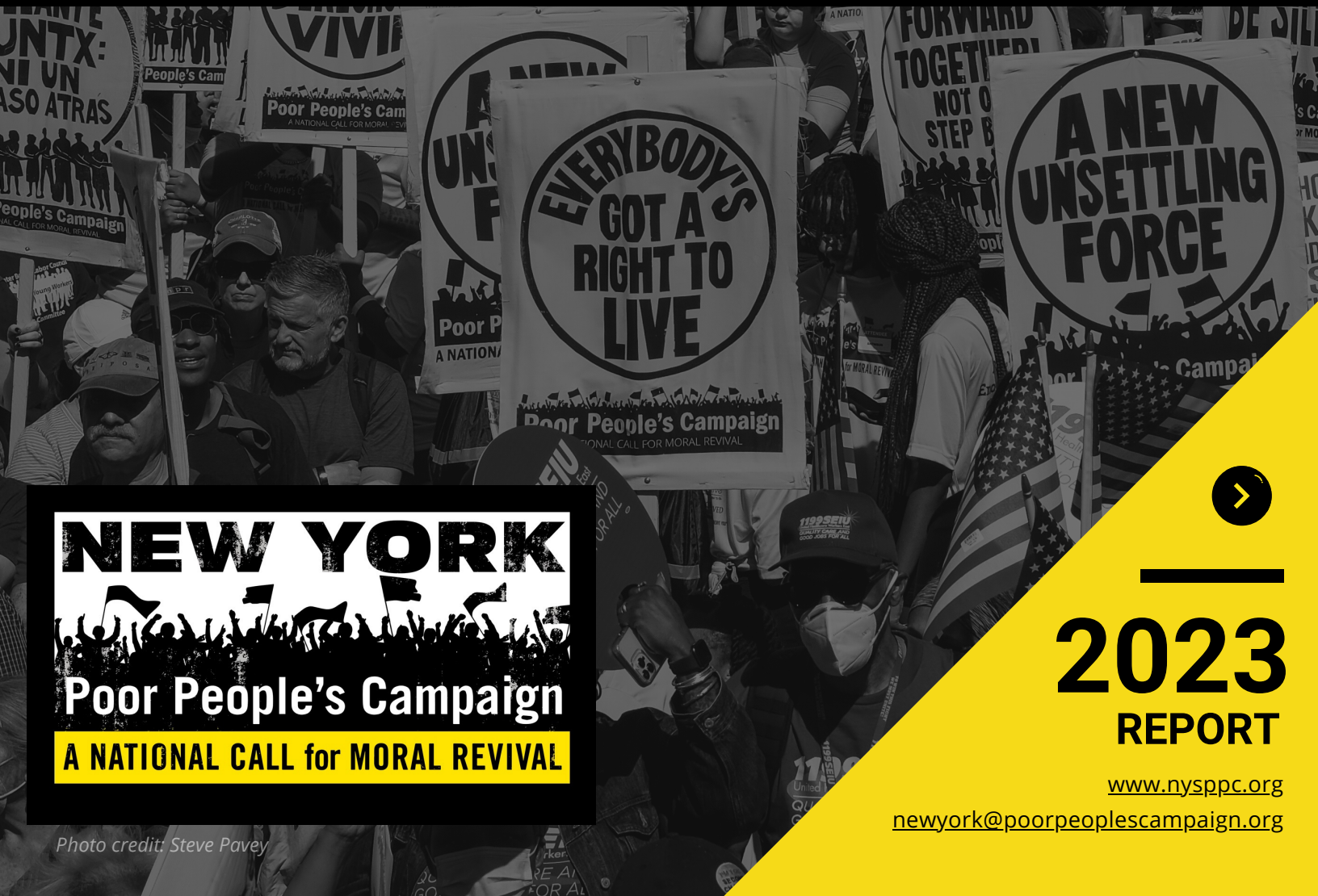


- NYSPPC POOR PEOPLE'S -

STATE OF THE STATE

An assessment of the state of poverty in New York State,
exposing the interlocking injustices of systemic racism,
poverty, militarism, and ecological devastation.



NEW YORK



Poor People's Campaign

A NATIONAL CALL for MORAL REVIVAL



2023
REPORT

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Photo credit: Steve Pavey

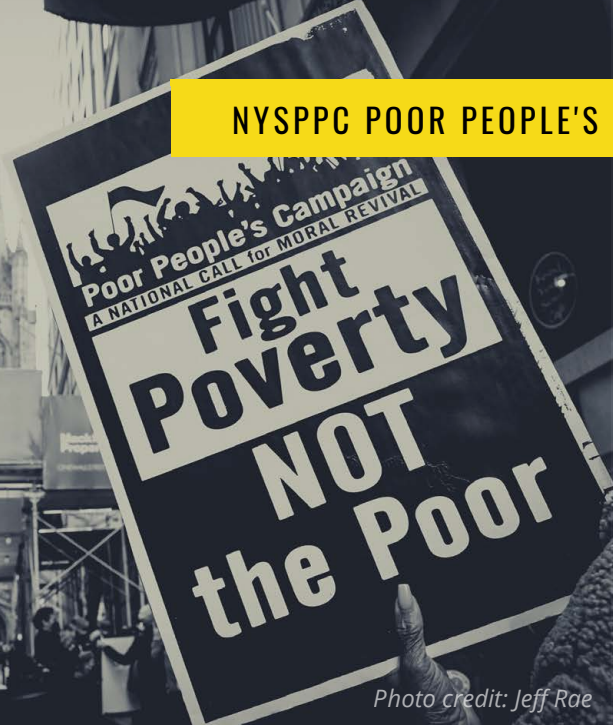


Photo credit: Jeff Rae

METHODOLOGY

This report compiles data from discrete research to offer an assessment of the state of poverty in New York state. It is organized around the themes of systemic racism, poverty, militarism and ecological devastation, with an awareness that they are interlocking. Sources for all data are hyperlinked within the text. The report attempts to maintain consistency across statistics, measures and issues, which is a challenge given the limited data on poor and low-income people. The Poor People's Campaign defines the poor and low-income population using 200% of the Supplemental Poverty Measure because this threshold more accurately captures those whose incomes fall short of meeting a basic standard of living. Because of limitations in the availability of data, this report sometimes uses other poverty measures, including the federal poverty measure. This report is also limited by the lack of availability of demographic data, including for LGBTQ, immigrants and Asian and Indigenous populations.

NYSPPC Poor People's State of the State Report 2023

INTRODUCTION

"True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It understands that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring."

— Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Poverty in the midst of plenty" aptly describes the state of New York as we enter 2023. As data in this report show, almost half of New Yorkers are struggling to meet their basic needs. Yet at the same time, New York ranks first among all states in the nation in "extreme wealth" - accounting for over one-fifth of national wealth over \$30 million - and has the greatest income inequality in the country. The average income of the top one percent is more than 62 times the average income of people in the bottom 90 percent.

This inequality arises from economic, political and cultural power that is highly concentrated in the hands of elite corporate and financial institutions and individuals. Meanwhile, the needs and interests of working people and poor and near-poor people not only go unaddressed - they are often directly contradicted by elite power structures that plague the lives of millions of poor and low-income people.

This brief report conveys some of the indicators of the dire state of poor and low-income people in New York. It is organized around the interlocking injustices of systemic racism, poverty, militarism and ecological devastation, all of which have profound negative consequences for the 8.6 million poor and low-income New Yorkers. Together, they show the influence of a warped moral compass that promotes unbridled individualism, reactionary religious nationalism and the continuing hold of white supremacy.

In issuing this Poor People's State of the State report and its associated video testimonies, the New York State Poor People's Campaign (NYSPPC) challenges Governor Kathy Hochul and the political and economic elites of New York to enact policies that fully and adequately respond to the needs and demands of poor and low-income people in this state. We also recognize all of the affected communities already working together and call on all of us to continue to build unity and power to achieve the lasting changes we so urgently need and deserve.



SYSTEMIC RACISM

"Racism is so universal in this country, so widespread, and deep-seated, that it is invisible because it is so normal."

— Shirley Chisholm, *Unbought and Unbossed*

As a colony and a state, New York was built on the structural denial of basic rights to people not of European descent, beginning with the genocide of Indigenous people and the enslavement of Africans. Laws, institutions and cultural practices have changed but the inequalities perpetuated by systemic racism persist. This section identifies some of the key indicators of systemic racism in trends and policies related to health and longevity, inter-generational wealth and debt, education, incarceration and police brutality.



Photo credit: Jeff Rae

HEALTH AND LONGEVITY

- From the New York State Department of Health in 2021, Black, non-Hispanic women were five times more likely to die of pregnancy-related causes than white, non-Hispanic women.
- Communities of color are disproportionately impacted by medical debt. For example, in Onondaga County, 41% of residents in communities of color have medical debt in collections, compared to 14% of residents in white communities in that county. In Monroe County, the rate is 26% in communities of color vs. 7% in white communities, and in Albany County, 26% vs. 10% for communities of color and white communities respectively.
- According to a report by the NY Health Foundation, non-Hispanic white New Yorkers make up 64% of the population in census tracts with the longest life expectancies, but only 35% of the population in census tracts with the shortest life expectancies. In contrast, Latinx New Yorkers comprise 14% and Black New Yorkers comprise 7% of the population in census tracts with the longest life expectancies, and 28% and 30% respectively, of the population in census tracts with the shortest life expectancies.



THE CARCERAL SYSTEM

- In New York, Black people are eight times more likely to be incarcerated, and Latinx people are three times more likely to be incarcerated than white people.
- Black and Latinx New Yorkers are disproportionately affected by lengthy prison sentences. Black men are almost three times more likely to be sentenced to 15 years or more than white men, while Latinx men are about one-and-a-half times as likely.
- Lost earnings among the state's formerly incarcerated population reach as high as \$1.9 billion annually, with more than 80% of those losses in Black and Latinx communities.

INCOME AND EDUCATION

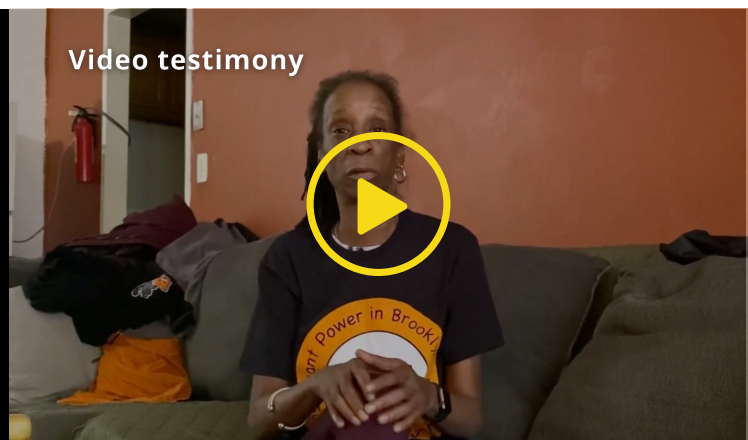
- In 2021 the median household income for Black and Latinx households in New York state was \$54,443, and \$55,245 respectively, compared to \$83,392 for white households and \$81,411 for Asian households. The discrepancy was more pronounced in New York City, where median income for Black, Latinx, and Asian households was \$52,197, \$48,316 and \$72,785, compared to \$97,107 for white households.
- According to the UCLA Civil Rights Project 2021 report, New York state K-12 public schools are the most segregated for Black students, and second most segregated for Latinx students, based on the share of Black and Latinx students attending schools with 90-100% students of color. New York State public schools are also segregated by socioeconomic status. Black, Latino and Indigenous students attend schools where 76% of the students are low-income, while white and Asian students attend schools where 44% of students are low-income.

VOTER SUPPRESSION

- Voter suppression tactics have historically disproportionately impacted communities of color in New York state. According to a Poor People's Campaign study of the 2020 election, more than 83% of low income voters (LIV) in New York were registered to vote, but only 55% voted. Turnout was lower in communities of color, with 50% of Black LIV and 44% of Hispanic and Asian LIV voting, compared to 62% of white LIV.
 - If effectively implemented, the New York Voting Rights Act signed into law in June will address voter suppression, including by creating civil liability for voter intimidation and requiring preclearance for changes to voting policy in areas with a history of voter suppression. Other provisions like same-day registration, no-excuse absentee voting, shorter lines and investment in voter education and countering voter intimidation are needed.

“When you come out here on Long Island where I live, as many Black people as you see who live here, there are no Black businesses. We have big major banks around here... they won't loan us money, but they take all our disability money.”
— TJ Shivers, New York Communities for Change

Video testimony



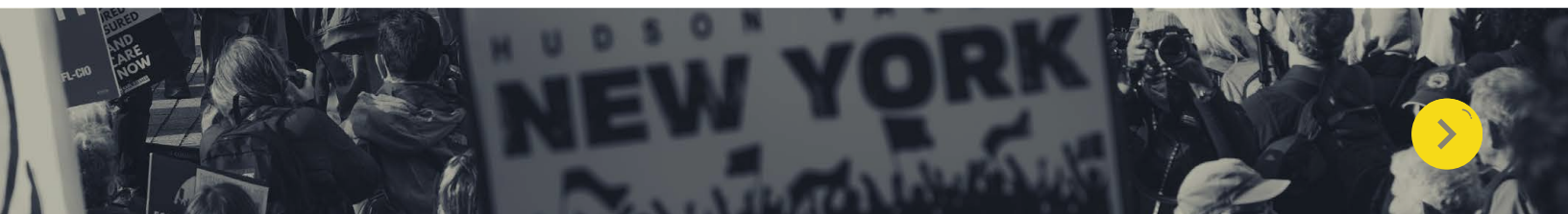
POVERTY

*"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."
— Emma Lazarus, from the inscription on the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor*

New Yorkers cannot breathe free when they are shackled by the grind of poverty. As the [new report](#) from the state comptroller's office affirms, addressing the issue of widespread poverty must be a central priority for policymakers in the nation's most unequal state. This section breaks down poverty by race and gender and demonstrates connections between low wages and the denial of basic needs like healthcare and housing.

Photo credit: Steve Pavey

- In 2020 45% of people in New York were poor or low-income—a total of 8.6 million residents. This includes 58% of children (2.4 million), 50% of women (5 million), 65% of Black people (1.7 million), 71% of Latinx people (2.5 million) and 36% of white people (3.9 million).
 - Poor or low-income is defined by the Poor People's Campaign as the population living under 200% of the Supplemental Poverty Measure threshold. This captures a more accurate assessment of economic insecurity than the Official Poverty Measure threshold which, at less than \$13,000 per year for an individual, is far too low for the nation, let alone New York.
- The United Way offers a comparable measure of economic insecurity in its ALICE data, which [tracks information for](#) "Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed" households. These are households with gross incomes that fall below their survival needs for housing, food, childcare, transportation, medical and other needs. From 2007-2018, NY households in poverty increased 8%, while ALICE households increased by 39% due to rising costs and stagnating wages.
- As of 2019, children in New York state were more likely to live below the federal poverty level than those in 32 other states. Overall, almost one in five children (18%) in New York state fell below the federal poverty level, but the rate was at least one in four for Black children (28%) and Latino or Hispanic children (25%). More than half of all children in New York live under twice the poverty threshold.



LOW WAGES AND HIGH INEQUALITY

- New York state has the highest level of income inequality in the U.S. It ranks first among all states in the nation in “extreme wealth”—New York’s share is 21% of all the wealth held by U.S. households with a net worth of over \$30 million. They collectively own \$6.7 trillion in wealth. A tiny tax on this extreme wealth could raise over \$88 billion that could be used towards meeting the social and economic needs described in this report.
- A living wage in New York is estimated to be nearly \$22 for an individual adult, over \$28 for each adult in a two-adult, two-child household, and over \$40 for a one-adult, one-child household. Meanwhile, minimum wage in New York is between \$14.20 and \$15.
- In 2021 more than one in four workers in New York - or 2.3 million people - made less than \$15 an hour, with significant disparities based on race and gender.
- While poverty wages are proportionately more prevalent among women and communities of color, nearly one in five white workers earn poverty wages.

LOW-WAGE WORKERS IN NEW YORK STATE

Cohort	Percent Earning less than \$15/hour
White	18.2
Black	33.7
Hispanic	41.5
Asian American/ American Indian	20.7
Women	31.1
Women of Color	41.2
Men	19.3
Men of Color	27.6
Single Parents	50.3



Video testimony

“I’d been working in the restaurant industry for 10 years... working sometimes seven days, [making] maybe just \$200 a week. And if you are working but you don’t get decent pay, your life is miserable. You cannot stretch that salary for so many things that you have to do.”

— Bella Calderón, *One Fair Wage*

DENIAL OF BASIC NEEDS: HEALTH CARE, HOUSING

- In 2019, between policing, jails, prisons, probation and parole, New York, its counties and localities, spent \$18.2 billion on the carceral system. New York spent just one third of that - \$6.2 billion - on mental health services, public health and other programs for youth and elders.
- Despite the increases in coverage since passage of the Affordable Care Act, more than one million New Yorkers remain uninsured. When the federal public health emergency declaration ends, approximately one million New Yorkers may lose their Medicaid coverage.
- A 2021 study estimated that health insurance gaps were associated with 8,218 COVID deaths in New York through August 31, 2020, the highest of any state.
- A 2019 survey found that a majority of New Yorkers find health care unaffordable. The rising costs – and low-wages – leave many New Yorkers going without or delaying health care, even when they have insurance. These costs also mean rising medical debt.
- From 2016-2020, hospitals sued more than 53,000 patients, including putting liens on more than 4,880 patients' homes.
- New York state has the worst home care shortage in the nation, largely due to low wages for home care workers, who average just \$22,000 in annual earnings. More than 54% of home care workers rely on public benefits. Though a small wage increase went into effect on October 1, 2022, in many cases funding is going to insurance companies instead of to workers. Even if workers were receiving the intended \$3/hour increase over two years, that amount falls far short of what a 2021 study found is needed to address the shortage.
- Housing is increasingly unaffordable as well. In recent years, homelessness in New York City has reached the highest levels since the Great Depression of the 1930s. In October 2022, there were 65,633 homeless people, including 20,751 homeless children, sleeping each night in New York City's main municipal shelter system. A near-record 22,077 slept in shelters each night that month.
- These numbers underestimate the broader housing insecurity facing New Yorkers, which is evident in the number of households who are rent-burdened and facing eviction. In the first year of the pandemic, 49% of tenant households were rent-burdened (paying more than 30% of income toward housing) and 28% were severely rent-burdened (paying more than half of income toward housing).
- Eviction filings in New York surged in 2018 then fell during the COVID-era eviction moratorium. In New York City, for example, there were over 112,000 eviction filings in the first half of 2018, compared to about 3,500 in the spring of 2020. But as a result of the moratorium ending in January 2021, new filings shot up again to nearly 50,000 in the first six months of 2022.



MILITARISM



"A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death." — Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

New Yorkers sent \$64.8 billion in tax contributions to fund the military in 2021. The true cost of military spending, in addition to the death and destruction caused by U.S. wars around the world, includes money that could have been spent on education, healthcare, housing and infrastructure at home. This section illuminates the deep effects militarism and the war economy have on our communities and the disproportionate trauma of veteran suicides.

THE REAL COSTS OF MILITARY SPENDING

- In 2021, the US military budget was \$801 billion, more than the next nine countries combined, seven of which are U.S. allies. New York taxpayers sent \$64.8 billion to the federal government as our share of the total. The table below shows what benefits New Yorkers could receive if the military budget were cut by just 15%, bringing it nearly back to its level before 9/11 and the misguided, wasteful and immoral wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and that money was redirected to social programs.
- But the U.S. military machine costs more than money. Veterans experience suicide in far greater proportions than the general population. The rate of suicide for veterans in New York state has been double or near double the rate for non-veterans at least since 2010.

“

"It's sickening that we would spend that much money on war and violence, when the true cost of war is such devastation to the youngest in our state... We have to stop feeding that war machine."

— Marybeth Knowles, Veterans for Peace

”

Video testimony



WHAT 15% OF 2021 MILITARY SPENDING REDIRECTED COULD BUY (ALL OF THESE)

Geographic Jurisdiction	Taxpayers dollars going to 2021 military)	Head-Start Slots for Children (for 4 years)	Clean Energy Jobs Created	Elementary School Teachers	Public Housing Units	Registered Nurses
New York State	\$64.8 Billion	39,721	11,275	16,457	183,685	18,344
Chemung County	\$131.7 million	80	23	33	373	37
Nassau County	\$7.09 billion	4,257	1,234	1,801	20,101	2,007
Suffolk County	\$5.02 billion	3,075	873	1,274	14,221	1,420
St.Lawrence County	\$113.77 million	69	20	29	322	32
Albany	\$148 million	91	25	37	419	42
The Bronx	\$1.04 billion	639	181	265	2956	295
Buffalo	\$280.98 million	172	49	71	796	79
Kingston	\$33.13 million	20	6	8	94	9
Rochester	\$193.93 million	119	34	49	550	55
Syracuse	\$117.6 million	72	20	30	333	33

Source: derived from National Priorities Project data <https://www.nationalpriorities.org/interactive-data/trade-offs/>



Photo credit: Steve Povey

ECOLOGICAL DEVASTATION



"The earth is not dying, it is being killed, and those who are killing it have names and addresses." — Utah Phillips

Ecological devastation is sometimes slow and sometimes catastrophic, but it is becoming an everyday concern on a warming planet. Natural phenomena become disasters especially for the poorest and most vulnerable when a society is structured around profit instead of the wellbeing of people and the planet. This section highlights the unequal impacts of contamination and fossil fuel pollution on the poor and people of color in New York state.

NEW YORK IS COLONIZED LAND

- Dozens of Indigenous nations lived in what is now called New York for more than 12,000 years before the arrival of European colonists. Despite four centuries of physical, economic and cultural violence that killed, assimilated and/or drove them from their land, Indigenous peoples have survived. Today 2% of New York residents - or about 350,000 people - are American Indian/Alaska Native according to 2021 American Community Survey data. New York recognizes nine Indigenous Nations; others remain unrecognized by the state and federal governments. On Dec. 17, 2022, Gov. Hochul vetoed a bill passed unanimously by the legislature to grant recognition to the Montauketts.
- Indigenous communities are engaged in ongoing struggles to protect their sovereignty, regain access to stolen land, and restore the health of the environment. For example:
 - Onondaga Lake, which is central to the Onondaga Nation and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, was known as the most polluted lake in the country in recent decades. The Onondaga Nation has pushed for cleanup, including suing the state and industrial polluters to return the lake to them in 2005. A partial cleanup effort began in 2007, but Onondaga Lake remains on the National Priorities List of Superfund sites, and the Onondaga continue to fight for a complete cleanup of the lake.
 - Shinnecock Bay, a central resource for the Shinnecock Nation over millennia, has been devastated by warming temperatures and toxic runoff from Southampton. Pollution worsened during COVID-19, as the population ballooned due to wealthy residents fleeing New York City to the Hamptons. One of the Shinnecock Nation's responses has been to start a kelp farm, which will both help clean the bay and generate needed income for the Shinnecock.

CONTAMINATION OF LAND AND WATER

- New York has 86 Superfund sites currently on the National Priorities List, which designates the most serious areas of hazardous pollution. Only Pennsylvania, California and New Jersey have more.
- The U.S. Department of Defense contaminated Lake Washington and other public drinking water supplies around Newburgh when PFAS chemicals leaked into the water from Stewart Air Force Base. The contamination was discovered in 2016 but is thought to have been present in the drinking water for decades. In June 2022, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a report that found that area residents have three times the national average of the PFHxS chemical in their blood.
- Also in 2016, Hoosick Falls residents learned that PFOA contamination had been found in their drinking water, a result of pollution from a Saint Gobain Performance Plastics manufacturing site. Officials waited 16 months after learning of the contamination to instruct residents not to drink the water. A 2017 study found higher rates of cancer and other PFOA-related illnesses among those exposed to the water.
 - Newburgh and Hoosick Falls are both lower income communities. The median household income in Newburgh and Hoosick Falls is \$47,952 and \$54,744 respectively, compared to \$75,157 for the state. The majority (55%) of Newburgh residents are Latinx and 21% are Black, while 92% of Hoosick Falls residents are white.

FOSSIL FUELS

- Buildings in New York state consume more fossil fuels than anywhere else in the U.S. Not only does burning fossil fuels worsen climate change, it also causes adverse health effects. According to data compiled in 2017, New York state had the highest number of premature deaths due to indoor air pollution from oil and gas heat.
- Poor air quality and other environmental hazards contribute to significantly higher rates of asthma in low-income communities. For example, in 2019 rates of asthma-related emergency department visits in New York were more than three times higher in low-income zip codes than other communities.
- While fracking is banned in New York, communities continue to face fossil fuel infrastructure development. In Brooklyn, National Grid is constructing a seven mile pipeline for fracked gas that zigzags through low-income areas and avoids wealthier neighborhoods. National Grid is seeking permits to also build two liquefied gas vaporizers as part of the project. In addition to the environmental risks, community members are being asked to pay higher rates to cover costs of the construction.
- Fossil fuel companies such as National Grid, Danskammer Energy and Millennium Pipeline have banded together under the misleading name New Yorkers for Affordable Energy to chip away at New York's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). As of October 2022 they had spent over \$320,000 on lobbying and advertising.

“Environmental injustice [is] when you can no longer go out to the waters that surround your indigenous territory and eat the shellfish, fish, mussels, snails, clams, oysters, scallops, all the beautiful food because of pollution.”
— Rebecca Genia, Shinnecock Nation

Video testimony



CONCLUSION

In 1967, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “The prescription for the cure rests with the accurate diagnosis of the disease.” A true State of the State message must include a clear account of the conditions of life experienced by the millions of New Yorkers who live in economically distressed circumstances.

We call on Governor Hochul and state legislators to meet regularly with poor and economically distressed people active in the New York Poor People’s Campaign, to hear their needs in their own voices, and to include them in the ongoing process of policy formulation to guide the legislative agenda.

This is why we are organizing in communities across New York state. We are heartened by the many streams of resistance already in motion in New York, which when drawn together can create a mighty torrent of political, economic and cultural power. This process will soon articulate a new moral value system that cherishes mutual aid and advances the general welfare, promotes peace and non-violence and underscores the need for environmental justice and restoration.

This is the agenda of the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. To get involved in New York state, contact newyork@poorpeoplescampaign.org.



Find us on social media:



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