

Reading Section #1 - POVERTY AND UPLIFT (2 Response Paragraphs opened Jan. 21 / due Jan 23.)

Re-submit Assignment

Due Jan 23 by 11:59pm **Points** 100 **Submitting** a file upload
Available Jan 21 at 12am - May 3 at 11:59pm 3 months

Students:

Click and READ the following (2) articles on Poverty and Uplift:

ARTICLE 1

On Mississippi:

"No room for them": For Mississippians in deep poverty, voting is easier said than done."

By Anna Wolfe October 29, 2018 (https://mississippitoday.org/2018/10/29/no-room-for-them-for-mississippians-in-deep-poverty-voting-is-easier-said-than-done/)

ARTICLE 2

On the Country

"Americans Want to Believe Jobs Are the Solution to Poverty. They're Not"

(https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/11/magazine/americans-jobs-poverty-homeless.html)

WRITE (2) two short paragraphs that answer the following questions:

X For ARTICLE 1 - Prompt:

X What is the relationship between voting, not voting and poverty?

∠ For ARTICLE 2 - Prompt:

X If jobs are not the answer to poverty, then (according to the article) what is?

Submit your paragraphs on the same WORD PAGE.

ELECTION

'No room for them': For Mississippians in deep poverty, voting is easier said than done

BY ANNA WOLFE OCTOBER 29, 2018



Eric J. Shelton, Mississippi Today/ Report for America

Matthew McLellan sits outside while reading his Bible near Stewpot Community Services in Jackson Thursday, Oct. 25, 2018.

Congregating with others outside Stewpot's community kitchen on an overcast, drizzly Thursday afternoon after grabbing some lunch, a bus driver reflected on the decline of his West Jackson surroundings.

The man, Tony Moore, said he'd rather try to make a difference in his community — give a hand up to folks living in poverty — than go to the polls on Election Day.

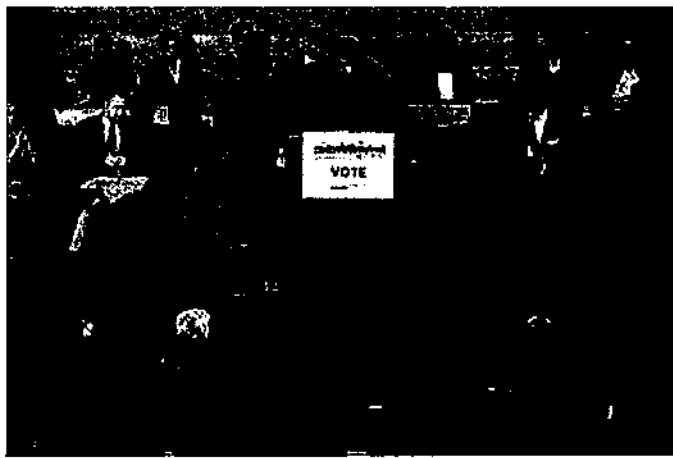
Chris Purdon and Jed Blackerby won't vote because they can't — they both say they are among the nearly 10 percent of voting-aged Mississippians permanently stripped of their right (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/10/06/us/unequal-effect-of-laws-that-block-felons-from-voting.html>) to vote due to a felony conviction.

Vivian Sims said she registered "just in case," but she doubts she'll cast a vote come November 6.

Mississippi Today spoke to a dozen people around Stewpot the day after the popular longtime civil rights activist the Rev. William Barber II visited Jackson as part of the Poor People's Campaign's "moral revival" aimed at engaging low-income Americans.

"Anybody that attempts to suppress your right to vote is actually trying to deny that you were made in the image of the Lord," Barber told the crowd. "That's why if we ever needed to vote we need to vote now. Because voting is a moral and religious responsibility."

Political engagement strongly correlates with a person's economic status. The most financially secure Americans are three times more likely to vote (<http://www.people-press.org/2015/01/08/the-politics-of-financial-insecurity-a-democratic-ill-undercut-by-low-participation/>) than the least financially secure, according to the Pew Research Center based on data from the 2014 midterm election.



Eric J. Shelton, Mississippi Today/ Report for America

Rev. William Barber II speaks during a Poor People's Campaign event at Greater Mount Calvary Baptist Church Wednesday, Oct. 24 in Jackson.

Illuminating this statistic is the fact that political candidates rarely speak on the issues facing people in deep poverty — a reason Barber said voters should “turn out” rather than “turn off.”

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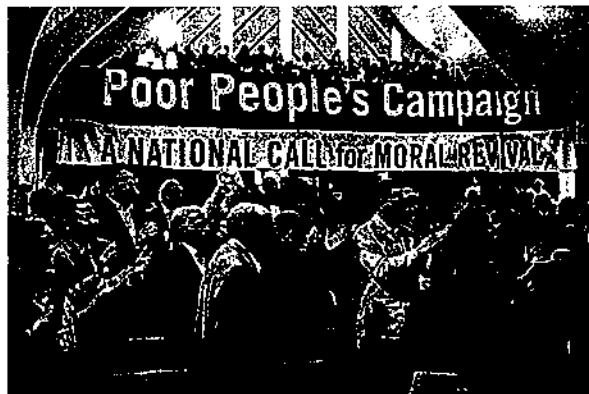
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“A lot of lawmakers and politicians frame issues for other people instead of asking people about their issues and then frame policy around that,” said Marquise Hunt, president of Tougaloo College’s National Association for the Advancement of Colored People chapter. “The most important thing is to meet people where they are.”

In Mississippi, the poorest state in the country, where nearly one-in-five people live in poverty, just 13 percent of registered voters (<https://mississippitoday.org/2018/09/26/roseman-13-percent-june-voter-turnout-must-be-improved/>) participated in the June primaries.

The Poor People’s Campaign strives to use grassroots voices to demand changes to the practices and policies it says prevent people from escaping poverty, such as systemic racism, voter suppression, income inequality, the prison industrial complex and military spending.



Eric J. Shelton, Mississippi Today/ Report for America

The audience cheers as the Rev. William Barber II speaks at Greater Mount Calvary Baptist Church Wednesday, Oct. 24 in Jackson.

Hundreds of locals — many middle-class professionals, students from Lanier High School and residents of nearby nursing homes — attended the 11 a.m. rally. They packed into pews at Greater Mount Calvary Baptist Church less than a mile from Stewpot, the most prominent soup kitchen and homeless services agency in Jackson.

Attendees rose to their feet and cheered at times during the impassioned sermons from Barber, local clergy and community activists while organizers passed around pledge cards. Joining the movement means agreeing to organize events, engage in voter mobilization in poor communities, promote the agenda on social media or deliver the campaign's demands (<https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/demands/>) to politicians.

As for the folks at Stewpot who had never heard of the campaign, “They’re not sure how to make their voices heard,” said Jill Buckley, executive director of Stewpot Community Services.

“I think that’s (true) for a lot of people but perhaps more so for people who have so little impact or control over things in their lives, that in the middle of all these other struggles, they’re not really sure how to make their voice heard or how making their voice heard will really matter to people in power,” she added.

One middle-aged man told Mississippi Today he doesn’t own an ID card — which he would need to vote — and another said he’s never been registered to vote. “I don’t know nothing about it,” he said, referring to the voting process.



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(<https://mississippitoday.org/thejungle/>)



Eric J. Shelton, Mississippi Today/ Report for America

Jill Buckley, executive director of Stewpot Community Services, talks about the Poor People’s Campaign’s involvement in Jackson’s homeless communities Thursday, Oct. 25, 2018.

Buckley has attended meetings for the Poor People’s Campaign — a movement she praises — and she received an invitation to the Wednesday rally. But no one from the campaign has visited to help engage the Stewpot community.

“We are a place where people gather who don’t have enough of this world’s goods, so Stewpot would be a good place to start organizing,” Buckley said.

Sims, a security guard, said no politician or candidate has addressed her greatest concern: the homeless people she sees downtown on her way home from from work.

“I get off of work every night to come through there and that same lady who doesn’t know how to ask for help ... is sleeping down there on that bench,” Sims said. “Either there’s not enough room or they don’t have nowhere to go. Or maybe they can’t speak for themselves. Maybe they don’t have a voice.”

"So if I had an issue to speak on or anything political, it would be to help those people," she added.

None of the candidates on the ballot for U.S. Senate — Incumbent U.S. Sens. Roger Wicker and Cindy Hyde-Smith, state Sen. Chris McDaniel, state Rep. David Baria and attorney Mike Espy — cite fighting homelessness among their official platforms.

"Many of us have a tendency to look at folk who live in shelters as being downtrodden, schizophrenic, having no ambition, they just ended up there and that's what they deserve," Iya'falola Omobola, local community activist and a co-founder of Cooperation Jackson, said during the Wednesday rally. "I want you to know that homelessness is not a state of mind. It is not a disease. It is a result of this country in which we live. I lived in a homeless shelter for nine months to the day with my daughter and thankfully it was a place who appreciated me and was able to help me uplift myself again."

Though Mississippi has some of the least expensive housing in the nation, a renter would still have to make \$14.51 an hour, nearly double minimum wage, to afford the average two-bedroom apartment, according to the [2018 National Low Income Housing Coalition report](https://nlhc.org/sites/default/files/oor/OOR_2018.pdf) (https://nlhc.org/sites/default/files/oor/OOR_2018.pdf), "Out of Reach." This is based on the standard that housing costs should not rise above 30 percent of a person's income.

Omobola now works as a case manager for the same shelter where she once lived. She said at least 10 people walk through their doors everyday.

"We have no room for them. There is no room here, period. We have got to come to an understanding when we talk about Poor People's Campaign, we're talking about everybody across the world," Omobola said.



The Poor People's Campaign launched last spring with "40 days of action" in which roughly 50,000 participants in 42 states held peaceful rallies, marched and even got arrested for refusing to leave state capitol buildings.

The demonstrations hark back to the campaign of the same name organized by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. after he famously visited the small Delta town of Marks in 1966 and saw children with no shoes.

In Mississippi, the current-day Poor People's Campaign organizers held several rallies over the summer, burned the state flag (<https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/politics/2018/06/18/mississippi-flag-burns-governor-mansion-phil-bryant/710680002/>) outside of the Governor's mansion with around two dozen onlookers, and deployed a canvassing teams in the weeks leading up to Barber's visit.

Thomas Jenkins, bishop of New Dimensions International Ministries in Jackson and a leader of the Poor People's Campaign in Mississippi, said one of their main missions is to simply arm the community with information.

"A lot of people talk about poverty with generalized terms, so we come up with the facts," Jenkins said. "Once we get the facts and put the fact out there and people see them, they can go to their congressman ... and say, 'Here are the facts and here are the policies that cause these facts to be what they are.'"

For example: In the U.S., the three richest residents ([http://In the U.S., the three richest residents possess as much wealth, \\$248.5 billion, as the bottom 50 percent of the country, or over 160 million people.](http://In the U.S., the three richest residents possess as much wealth, $248.5 billion, as the bottom 50 percent of the country, or over 160 million people.)) possess as much wealth, \$248.5 billion, as the bottom 50 percent of the country, or over 160 million people.

While productivity in the U.S. has increased by 77 percent since 1973, hourly wages have grown by 12 percent. If the federal minimum wage had grown alongside productivity, it would be more than \$20 an hour today, according to a New York Times Magazine analysis (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/11/magazine/americans-jobs-poverty-homeless.html>) on employment in poverty.

Meanwhile, the social safety net is shrinking. In 2017, the latest data available, Mississippi spent just 6.5 percent of its federal grant for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or "welfare," on direct payments to needy families. The number of families receiving this assistance shrunk from 11,377 in 2012 to 5,682 in 2017.

None of the U.S. Senate candidates reference income inequality or the growing gap between the rich and poor in their official platforms online — though Baria does support equal pay for women and Espy has touted the Earned Income Tax Credit designed to benefit low-wage workers.

Both candidates also support raising the minimum wage, Espy on his campaign website and Baria through public statements and legislation he's introduced in the House.



Eric J. Shelton, Mississippi Today/ Report for America

Jed Blackerby stands outside of Stewpot Community Services as he talks about his views on Mississippi politics Thursday, Oct. 25, 2018.

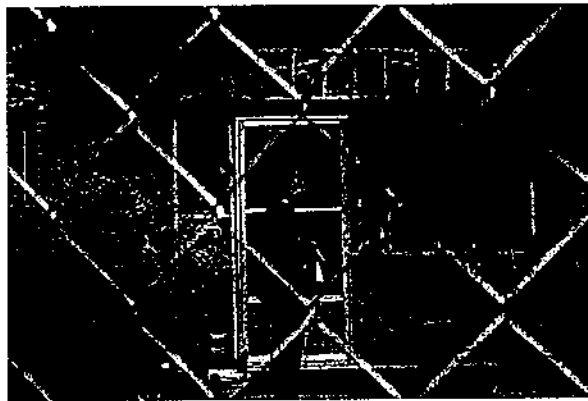
The Poor People's Campaign attributes the country's impoverished population — over 40 million people — to policies that allow a small number of people to hoard much of the nation's wealth and the lack of federal programs for the poor.

"Mississippi wants to take all their money and put it somewhere and you see all this right here," Purdon said, motioning around him to the many abandoned buildings on West Capitol Street near Stewpot. "So excuse my French, Mississippi ain't shit."

For charities and social workers, there's almost no intersection between providing assistance and political engagement.

"If you can kind of lift yourself out of the daily grind, of course you realize it (voting) is important. But so much is about making sure that people have enough food clothes and shelter — to meet those basic needs ... We perhaps don't keep 'citizen action' in the forefront of our minds," Buckley said.

Transportation is a barrier for low-income folks to see their doctor or go to a job interview, Buckley said, let alone vote on Election Day. To address this, several activist groups are offering carpooling and have even partnered with Uber (<https://www.uber.com/newsroom/drivethavote/>) to offer free rides to voters.



Eric J. Shelton, Mississippi Today/ Report for America

Rev. Erica Williams canvases neighborhoods, Tuesday, Oct. 24, as she passes out flyers about a Poor People's Campaign event at Greater Mount Calvary Baptist Church.



Eric J. Shelton, Mississippi Today/ Report for America

Danyelle Holmes leaves a flyer at a door with information about a Poor People's Campaign event at Greater Mount Calvary Baptist Church as she canvases neighborhoods Tuesday, Oct. 24, 2018.

Organizers from the Poor People's Campaign visited West Jackson Tuesday, canvassing the homes surrounding Greater Mount Calvary the day before their rally.

On one stretch of Grand Avenue, there was no one to invite to the movement. Abandoned, dilapidated homes lined the block.

Canvassers walked past the blighted properties, over discarded glass bottles on overgrown

sidewalks. All these empty homes and lots — an estimated 3,000 across Jackson — in a city with hundreds of homeless people.

Said Erica Williams, a Michigan native and national organizer for the campaign: "Why, in the richest country in the world, do we have these issues?"