

Invocation
June 11, 2018

Creator God, Author of Life, so many years ago you heard your people's crying out against the heavy hand of Pharaoh. Today we pray that you would hear the cry of your people all across this beloved nation as they cry for education, living wages, jobs, income and housing. And we ask that you hear us. Hear your people gathered here as we cry for justice in this commonwealth.

We cry out that everybody's got a right to learn. Everybody's got a right to housing. Everybody's got a right to love. Will you cry with me?

Everybody's got a right to live.

When wages have stagnated over the past 50 years although the economy has grown and there are 62 million workers who earn less than a living wage, we cry out with one voice:

Everybody's got a right to living wage jobs and the right to organize.

When three individuals in the U.S. have as much wealth as the bottom 50% of all Americans combined, cry out:

Everybody's got a right to thrive.

For the 44 million Americans who are carrying the burden of \$1.34 trillion dollars in student debt, we cry out:

Everybody's got a right to learn.

When 3.5 million people are sleeping in shelters every year and 7.4 million are on the brink of homelessness—the majority of whom are white and up to 40% of homeless youth are LGBTQIA—we cry out with one voice.

Everybody's got a right to housing.

When 38% of American households—primarily black and Latino families—have a net worth of zero dollars, we cry:

Everybody's got a right to a quality education. Everybody's got a right to living wage job. Everybody's got a right to safe, affordable housing.

Our nation's guiding documents, written by our forebearers, state: "All [people] are created, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness"

All of our religions sacred texts affirm the dignity of every person.

"We carry [the children of Adam] on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good things for them..." (*The Qur'an*)

"You shall not abuse a needy and destitute laborer, whether a fellow countryman or a stranger..." (*Jewish scriptures, Deuteronomy 24:14*)

"I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was homeless and you gave me a room, I was shivering and you gave me clothes, I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me...When you did it unto these, you did it unto me." (*Christian scripture, Matthew 25:34-36*)

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness means the right to a quality education, purposeful work that pays a living wage, and safe affordable shelter for self and family. Everybody's got a right to learn. Everybody's got a right to housing. Everybody's got a right to live.

(liturgy was created by the National Poor People's Campaign)