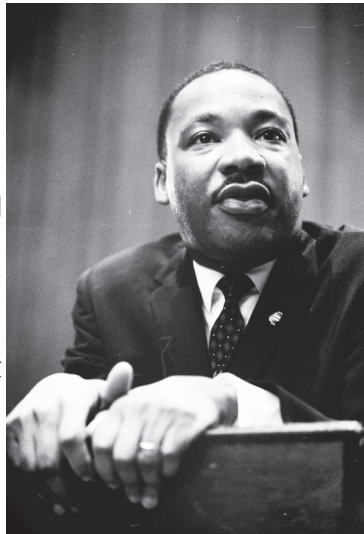


"We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life; longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. So I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."



— Martin Luther King, Jr., in Memphis in support of striking public-sector workers, the day before his assassination

Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday was approved as a federal holiday in 1983, and all 50 states made it a state government holiday by 2000. Officially, King was born on January 15, 1929 in Atlanta, but the King holiday is marked every year on the third Monday in January.

# The unfinished labor of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.

The United States honors and celebrates Martin Luther King Jr. the third Monday every January, but the version of King we hear most about has been sanitized. We hear a lot about King the dreamer, King the integrationist, King the civil rights icon.

Too often neglected is the King who hungered for economic justice, who stood with Black workers in union struggles, who called for a massive government jobs program. That King, in the final days of his life, was organizing a Poor People's Movement — to march on Washington, D.C., and set up a tent city there until the government got serious about ending

poverty. That King was the target of dismissive newspaper editorials and surveillance by a paranoid FBI.

Even when we hear about the 1963 March on Washington — at which he made the "I Have A Dream" speech — it's too often forgotten what they were marching *for*. The march — the largest demonstration in U.S. history up to that point — wasn't just for an end to racial discrimination. It was the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom." Not just freedom, but jobs. Not just an end to racial discrimination in housing, but a guarantee of decent housing for all Americans. Not just an end to racial discrim-

ination in employment, but an increase in the minimum wage to \$2-an-hour — which would be over \$17 in today's dollars. Not just an end to voting restrictions, but a comprehensive program to train and employ all unemployed Americans.

Those were King's goals in 1963, and they remained his goals in 1968 when he was assassinated. Too many of them today remain undone.

So this MLK Day, let's not congratulate ourselves on all that he and we achieved. Let's take up his unfinished labor. Let's demand that government intervene to reverse growing economic inequality.

## The 10 demands of the March on Washington

1. Comprehensive and effective civil rights legislation from the present Congress, without compromise or filibuster, to guarantee all Americans access to all public accommodations, decent housing, adequate and integrated education, and the right to vote
2. Withholding of federal funds from all programs in which discrimination exists.
3. Desegregation of all school districts in 1963.
4. Enforcement of the Fourteenth Amendment, reducing Congressional representation of states where citizens are disfranchised.
5. A new Executive Order banning discrimination in all housing supported by federal funds.
6. Authority for the Attorney General to institute injunctive suits when any Constitutional right is violated.
7. A massive federal program to train and place all unemployed workers — Black and White — on meaningful and dignified jobs at decent wages.
8. A national minimum wage act that will give all Americans a decent standard of living.
9. A broadened Fair Labor Standards Act to include all areas of employment which are presently excluded.
10. A federal Fair Employment Practices Act barring discrimination by federal, state, and municipal governments, and by employers, contractors, employment agencies, and trade unions.

## Environmental groups say green jobs need to pay a living wage

At least 16 environmental groups have signed a letter to Oregon legislators in support of a call by the Oregon State Building Trades Council and affiliates to require developers benefiting from state tax subsidies to meet labor and workforce standards.

It started when members of Climate Jobs PDX, a project of Portland Jobs with Justice, read in the *Labor Press* that most recent renewable energy projects in Northeastern Oregon have been built by nonunion, out-of-state firms with nonunion crews from outside Oregon — despite receiving generous tax breaks from the state.

As of 2019, about a dozen utility-scale wind and solar projects in Northeastern Oregon were saving over \$30 million a year total thanks to the Oregon's Strategic Investment Program (SIP) property tax break, a 15-year property tax exemption.

Climate Jobs PDX approached other environmental groups to sign a letter calling for companies that benefit from state tax subsidies to be required to meet high road labor and workforce standards, including paying prevailing wages, taking part in registered apprenticeship training, and hiring locally and hiring women, people of color, and veterans. Groups signing the letter to lawmakers include Sierra Club, Oregon League of Conservation Voters, Sunrise, 350PDX, OPAL, and Verde.



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