



Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign
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Press Release

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March to Fulfill the Dream

*Historic march and caravan led by poor people goes from
New Orleans to the U.S Social Forum in Detroit*

NEW ORLEANS, LA – On April 4th, 2010, Easter Sunday and the anniversary of Martin Luther King's assassination, poor people and their allies will unite with the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign (PPEHRC) to advance Dr. King's dream of ending poverty. The March to Fulfill the Dream will visit dozens of cities between New Orleans and Detroit, the site of the US Social Forum 2010, to highlight the urgent need for affordable housing and healthcare in the United States. Housing, healthcare, and jobs are human rights according to the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, endorsed by the U.S. in 1948. Continuing the legacy of Dr. King's 1968 Poor People's Campaign, which was cut short by his assassination, the tour is part of a larger strategy to unite poor people's groups and their allies from across the country to build a diverse nonviolent movement to end poverty.

The PPEHRC caravan will visit many cities, including historic cities from the Civil Rights movement, for which Dr. King became the famous spokesperson. Each stop will include marches, demonstrations, and speak-outs led by poor people from the local cities, dramatizing the plight of today's swelling numbers of the poor. Among the stops is Marks, Mississippi, where Dr. King launched the original Poor People's Campaign in 1968 with a march and caravan to the nation's capital.

“Dr. King's dream is as relevant today as it was during his lifetime. More people than ever before are living in poverty surrounded by an unprecedented concentration of wealth and abundance. We are organizing to finally realize the dream of racial equality and economic justice in the United States,” said Viola Washington of New Orleans, a Katrina survivor with the New Orleans Welfare Rights Organization, a PPEHRC member group.

People in the U.S. are experiencing the worst recession since the Great Depression, with record numbers struggling for jobs, housing, and healthcare. More than 6 million Americans have been unemployed for 6 months or more, “the largest number since the

government began keeping track in 1948,” according to a recent [New York Times article](#). Three million homes were foreclosed in 2009, a record in U.S. history, with millions more expected to follow this year. Over 45 million Americans have no health care. Billions are spent on wars abroad while citizens at home lack basic social services.

“We don’t expect the changes we need to come from Washington or Wall Street, so we are building a mass movement to fight for the healthcare, housing, and jobs we need,” stated Khalilah Collins of Women in Transition, a PPEHRC member group in Louisville, Kentucky. “We are developing leaders from the ranks of the poor to create solutions ourselves and build a sustainable system.”

The Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign is a national coalition of over 125 grassroots anti-poverty groups, most of which are led directly by poor and homeless people. It is the nation’s largest anti-poverty organization that is led directly by the poor.

The March to Fulfill the Dream and the U.S. Social Forum (USSF) will connect poor people and anti-poverty groups from across the country with a special focus on education and leadership development. Every March event will promote dialogue among poor and disenfranchised people about the economic crisis and community-based solutions. “Organizing and education together can help us turn this recession into an opportunity for creative transformation,” said Larry Bresler, PPEHRC’s National Director.

The caravan, and the USSF itself, where more than 20,000 people representing progressive groups from across the U.S. and the world will gather, will provide spaces for poor people and their allies to further develop the analysis and strategy to build the movement and challenge the structures that cause poverty.

“All major social movements in history have been led by those most affected by problems. The Civil Rights, American Revolution, and Women’s Suffrage movements were all led by those most oppressed by injustice. The crisis in our economic system gets fixed when poor people are organized to lead the fight,” said Cheri Honkala, National Organizer of PPEHRC.

PPEHRC member groups have helped move homeless families into abandoned buildings, and are coordinating food distribution drives to help feed growing numbers of hungry people in both urban and rural cities. The coalition is running a national Zero Evictions and Foreclosures campaign to address what it sees as a national housing epidemic. As part of its “Programs of Survival” people are trained to resist foreclosures by using nonviolent civil disobedience to stay in their homes when other options have failed.

“There’s no more time to sit back and hope for politicians to help us. They help the banks and abandon the poor,” said Marian Kramer of the National Welfare Rights Union and Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, both PPEHRC member groups. “The present economic catastrophe calls for a wave of nonviolent civil disobedience to sweep over this nation and win the basic human rights we need to survive.”

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