

## **May 17 - Reflections from Buffalo, Before You Sign Seminar, Legislative Actions**

The last two days, I have been in Buffalo meeting with clergy and members in the community. It has been my aim, on behalf of the Council, to make connections, build bridges, and discern with others how to faithfully act.

I would offer four observations.

### **1. Remember the victims and find ways to provide for the care of those who are traumatized.**

Here is [news coverage](#) about those who died Remember their names. Remember their witness. Never forget.

There are major efforts underway in Buffalo to offer many physical and mental health supports for those who need it. Remember that our children right now are reporting they are scared to even go to the supermarket because they fear they will be shot. We also must acknowledge that so many are re-traumatized after experiencing loss from the pandemic.

### **2. Show up and be present in your community wherever you are.**

On Sunday, I attended a citywide interfaith prayer service at Macedonia Baptist Church (dually affiliated with Empire Baptist Missionary Convention and the American Baptist Churches). Under the leadership of The Reverend Julian Cook, Macedonia brought together the widest diversity of people to grieve, to give God praise, and to act. Here is a [recording](#) of the service which I commend to you: Here was some [news coverage](#) of the service.

Earlier in the day, we heard from The Reverend Darius Pridgen, Pastor of True Bethel Baptist Church. You can view the 10:00 AM service by clicking [here](#)

Mayor Adams invited people on Monday night to the Bethel Gospel Assembly to pray for the victims.

On Tuesday, May 17 in Buffalo, President Biden will arrive at 10:00 AM and head to Tops Market before meeting with victims and community leaders thereafter at the Delavan-Grider Community Center before leaving at 2:00. There will also be a prayer vigil at 6 at the Tops site and also at 7.

### **3. We must take white supremacy seriously and counter it in its many manifestations.**

At a prayer service yesterday, I was challenged along with other guests about what we are doing to address racism in white churches. There was a plea to have much more serious conversations about white supremacy. It is about our language and the ideas to which we give tacit permission to be expressed in our political discourse. For example, some politicians are known to propagate replacement theory which suggests that people of color and immigrants are being brought in to diminish the political power of white people. This was one of the many white supremacist ideas embraced by the shooter in his manifesto.

It is about the language we use and challenging each other when we stray but it is also about challenging the chronic and racist disinvestment in many communities. Why is it, I was asked near the Tops market by one man running for Congress, that we send a whole lot of money to the

Buffalo waterfront but do not invest those same dollars in neighborhoods like where the Tops market was located? How do we pay reparations for the consequences of redlining, housing discrimination, bad water, poor health care, food deserts, and disinvestment in the social safety net. How are we going to "get political" and invest in infrastructure and design which build up neighborhoods to reverse the destruction that came from "urban renewal" and superhighways ripping up black neighborhoods to get white people from one suburb to another?

To see actions you can take, the Council of Churches offers much guidance on policies that must be changed. For background, you can view our 2022 legislative ask and seminars by [clicking here](#).

#### **4. Finally, we need to take gun violence seriously and do something about it.**

We need much tougher Federal gun laws which make it impossible for states with fewer gun restrictions to export these weapons to other states with stronger gun laws. One thing we must **never** do is to call for re-instituting the death penalty in New York as was proposed today by some in the Republican Minority. State sanction of violence begets more violence. It does not prevent it. We must instead, look closely at what steps must be taken to stop gun related crimes and take restorative and not revenge-based approaches to criminal justice reform.



# **PLEASE REGISTER FOR EVENT HERE**

"On Thursday, May 19, from 2:00 to 3:30 the Partnership for Faith-Based Affordable Housing and Community Development will present "Before You Sign...", a workshop designed to help faith communities better understand the real estate development process. In the face of great financial pressures made more difficult by the COVID-19 pandemic, many houses of worship are considering selling or re-developing their property. In this workshop, we will cover the steps to take before pursuing a deal, and ways to advocate for the best possible outcome for you and your community when working through the development process."

Panelists Include:

Jason Labate, Partner, Goldstein Hall Attorneys at Law

The Reverend Dr. William Shillady, Executive Director, United Methodist City Society

The Reverend Dustin Wright, Pastor, Messiah Lutheran Church, Rotterdam

Willy Zambrano, Partner, Zambrano Architectural Design

The Reverend Peter Cook, Executive Director, New York State Council of Churches

The Partnership is funded by a grant from Trinity Church Wall Street and is comprised of Bricks and Mortals, Interfaith Affordable Housing Collaborative, Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing and the New York State Council of Churches. Together, we offer guidance and forgivable loans to houses of worship of all faiths wishing to repurpose their property to serve their communities to build affordable housing. We also provide guidance for congregations looking to repurpose their property for non-housing uses (arts centers, schools, day cares, rental). We also help congregations look at their options for energy use and to promote policies which address the affordable housing crisis including encouraging landlords to accept Emergency Housing Vouchers.

For more guidance on the pre-development process please see [WWW.IAHNY.org](http://WWW.IAHNY.org),

You can also contact Kevin Ritter, Program Manager, at [Kevin@Judson.org](mailto:Kevin@Judson.org) for more information about pre-development for housing and non-housing uses.

To participate in our Interfaith Landlord Locator Project go to:

<https://www.nyscoc.org/take-action/housing-justice>

For energy consultation for your congregation, contact, Peter Cook, at [Pcook@NYSCOC.org](mailto:Pcook@NYSCOC.org) or 508-380-8289.

CAMPAIGN FOR

# NEW YORK HEALTH

Calls are needed this week to state leaders in support of bringing the New York Health Act to a vote before the end of session. We need all grassroots and grasstops leaders in the coalition to make a set of calls to Senate Leader Stewart Cousins, Assembly Speaker Heastie, and your own state representatives. Can you make these calls today? Please let us know how your calls went by filling out this google form and let us know if you would like sample language to mobilize your membership as well.

Below you will find links to social media content from a press conference yesterday in Albany with the Black Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Caucus – please retweet to show strong statewide support for passing the NY Health Act!

**Call 1) SENATE MAJORITY LEADER ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS**

Albany: 518-455-2585, District: 914-423-4031 Or use the call tool: <https://p2a.co/3JHYFz0>

**Call 2) ASSEMBLY SPEAKER HEASTIE**

Albany: 518-455-3791, District: 718-654-653 Or use the call tool: <https://p2a.co/3JHYFz0>

**SAMPLE SCRIPT** Hello! My name is [YOUR NAME] from [ORG]. I am calling to urge [Leader Stewart-Cousins/Speaker Heastie] to bring the NY Health Act to the floor for a vote as soon as possible before the end of this legislative session. It is bill number [A6058/S5474]. Thank you.

**Call 3) YOUR LOCAL LEGISLATORS and LEGISLATORS YOU HAVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH**

Ask them to tell their Leadership to bring the NY Health Act to a vote. This spreadsheet has contacts for every legislator and whether they cosponsor:

<http://www.bit.ly/NYHATracker2022>

**AMPLIFY ON SOCIAL MEDIA - UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE AND RACIAL JUSTICE**

Yesterday the Campaign for New York Health joined with the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus to release a new report on healthcare and racial equity. Please continue using the social media toolkit to amplify the findings and show support for passing the NY Health Act.

Show strong support for passing the NY Health Act by retweeting the cosponsors who spoke at Wednesday's press conference:

- [Retweet AM Catalina Cruz](#)
- [Retweet AM Jon Rivera](#)
- [Retweet Senator Jessica Ramos](#)
- [Retweet Senator Gustavo Rivera](#)
- [Retweet AM Taylor Darling](#)
- [Retweet Niecy's Purple Heart Foundation](#)
- [Retweet AM Zinerman's quote](#)

Thank you for all you do to help win healthcare for all.

In solidarity,

Ursula Rozum

Co-Director, Campaign for New York Health

(315) 414-7720

### **SAFER CONSUMPTION SERVICES ACT AND BUPRENORPHINE DECRIMINALIZATION**

**Tuesday, May 10 @ 12PM: Join us VOCAL New York for their weekly PhoneZap Power Hour to #EndOverdose:** We will be flooding key state lawmakers' phone lines—urging them to cosponsor/support two life-saving pieces of legislation: Safer Consumption Services Act and **Where:** Online (via zoom) [RSVP Here](#). **Contact:** Biz (413-406-8838 | [biz@vocal-ny.org](mailto:biz@vocal-ny.org))

## **HOUSING**

### ***Fight for Good Cause with Tenants May 17<sup>th</sup>***

New York State Council of Churches is pleased to join VOCAL and other partners from the Housing Justice 4 All coalition as we mass-mobilize tenants from Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse, Albany, Westchester, NYC, and beyond to Albany for a Day of Action to meet with elected representatives, hold a press conference, rally, and **demand Good Cause is passed THIS session!**

**[RSVP here!](#)** to join us in Albany on Tuesday, May 17 at 11:00 at the NYS Capitol Building & Legislative Office Building to take action with tenants and directly-impacted community members from across the state. *Transportation and food will be provided.* If you live in the Capital Region and need a ride, please reply to this e-mail or contact Ash at 518-469-3573 or [Ash@vocal-ny.org](mailto:Ash@vocal-ny.org). **[Click here to join us!](#)** You can also write to Governor Hochul urging her to support to support Good Cause by [clicking here](#)

# CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

## CLEAN SLATE

#CleanSlateNY, #CommunitiesNotCages & #ParoleJusticeNY

**Now is the time to win the passage of Clean Slate and put an end to perpetual punishment.** Help us demand access to the jobs, housing and education that we all need to thrive by taking action throughout this month:

**RSVP here** to join us and spread the word with this **graphic** and **social media toolkit**.

**#CleanSlate NYC RALLY (May 19):** On May 19 at 11am, we're rallying in NYC on the steps of City Hall. Joined by state and local elected officials, we will call for the passage of the Clean Slate Act (and highlighting the NYC resolution calling for the same). Please join us and help spread the word! **RSVP here**.

**ECONOMIC JUSTICE & #CleanSlateNY ADVOCACY DAY (May 24):** Join us and NY's largest labor unions for an Economic Justice + Clean Slate Advocacy Day! **RSVP here**.

Remember to frequently **visit our website** which is updated daily with new information and events.

\For more information on our legislative ask, seminars and town halls around the budget and proposed bail, raise the age, and discovery rollback **click here**.

The New York State Council of Churches relies on contributions to carry out its ministry, **please donate**

Also, **like us on Facebook** and **follow us on Twitter**