



**Poor People's Campaign Remarks**  
**40 Days of Moral Action - Washington DC**  
**May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018**  
**Rabbi Sharon Brous**

I am Rabbi Sharon Brous from IKAR in Los Angeles. I speak for the millions of American Jews- many of whom are here today and in state capitals around the country- who are dedicated to bending the arc of the moral universe toward justice.

The oldest and boldest formula for economic justice comes from the Hebrew Bible (Leviticus 25:10). In the 50th year, the Jubilee, the great shofar is sounded. All slaves are freed and all property reverts to its original owners. A holy RESET button is pressed. This is a sweeping and revolutionary act of economic redress rooted in the assumption that in a just society, there can be no permanent class of poor. The destitute, [the exploited](#), the downtrodden must be given a fair shot and a fair share.

Most astonishingly, we're taught that overturning economic systems benefits not only the enslaved and the poor. It keeps the whole society from breaking:

וְקִרְאתֶם דְּרוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ לְכָל-יֹשְׁבֵיהָ Proclaim liberty throughout the land... for all its inhabitants.

Think of it: the liberation of the poor is a prerequisite for the liberation of all people! I don't care what zip code you live in, how many graduate degrees you hold, how secure your pension. Your liberation is tied up in the liberation of every person who must choose between prescription drugs and groceries, who worries if the water she serves her thirsty children is tainted with lead. It is simply inconceivable that I could live freely while my neighbor lives in perpetual anxiety over whether she, or her loved ones, will be one of the thousands to die this year from poverty.

The Torah is desperate for us to learn the great secret of human existence: We are all bound up in one another. Solidarity is not a choice to opt into or out of: our shared humanity links our destinies to one another. My liberation is contingent on yours; and yours, on mine.

This movement, rooted in the understanding of interlocking injustices, insists: we cannot fight systemic poverty while ignoring white supremacy and patriarchy. And we cannot fight racism without also fighting antisemitism, Islamophobia, homo- and transphobia, xenophobia. This movement—dedicated to lifting up the widow, the orphan and the stranger—depends on all of us, and will free us all.

We're here today because our lives depend on it. Our nation is driven by fear, mired in a failed moral narrative, contaminated by corruption, hypocrisy and indecency. Our nation—the richest in the world, boasts 140 million who are poor or live in poverty (with women, children and those with disabilities disproportionately affected). We will no longer abide a politics that invisibilizes, marginalizes and steals from those who need most, a politics in which hatred, intolerance and heartlessness poison the water of our nation.

In this time of moral crisis, we live even more deeply and proudly from our core convictions.

There is a moral wave rolling across this nation. This wave is fueled by a stubborn and persistent hope and infused, always, with love. This wave is redefining what it means to be a patriot, and what it means to be a person of faith.

Today, 50 years after the assassination of Dr. King, we declare Jubilee. We lift our voices for justice. We put our bodies on the line for mercy. And together we proclaim liberty throughout the land: for the enslaved, for the poor, and for us all.

@ikar #poorpeoplescampaign