



Do Justice!!

“Do Justice, Love Kindness and Walk Humbly With Your God” Micah 6:8

A Newsletter on Social Justice Issues

Welcome to the April 2016 edition of Do Justice. This newsletter, prepared by Auckland Diocesan Social Justice Group, looks at various Social Justice Issues.

American Presidential Elections.

Last month we indicated that we would comment on the American Presidential election from a Social Justice viewpoint. This month we have included in full an editorial article by Jim Wallis from **Sojourners Magazine**.

A vote for Donald Trump is a vote for racism.

In one of the many postmortem discussions on Tuesday’s primary results, Cokie Roberts on *Morning Joe* said we were leaving race out of the questions we’re asking. She’s right. Donald Trump’s success isn’t just because of his entertaining flamboyance, his marketing brand, his experienced self-promotion, his business boasting, and his other fabricated “outsider” identities that appeal to people who genuinely feel outside of American politics and life. At its core, Donald Trump’s campaign is about race — which is why this is about far more than politics and partisanship for many of us religious leaders. When Roberts asked Trump if he was proud of the growing reports about white schoolchildren verbally attacking students of color and telling them they will soon have a wall built against them to keep them out of America, Trump reacted by saying it was a “nasty” question. No, it was one of the few good questions from journalists that morning.

Donald Trump is the race candidate, projecting white nationalism and xenophobia, appealing to fear and resentment, and always blaming people of other races for the problems of low-income white people. There is a long history of that in the United States, recently exemplified again by the KKK and other white supremacists coming into the electoral conversation and Trump’s unwillingness to be quick and clear about his rejection of racial politics.

The pundits say working class Republicans are in revolt against the Republican establishment, which makes sense as those elites are ones who have supported and benefitted from rigged market forces and globalization that have turned all our economic rewards to the top 1 percent while abandoning working and middle class people. Bernie Sanders is getting many of those angry

white votes, too, in the Democratic primaries. But Sanders doesn’t blame “the others” as Trump does; he instead focuses on the richest institutions and people in America who have managed all this — the same ones Trump loves to brag about being part of with his ostentatious lifestyle. (How many press conferences have you seen with the candidate’s expensive wines and steaks on display while he proudly lists all of his properties? Is this really happening in America?) There is also a long history of uniting working people from all races against the forces that would both ignore and divide them. One kind of populism tries to divide those who have been marginalized; the other kind tries to bring them together. Donald Trump is clearly appealing to our worst instincts, as many have said, but let’s be more clear: Donald Trump is appealing to the worst instincts of white people, and American history has shown how ugly and violent those white instincts can be. He is right when he claims to be bringing out people that have never voted before — but he leaves out that those new voters are angry white people.

At the same time we’re adding them to our voting rolls, there are active political forces directly engaged in trying to block and diminish the turnout of black, Hispanic, Asian, and Muslim voters. They’re doing so in four ways.

First, as Michelle Alexander explains in *The New Jim Crow*, political strategies now connect the deliberate mass incarceration of black and brown men and women with the subsequent and purposeful political disenfranchisement of those millions of people of color when they return to society.

Second, deliberate gerrymandering and misshaping of voting districts creates and protects white voting blocs and puts minorities together so as to not challenge those white majority blocs. After sweeping victories in 2010, newly elected Republicans in state legislatures and governors’ mansions across the country took full advantage of Census-based redistricting to gerrymander in favor of white conservatives.

Third, the passage of a slew of new voting rules and regulations enacted since 2010 are again deliberate attempts to reduce the votes of minorities and young people in what Rev. William Barber calls “**the second**

career of 'James Crow, Esq.'" In other words, after the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of the 1960s dismantled the overt Jim Crow laws that enforced segregation and denied African Americans many basic rights, Jim Crow went to law school, became the more respectable "James Crow, Esq.," and devised more sophisticated and insidious ways to disenfranchise people of color. The historic election of 2008 brought an unprecedented number of young people and people of color to the polls. The white conservative backlash came in the 2010 mid-term elections. As Myrna Pérez explains in *Sojourners* magazine:

Since the 2010 election, 21 states have instituted new voting restrictions—the biggest rollback of the right to vote since the Jim Crow era. This year will be the first presidential election with many of these new barriers in place, from requiring photo identification (which millions of Americans do not have) to curtailing early voting (which many citizens depend on to cast their ballots). On top of this, voters will go to the polls in November with the fewest federal protections against racial discrimination in half a century, due to a 2013 Supreme Court decision gutting a key provision of the Voting Rights Act.

Fourth, there are efforts to bring new white voters to the polls who are angry and resentful of America's growing racial diversity — basically, Trump's constituency.

So here is an election strategy for people of faith from all races, for people of moral conscience in both parties who are against racist policies and practices, for everyone who believes that every American should have the right and greatest opportunity to vote, and for those who believe that access is absolutely essential to the future of our democracy. This should be a moral issue, not a partisan one.

It is time for a new and powerful alliance between the faith community, white voters against racism, and democracy advocates of all political stripes to unite together to register as many racial minorities and young people as possible to vote — with the best efforts being led by leaders and organizations of color — and then to mobilize the best possible access to voting on Election Day for everyone. Perhaps it's time for clergy to show up on Election Day in polling places to help support and secure the votes of those minority voters who are under attack. These are some moral marching orders for election 2016. We have about 8 months to do them.¹

What's in a word?

Over the last few years the debates about **State** Housing have been changed to **Social** Housing. Why?

For over a century it has been widely accepted by a large majority of the population that the Government has a responsibility for Housing in general and housing for the poor in particular. Hence **State Housing**. Now there are some political parties who no longer accept the consensus

view so have tried to change the playing field by talking about **Social Housing** which somehow spreads the responsibility for housing to other groups in society including corporations, social service agencies. Furthermore Government policy now specifically discourages local authorities, who had a specific responsibility for the housing of the elderly, from providing accommodation for the needy.

The fact that the Auckland Council is in the process of "outsourcing" the management of accommodation for the elderly to an NGO as the NGO is eligible for a government subsidy that the Council is not eligible for appears to have Alice in Wonderland overtones.

The various local authorities that came together to make the Auckland Council had many years' experience in providing "pensioner flats" and other accommodation mainly for the elderly. Surely this experience has not been lost so that the Council can no longer be trusted to efficiently managed pensioner flats? And what about the many local authorities around the country that are having to divest themselves of these responsibilities, have they suddenly become incompetent?

No, the change from **State** to **Social** is ideological, an ideology that is only interested in protecting the 1%.

Up Coming events.

- **"Are Labourers worthy of their Hire" The Church and the Living Wage.** The Auckland Living Wage Faith Group are presenting this workshop on Saturday 9th April 2016. 9:30am to 12:30pm at **Trinity Kingsland Methodist Church 400 New North Road, Kingsland. All welcome. Please RSVP:**

cissy.rock@livingwage.org.nz
for catering purposes.

- **New Zealand Housing Summit on 16 April 2016 at the Western Springs Garden Community Hall on Great North Road, Auckland. Starts at 10:00am finish about 4:30pm**

The following key issues have been identified as needing the most urgent action:

- Stopping the sale or transfer of state houses
- Building more state houses
- Controlling rents
- Insisting on a "warrant of fitness" for all rental properties.

Individuals and groups concerned about these issues, especially the sale or transfer of state and council housing, are warmly invited. Lunch will be provided (gold coin). Contact Jean Brooke's jeanbrookes97@xtra.co.nz for more information.

¹ : <https://sojo.net/articles/4-ways-political-forces-steal-elections-and-how-we-can-stop-it#sthash.M1wwwGEw.dpuf>