

STATEMENT ON THE POOR PEOPLES' CAMPAIGN

by the INTERRELIGIOUS COMMITTEE ON RACE RELATIONS, Washington, D.C.

Believing that the continued blight of poverty in so affluent a nation as ours constitutes a clear denial of human dignity;

Deploring the poverty of both imagination and commitment that we as a nation have brought to bear upon the persistent problem of poverty;

Compelled by our religious traditions to bear witness to this American tragedy;

WE, the INTERRELIGIOUS COMMITTEE ON RACE RELATIONS, endorse the legitimate aims and goals of the Poor Peoples' Campaign during the spring and summer of 1968, under the auspices of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference led by Reverend Martin Luther King.

These goals we understand to be:

First: To raise before the eyes and conscience of this nation the plight and despair of the poor, thus making visible those whom our affluent society has allowed to become invisible.

Second: To promote in the face of chaos and violent revolt the efficacy of non-violent tactics in combatting the apathy that breeds despair among the poor.

Third: To achieve minimal standards of human decency for all of our people, namely,

- meaningful jobs for all,
- adequate income for all,
- decent housing for all,
- quality education for all, and
- adequate medical and dental care for all.

These we believe to be basic to any standard of human dignity and we support Dr. King's attempt to seek, through non-violence, to make these standards a reality throughout the nation.

We further believe that the American people and the Congress of the United States must quickly and resolutely bring about the accomplishment of these goals.

We call upon the religious community of Metropolitan Washington to be responsive to the human needs of the poor who will visit us during the coming months. It is our understanding that they will need supportive services of many kinds.

In the words of the recent report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, "It is time to end the destruction and violence, not only in the streets of the ghetto, but in the lives of the people."

We believe Dr. King offers a clear alternative to the self-defeating violence of spontaneous revolt by a direct and deliberate non-violent attack upon the roots of that revolt--the debilitating but hidden violence of despair.

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