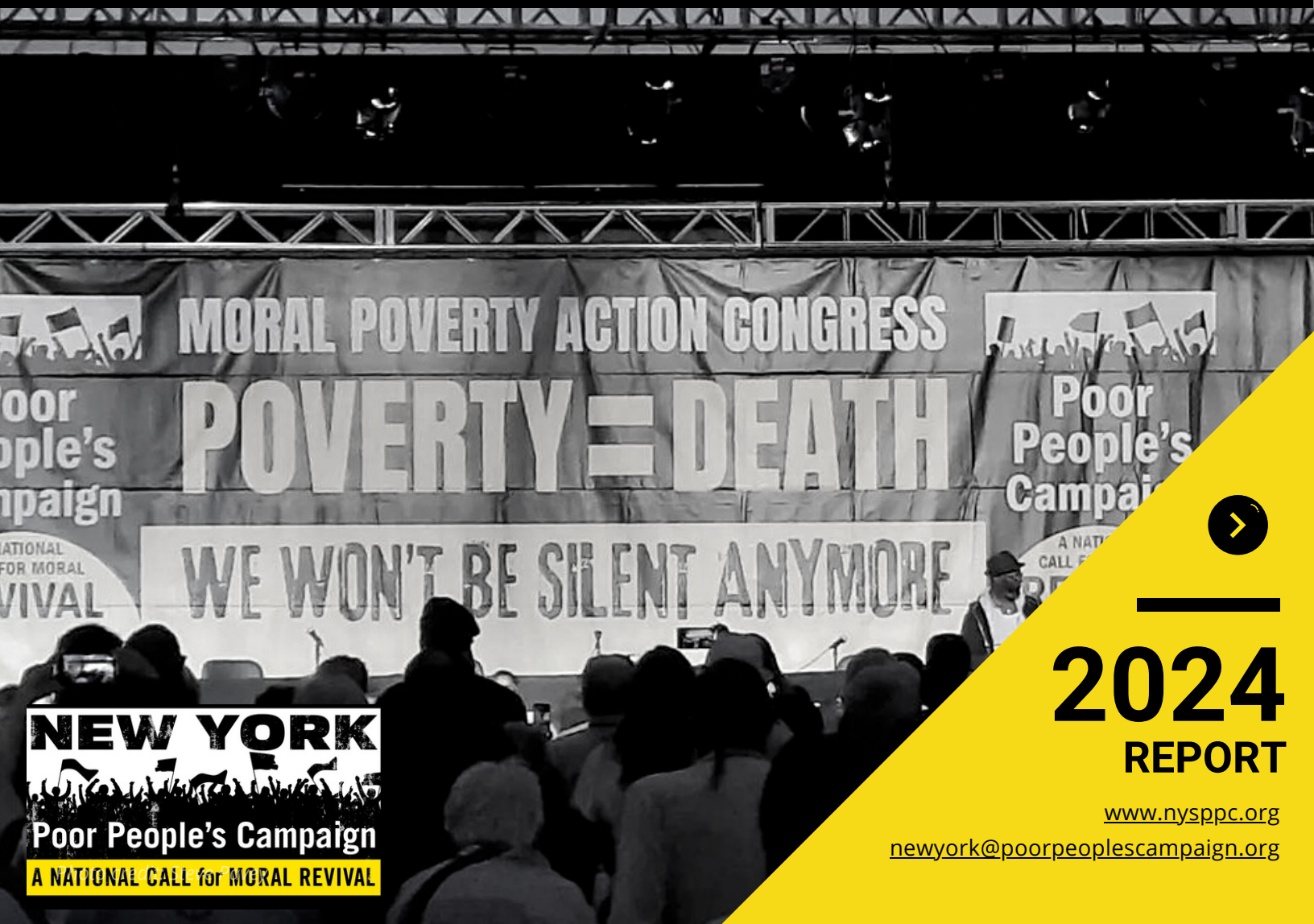


POOR PEOPLE'S STATE OF THE STATE

An updated assessment of the interlocking injustices of
systemic racism, poverty, militarism and ecological devastation
in New York State with moral and policy demands.



2024 REPORT

www.nysppc.org

newyork@poorpeoplescampaign.org

NEW YORK



Poor People's Campaign

A NATIONAL CALL FOR MORAL REVIVAL

NYSPPC Poor People's State of the State Report 2024

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.

In 2023, the New York Poor People's Campaign released its first Poor People's State of the State Report, which conveyed the dire state of the 8.2 million poor and low-income New Yorkers. In a compilation of data, analysis and linked video testimonies, the report exposed the true nature and scope of poverty and how it intersects with the other interlocking evils of systemic racism, militarism, and ecological devastation. Yet just days after we released the report we listened to Governor Hochul address the state as if poverty didn't exist - in fact not once did she say the words poverty or poor in her State of the State address.

Throughout 2023, we watched our legislature fail to make substantive changes that would improve our communities and lift people out of poverty. Even when faced with the opportunities to make incremental changes, most often our elected officials failed to do so.

While last year's report provided facts and statistics, this year's report spotlights and takes a deeper dive into a few of the opportunities for change in New York State over the past year. This report provides an analysis of these select areas as examples of the ways our elected officials only partially addressed, and in some cases, completely failed to address the needs of poor and low-income New Yorkers. While the Poor People's Campaign follows Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in understanding that we can't get rid of one of the systemic evils without addressing the others, the report suggests specific policies that would significantly improve the lives of poor and low-income New Yorkers.

In the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, we denounce poverty as the fourth leading cause of death in the United States. In New York, we lift up the life-and-death realities our communities are experiencing and demand that our elected officials do what is necessary to create a state where everybody has a right to live and thrive.

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.

Photo credit: Jeff Rae



SYSTEMIC RACISM

"Prisons do not disappear social problems, they disappear human beings. Homelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, mental illness and illiteracy are only a few of the problems that disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated to cages."

Angela Davis

SPOTLIGHT ON THE CARCERAL SYSTEM:

The carceral system is a network of policing, prosecution, incarceration, surveillance, debt, and social control that is rooted in, builds upon, and perpetuates economic and racial inequality and oppression.

The statistics below from [2023 NYS Poor Peoples State of the State report](#) highlight the racism inherent in New York State's carceral system.



Photo credit: Jeff Rae

THE CARCERAL SYSTEM

From the 2023 NYSPPC Poor People's State of the State Report:

- 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.



WHAT HAPPENED IN 2023?

- Despite calls for statewide police reform after the national protests surrounding the police murder of George Floyd in 2020, reforms including Gov. Cuomo's Executive Order 203, have stagnated due to opposition by law enforcement and a lack of political will.
- Most police departments have not released records of police misconduct and thus are not in compliance with the repeal of §50-a of the Civil Rights Law.
- The NYC Civilian Complaint Review Board was forced to suspend several categories of investigations into police misconduct due to mandated budget cuts from Mayor Eric Adams, a former police captain.
- Police continued to deny access to footage from body-worn cameras, making them largely unavailable to the public, Civilian Complaint Review Boards, and lawyers.
- 2019 Bail reforms were rolled back further, with changes enabling judges to impose money bail at their discretion and broadening the definition of “harm” so that bail could be set for things such as repeat shoplifting.
- Governor Hochul vetoed the Challenging Wrongful Convictions Act, which would have made it easier for people to argue in court that they were innocent when convicted, even if they plead guilty under pressure. It also would have streamlined the process for New Yorkers to clear their criminal records of offenses that have subsequently been decriminalized.

WHAT ACTION DID THE LEGISLATURE/GOVERNOR TAKE TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?

- The Governor signed the Clean Slate Act. This law will help people impacted by racist policing by automatically sealing conviction records of most misdemeanors after three years, and most felonies after eight years. As formerly incarcerated people rebuild their lives, this law will limit when people like employers and landlords can see their records.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

- Advocates are calling for reforms that create transparency and accountability and reinvest funds from police departments into the communities they serve.
- The following 3 legislative changes must be made to rein in the power of police unions:
 - Pass bill S3095/A4778 to *enforce* the repeal of §50-a and create a police misconduct database available to the public.
 - End the use of Qualified Immunity as a defense for public officials in cases of misconduct and civil rights violations. This legislative change (S1991/A4331) would hold public officials to the same set of laws as civilians.
 - In NYC, pass the How Many Stops Act to require that NYPD document every investigative encounter. This will bring critical transparency by exposing abusive and discriminatory conduct in the NYPD and serve as a model to be implemented statewide.
- The Governor must abandon her 2024 proposal to increase funding for policing personnel, expanding Crime Analysis Centers, and new State Police units. We call on the Governor to instead invest in education and social welfare programs, raise the minimum wage, and forgo increasing carceral policies.



POVERTY

"A lot of children are going to their bed hungry. For a country this rich to have so many people homeless and poor, it's immoral and it's wrong!" - GG Morgan, at a NYSPPC rally in Albany.

SPOTLIGHT ON LOW WAGES AND HIGH INEQUALITY: New York's extreme income inequality is caused, at least in part, by a minimum wage that is not enough to live on in our state. Nearly 40% of New Yorkers' incomes are too low to afford necessities, and marginalized New Yorkers, such as women and people of color, experience income inequality at disproportionately high rates. When essential workers such as home care workers are underpaid and undervalued, there are cascading impacts on families and communities of workers and those seeking home care.

Photo credit: Steve Pavey

From the 2023 NYSPPC Poor People's State of the State Report:

- 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. These multimillionaires and billionaires collectively own \$6.7 trillion in wealth.
- A living wage in New York State 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.
- New York State has the worst home care worker 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 worker shortage.



LOW WAGES AND HIGH INEQUALITY

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2023?

- The Governor announced that beginning in 2024, New York State would increase the minimum wage to \$16 in New York City, Long Island, and Westchester and \$15 in the rest of the state. By 2026, the minimum wage will be \$17 in the New York City area and \$16 upstate and will increase with inflation.
- However, unlike most other states that tie minimum wage increases to rising costs of living, the Hochul administration created a business-friendly safeguard that cancels the increases if unemployment rises.
- Additionally, earlier gains made by home care workers (a \$2 increase in 2022 and \$1 in 2023) were eroded by the overall increase in the minimum wage, meaning home care workers in physically and emotionally demanding jobs may be tempted to find easier work for similar pay.
- After Gov. Hochul refused to sign an earlier version of the bill that would have increased the minimum wage for home care workers to \$22.50, legislators reintroduced the Fair Pay for Home Care Act (S3189A/A8821) to raise minimum wages for home care aides to 150% of the minimum wage to properly value their work.

WHAT ACTION DID THE LEGISLATURE/GOVERNOR TAKE TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?

- Along with reintroducing the Fair Pay for Home Care Act, State Senator Rachel May included language to ensure that wage increases land in workers' pockets. "Last year, we put a lot of money into raising home care wages...but a lot of the money flowed to the big managed long-term care companies, which are basically insurance...they were giving them raises of 25 cents or 50 cents."

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

- With as many as 17% of open home care jobs unfilled, and 26,510 new home health aides needing to be hired each year to meet the needs of New Yorkers, the need to ensure fair pay for home care workers has never been more clear.
- We call on the legislature to pass the new Fair Pay for Home Care Act, and for Gov. Hochul to sign it and ensure that home care workers receive the pay they deserve for important work supporting elderly and disabled New Yorkers.
- By increasing wages, New York can ensure that home care workers can stay in their jobs and support their families, while also ensuring that New Yorkers who need care aren't forced into expensive, private facilities.



SPOTLIGHT ON HOUSING AND THE DENIAL OF BASIC NEEDS:

With housing costs rising between 40 and 80% since 2015, and homelessness in New York City soaring to levels unseen since the 1930s, immediate action is needed to curb the damage being done by New York's for-profit housing market. More and more New Yorkers are unable to consistently pay rent and at risk of losing their homes. Ensuring housing for all, preventing eviction, and empowering tenants are crucial steps toward a more secure and equitable housing landscape across the state.

From the 2023 NYSPPC Poor People's State of the State Report:

- In recent years, homelessness in New York City has reached the highest levels since the Great Depression of the 1930s.
- 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).

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2023?

- The Governor's Housing Compact proposal didn't pass the state legislature in large part because the Governor would not include tenant protections in the form of Good Cause eviction legislation.
- The Governor signed S2980-C/A6216-B, a bill that addressed a practice known as "frankensteining" in which landlords combine two rent-regulated apartments and set a new rent, often at a much higher level than the once separate apartments.
- Gov. Hochul vetoed a bill (A4047) that would have addressed the loss of rent-regulated units and enforced repayment of overcharges.
- In New York City, there were over 126,100 eviction filings and approximately 12,000 residential evictions, nearly three times as many as in 2022.

WHAT ACTION DID THE LEGISLATURE/GOVERNOR TAKE TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?

- Gov. Hochul focused much of her attention on increasing housing developments, meaning funding would subsidize developers rather than communities.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

- To protect both long-term residents and migrants who are the newest New Yorkers, housing should be recognized as a human right and comprehensive reforms must be made.
- In line with Housing Justice for All, we call on the legislature and the Governor to:
 - Protect tenants from unreasonable rent increases and unjust evictions by passing Good Cause Eviction
 - Create a statewide rental subsidy program for the neediest New Yorkers through the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP)
 - Empower tenants to make the first offer on a building if a landlord sells it by passing the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA).
 - Use union labor to build permanently affordable housing by creating a Social Housing Development Authority (SHDA).



MILITARISM

The War Economy Immoral

140,000,000 PEOPLE ARE POOR OR LOW INCOME 43% of the NATION 52% of CHILDREN
Mass Poor People's & Low-Wage Workers Assembly and Moral March on Washington and to the White House
JUNE 18, 2022

Photo credit: Steve Pavey

"I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube. So, I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such." — Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE REAL COSTS OF MILITARY SPENDING: War is arguably the most destructive and harmful activity for people and the planet. War affects the poor of the world most directly, first as victims and also as soldiers who find no other option but to enlist in the military to survive. War, military violence, and the threat of violence are immoral and do not fulfill their stated mission of making the world safer. Meanwhile, benefiting from war are private corporations and contractors who make up the military-industrial complex.

From the 2023 NYSPPC Poor People's State of the State Report:

- 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.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2023?

- Congress approved a record federal military budget of \$886 billion for 2024, an astounding 52 percent increase since 2017. New York taxpayers will pay over \$80 billion of this bill.
- The US provided an ongoing supply of shells and bunker-buster bombs to the Israeli military, which were used to bomb homes, hospitals, and schools, and enabled the genocide in Gaza to continue.
- The New York State Common Retirement Fund, headed by NY State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, has invested \$20 million in Israel bonds—a type of loan to the Israeli government—since October 7, 2023.
- Gov. Hochul sought to position New York as a strong ally of Israel as it bombed and invaded Gaza following Hamas's Oct. 7 attacks. She spearheaded a letter from 17 governors to federal officials on Oct. 16, which included calling for "immediate and continued U.S. aid to Israel in the weeks and months to come."
- On Oct. 18, Gov. Hochul took a taxpayer-funded trip to Israel, where she met with grieving Israeli families and political leaders, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. She wrote in an email blast following her trip that, "It was important for me to go and... make abundantly clear: Today, and every day, New York State stands with Israel."



WHAT ACTION DID THE LEGISLATURE/GOVERNOR TAKE TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?

- While the Governor has expressed unconditional support for Israeli military actions and has refused to acknowledge Palestinian suffering, several New York State lawmakers have joined calls for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and participated in protest actions. For example, Assemblymember Zohran Mamdani helped lead a five-day hunger strike with other state lawmakers outside the White House in November.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

- In our Poor People's Resistance to War and Militarism (2020), the NYS Poor People's Campaign seconded Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s conviction that we must be "compelled to see war as an enemy of the poor and attack it as such." This is true both because of the myriad costs of war as well as because of the massive funds stolen from essential social services here at home.
- Rather than boasting about creating a supportive business environment for defense contractors like Lockheed Martin Systems and Raytheon Aerospace, the New York State government should actively work to create a "Peace Economy" that values all humanity.
- We call on the Governor and state legislators to desist from making statements in support of Israel and instead advocate on behalf of their constituents for tax dollars to be redirected from war-making to community needs, as expressed in the Move the Money Resolution introduced in the New York City Council. Public officials should also use their platforms to amplify the insights and demands of New Yorkers who have experienced war's devastation firsthand.



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*“The world has enough for everyone’s need,
but not enough for everyone’s greed.”*
- Mahatma Gandhi

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ECOLOGICAL DEVASTATION

SPOTLIGHT ON FOSSIL FUELS: Fossil fuels are the largest contributor to climate change, with coal, oil, and gas releasing gasses that trap heat and disrupt weather patterns. As the impacts of climate change are seen more clearly in poor people's daily lives, whether from polluted air caused by increased wildfires or deadly floods caused by unnatural rain storms and tidal surges, policies tied to fossil fuels take on increased urgency.

From the 2023 NYSPPC Poor People's State of the State Report:

- 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 in other communities.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2023?

- Citing cost effectiveness, State Senator Kevin Parker and the Hochul Administration proposed a shift in how greenhouse gasses are counted in New York. Currently, New York is a national leader in measuring gasses' global warming potential in a 20-year timeframe.
- In contradiction with New York's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act passed in 2019, the administration wanted to shift from a 20-year to a 100-year timeframe. Given the urgency of the climate crisis already upon us, moving benchmark indicators to a 100-year timeline is essentially a free pass to corporate polluters to continue polluting and negatively affecting our health and that of the environment.
- Disregarding health and climate costs, Senator Parker said, "It creates an easier time horizon and cost horizon for companies to use as they go into this process."
- National Grid, National Fuel, and the Empire State Forest Products Association were all supportive of the change.
- Environmental groups such as Earthjustice, Environmental Advocates NY, Food and Water Watch, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, NY Renews, and the Sierra Club wrote memos in strong opposition to the change. They were particularly concerned that a change could negatively impact New Yorkers' health if it encouraged increased burning of fuels like natural gas.
- In addition, in 2023 the Governor vetoed several bills that were not focused on fossil fuels but would have addressed other forms of ecological devastation, including:
 - S4859/A5682, which would have required state contractors whose products contain certain tropical forest-risk commodities to demonstrate that their products are not driving deforestation;
 - S1725a/A4601a, which would have protected certain streams; and
 - S5957/A5949, which would have prohibited the application of pesticides to certain local freshwater wetlands.



WHAT ACTION DID THE LEGISLATURE/GOVERNOR TAKE TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?

- Under pressure from environmental groups, the Hochul Administration said the change in how greenhouse gasses are counted was no longer a priority during the Spring 2023 budget season.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

- The New York State Poor People's Campaign joins environmental advocates in calling on the Governor and legislature to maintain the high standards established in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.
- The Governor and legislature can build on successes such as the recently-signed Birds and Bees Protection Act, and funding to update water infrastructure and prevent contamination, by fully funding climate and environmental justice programs laid out in the People's Climate Justice Budget.
- The People's Climate Justice Budget is a \$1 billion investment plan developed by NY Renews, a coalition of over 370 New York organizations that focuses on reducing pollution, lowering energy costs for households, preparing for the immediate effects of climate change, and transitioning to a green economy.



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“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

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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. Forward together, not one step back!

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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