

May 21 - Further Reflections from Buffalo. Clergy Sign-Ons Needed Now to Call on Governor to form Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council

If we have learned any thing from the massacre in Buffalo, it is the need to name and counter the scourge of white supremacy. In order for that to happen, we need to have hard conversations in our church to name the subtle and not so subtle expressions of this ideology which presents itself on media but also in our conversations in our families and congregations.

As The Reverend Tim Brown, President of Buffalo Baptist Ministers Alliance, put it to me bluntly: "what are you going to do have these tough conversations in your white congregations?" clearly feeling that our efforts to counter racism in our white congregations have fallen woefully short. Indeed, he was curious as to what we say or do at coffee hour or at a family gathering, when some a beloved family or church member starts minimizing racism, complains about gun control, grieves that black people are getting more than deserve, or that fumes that people of color and immigrants are taking away the power of white people by embracing Replacement Theory promoted by politicians and media news entertainers like Tucker Carlson. Will we speak up, he asked, or will we just smile and change the subject so as not to cause waves? If we don't speak up, he stressed, then we become part of the problem! How do we teach our children through our words and actions, how not to hate?

White supremacy is also baked into our social and economic policies. It is about our language but it also about naming the truth that historically we supported policies which developed wealth for white people while leaving black people behind.

1. Redlining was a practice up until 1962 where banks would only give government backed mortgages to white people and not black people. This unequal investment meant that whites were able to accumulate wealth and pass that wealth down through generations, while the same subsidy and hand up was not given to blacks. While redlining is now illegal, it laid a foot print for housing in black neighborhoods losing value and without the ability to fix up to property. This lead to more decay in places like East Buffalo. Will we invest the money taken by whites for their benefit and invest it in repairing property and offering mortgages that affordable to its residents?
2. Because of disinvestment in homes and businesses it means that less property tax revenue is available to invest in schools than in white communities with more tax revenue because of higher property values? How will we invest in our schools in East Buffalo in the same way we invest in white suburbs?
3. It was a hard fight to get a Top's Market into East Buffalo twenty years ago in what was a food desert. The Top's Market helped but it is a small market with a footprint three to four times smaller than markets found in wealthier neighborhoods. Their offerings of fresh meat and fruits and vegetables is limited. Conversations are underway, of course, to get the Top's store to re-open but, in addition, why not attract a larger supermarket to the area to make East Buffalo even less a food desert?

4. White supremacist disinvestment has accelerated child poverty. We saw that the child tax credit under the Federal Relief act helped significantly cut the child poverty rate by giving enough money to raise families above the poverty line. Unfortunately, that tax credit was revoked and has not been re-instituted by Congress. The power of the tax credit was a reminder that when we get more money into pockets with direct subsidy, we make an economic impact. But it also reminds us that another way to increase wealth is to reduce people's costs for childcare, housing, and health care by passing Build Back Better type legislation on the state and Federal level. Such policies can help reverse discrimination while helping places like East Buffalo to rise. Lest people complain that we should not move to a socialist state, it's well to remember that we are more than happy to offer socialism to the rich by giving them enormous tax breaks and corporate subsidies in hopes that the benefits will trickle down to places like East Buffalo. At the same time, we impose the worst of unbridled capitalism on our poorest and blackest neighborhoods. We need a bottom up and middle out approach by investing in the social safety net which releases much more money into the economy than tax breaks.

As a Council, we will continue to advocate strongly for reversing wealth inequality and counter a plantation like neoliberal economic priorities. We call on congregations to counter interpersonal racism but also advocate for policies which counter structural racism which hurts all of us.,

In this spirit, we call on congregants to "get political" to examine closely the platforms of candidates for public office while advocating for good legislation that reverses wealth inequality and invests properly in our communities. Here are a few ways to act.

1. We are asking today that clergy to **please sign our letter to the Governor calling on her to act swiftly to convene the Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council without further delay. You can find our sign on letter [at this link](#).**

It is notable that in New York's 15th Congressional District, located in **the Bronx**, has the highest child poverty rate of any of our nation's Congressional Districts.

Syracuse has the highest child poverty in the nation among cities with at least 100,000 people, according to new census data released in March 2022. The poverty rate among kids under 18 is 48.4% in Syracuse, ranking the city ahead of places like Detroit and Cleveland.

Two other Upstate New York cities, **Buffalo** (42.3%) and **Rochester** (48.2%), are also on the top 10 list of larger cities with the highest child poverty. Tragically, Rochester is ranked 2nd and Buffalo is ranked 6th.

Black and Latinx children more than twice as likely as white children to live in poverty in our State, and New York carries a higher child poverty rate than that of 34 other states. Yet, New York is the third-richest state in the United States, with a GDP of \$1,705,127,00

2. We invite you to channel resources for victims and investment as recommended by VOICE Buffalo.

3. Please call on your legislators to pass the New York Health Act which will provide truly universal and affordable health care.
4. Pass statewide Right to Counsel legislation which offers free legal representation to people making less than 80% of median income to reduce home evictions.
5. Get behind efforts to bring supermarkets to food deserts in places like East Buffalo.
6. Continue to call on Congress to pass revised Build Back Better legislation to restore the child tax credit, increase housing subsidies, improve investment in child care and home care, invests in clean energy infrastructure to counter environmental racism and protect the climate, and finally tax the wealthy who often pay less tax than poor and middle income people.

Some examples include an economic study of East of Buffalo led by [**Dr. Henry Taylor, Jr.**](#) Director of University of Buffalo's Center for Urban Studies. Listen to India Walton's [**reflections**](#) on investment in Buffalo on Democracy Now. Also hear the remarks of The Reverend Al Sharpton, President of National Action Network, State Senator Tim Kennedy, Majority Leader Crystal People's Stokes, Byron Brown, Mayor of Buffalo, and The Reverend Timothy Brown, President of the Baptist Minister's Alliance and many others at Antioch Baptist Church [**prayer service and rally**](#). Also reference the [**Interfaith Prayer Service**](#) at Macedonia Baptist Church under the leadership The Reverend Julian Cook.

For more reflections on reversing racist public policies, we invite you to pay attention to video presentations by people like [**Heather McGhee**](#), author of the Sum of Us, [**Ibram Kendi**](#) author of How to be an Anti-Racist, [**Isabel Wilkerson**](#) author of Caste, and [**Nicole Hannah Jones**](#) editor of the 1619 project.

Here is an [**interview**](#) Peter Cook had with The Guardian on Christianity and guns which appeared this morning. Remember that we need much stronger Federal legislation with complements on the state level. See [**review of executive orders proposed state legislation**](#) from Governor Hochul in City and State and a [**story**](#) in Democracy Now featuring the Executive Director of Brady.

VOICE Buffalo has published on their website a variety of ways in which people from across Western New York, the state and country can respond to the tragedy. To view resources [click here**](#)**

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

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](#).

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](#).