

Thu, Jan 2, 2025

# CALIFORNIA



**Good morning! In this issue...**

- A glance at our 2024 PPC achievements
- Recaps: Merced memorial and Oakland sanctuary community
- Rev. Liz compares the Prophet with the incoming POTUS
- A conversation with music legend Terence Blanchard

## Announcements

### 2024 in Review

*From the State Capitol to the U.S. Capitol, it was a monumental year for the PPC. Below, we round up a handful of our 2024 actions. We hope it renews your commitment to our work as we face what will certainly be a challenging—and, we hope, encouraging—year ahead. Forward Together, Not One Step Back!*



March saw our **day of action at state capitols** across the country. With these actions we launched a 40-week effort to mobilize poor and low-wage voters across the nation. In Sacramento, more than 350 people gathered to demand that our elected officials address the crisis of death by poverty.

On April 4 we continued our tradition of collectively reading Dr. Martin Luther King's prophetic speech "**Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence.**" Members from across the state took turns reciting the speech in its entirety so that we could experience the eloquence of Dr. King's words and depth of his message—a call for an end to all wars and occupations around the world and for the redirection of resources from the industries of violence to providing for the wellbeing of all people and our environment.



We showed up in force at the **Mass Poor People's & Low-Wage Workers' Moral March on Washington** and to the **Polls** on June 29. Braving the heat, humidity and approaching

thunderstorms, tens of thousands of people from across the country gathered in Washington, D.C. to declare “We are the swing vote!” The crowd included low-wage and no-wage workers as well as religious, labor and social justice organizations. In California, PPC supporters Gloria Meneses-Sandoval and Luis Bautista organized a watch party in Merced. “We had about 35 in attendance with many passionate people expressing themselves in English and Spanish,” Gloria said. “We were all jazzed up!”



In September, we launched our **Get Out The Vote** drive with the goal of reaching 15 million poor and low-wage infrequent voters through a national textbanking program, in-person canvassing and all forms of social and earned media. Week after week, GOTV gatherings and press events kept us motivated.

Throughout the year, we loudly opposed the **Grants Pass** decision, which made homelessness a crime, and we spoke out about the ongoing threats to the sacred land of **Oak Flat**. We participated in events that opposed **nuclear proliferation** and the atrocities in **Palestine**, and we organized in solidarity with **immigrant communities** that face renewed threats from the incoming administration.

We look forward to seeing you at an action in 2025!

## Meetings & events

### Los Angeles regional meeting

**Sunday Jan 5, 3pm | [RSVP](#)**

Join Los Angeles PPC activists for our first meeting of 2025! We'll have a CA PPC year in review and dive into exciting plans in the works, including in-person meetings and celebrations for MLK Day. All are welcome—invite your family, neighbors and friends.

### Virtual conference: Building Moral Leadership to Address Christian Nationalism

**Sunday, Monday & Tuesday Jan 12–14, 4–6:00pm PT | [RSVP](#)**

2025 will see a new president take office in a highly polarized nation where White Christian Nationalism holds influence over significant sections of political, religious and cultural life. How do people of faith make sense of this moment, its threats and

opportunities? How do we effectively confront religious nationalism? And how do we move beyond playing defense to actually envision and embody the just society God calls us to build?

A week before the presidential inauguration, join the Kairos Center and Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) for a virtual conference to engage these questions with religious leaders, congregants and others. This is the first public event of the Luke 10 Initiative, a program that will launch cohorts of congregations this spring to understand and confront White Christian Nationalism. Read the [Kairos event webpage](#) for more information and to RSVP.

## Recaps



### **Homeless/houseless memorials and encampments at the year's end** **Merced 2024 winter solstice houseless memorial**

Fifty-two members of the Merced unhoused community died in 2024, most of them between the ages of 50 to 70. On the winter solstice, community members gathered in McNamara Park to remember their lives, struggles and importance. Pictured above is one of the 52 ornaments that were put on a Christmas tree to honor each person. Gena Mercer, previously houseless, urged, "If you don't want to help the homeless, at least don't hurt them."

### **Oakland sanctuary community**

Unhoused people in the Bay Area have been organizing all year for their right to housing, and our Bay Area PPC region has been providing support and solidarity. The community's efforts culminated in events that began on December 17 at Oakland City Hall, San Francisco City Hall and other locations statewide, where sanctuary communities were set up.

In Oakland, this included 24-hour provision of food, water, community, care and survival resources, run by people who are unhoused, assisted by volunteers and housed allies. Organizers there held a second press conference on December 21 to keep the spotlight on the ongoing sweeps and attacks against unhoused neighbors, while drawing attention to the lack of accountability for the money allocated to house people. A week later, they made the decision to dismantle the sanctuary resource zone.

Thank you to readers of this newsletter for the support offered, including calls to action based on the international human right to adequate housing, to stop the deadly sweeps and other demands.

## Support the California PPC!

*When over 140 million Americans are poor or living with low-wages, it's time for systemic change. We are building a movement led by poor and impacted folks, building across all lines of division, in order to topple the interlocking pillars of racism, poverty, militarism, environmental destruction and this country's distorted moral narrative. Please help us achieve this goal by clicking below and chipping in whatever you can.*

**DONATE**

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### PPC in the media

#### **Podcast: Rev. Liz on KPFA's Background Briefing**

##### **"The Contrast Between the Prophet of the Poor and Trump's Billionaires"**

On a Christmas Eve episode of a [podcast](#) hosted by veteran journalist Ian Masters, Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis discusses the contrast between the life and lessons of Jesus Christ and "the emergence of a ruling clique of billionaires taking over the executive branch, after having captured the judicial branch, having promised the 76 million who voted for them they would be champions of working Americans." Rev. Liz asks listeners to remember a critical source of hope in our society: "This is a Christmas lesson of who visited Jesus first in that nativity thousands of years ago." She concludes that hope doesn't come from the rich and powerful but from "from the people down below who are compelled to make better lives for themselves and their communities."

#### **Podcast: A Breach Repairer's Song returns**

##### **Terence Blanchard discusses the power of art with Bishop Barber and Yara Allen**

In the second episode of their new [podcast](#), this one with visionary jazz musician and Oscar-nominated composer Terence Blanchard, PPC theomusicologist Yara Allen and Bishop Barber explore the meaning of music, its connection to a higher purpose and its power to heal. Blanchard shares his journey through music, reflecting on his spiritual connection to it, his upbringing in New Orleans and much more.

Upon hearing Blanchard talk of the importance of listening to others, Bishop Barber referenced two passages from scripture: "Awaken my ear each morning, oh Lord, and I might have the tongue of the learned and I know how to speak to those who are in distress," and "lift your voice like a trumpet," after which he chuckled, then continued, "and cry loud and tell the nation of their sins."

On becoming a trumpeter, Blanchard says, "it's almost like the trumpet chose me. I was playing piano from the time that I was a little kid. But when I heard Alvin Alcorn and other trumpet players in New Orleans, there was something about that instrument that was spiritual and it was just very well beyond me as a human being. Even now when I play sometimes, I don't feel like it's me; I feel like I'm being used for something else." Listen to [A Breach Repairer's Song episode 2](#).

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*Thanks for reading. If you have any questions, you are welcome to reply to this newsletter or email [california@poorpeoplescampaign.org](mailto:california@poorpeoplescampaign.org).*