The Portland Observer

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Overcoming the Supreme Court's Setbacks

Restoring the right to vote

BY MARGE BAKER

Last year, the Supreme Court decimated one of the civil rights movement's crowning achievements. Now, it's time for Congress

together and make our laws on voting rights. strong enough to protect our most important right: our vote.

Many folks who lived and fought through the civil rights movement weren't just frusdecision in Shelby County v. Holder, which undermined a core provision useless.



provision of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

They were heartbroken.

the Justice Department to

sion didn't eliminate the Justice locations, these restrictions fall drafting the new legislation, Department's preclearance authority itself, but it removed the elderly, students, and the poor. the chair of the House Judiciary formula that determined where Now it's up to Congress to solve Committee have decided to block trated by the Supreme Court's it could use that authority, rendering the entire preclearance

In doing so, the Court opened pair the damage and put the ing rights and very bad news for

thority to block some of the ments that many eligible voters changes are clear and fair. to pick up the pieces, put it back country's most egregious attacks don't have and can't easily get.

the problem.

left room for Congress to re-

the gates for a flood of new laws law's protections back into that restrict the right to vote effect. And a bipartisan group palities have pushed through leg- Voting Rights Amendment Act pre-approve changes to vot- islation making it harder for mil- . It is a flexible, modern, naing laws in areas with a lions of people to cast ballots. tionwide solution to combating history of discrimination at States have cut back on early voting discrimination. And it the ballot box. For nearly voting, made it harder to regis- would provide new tools to stop half a century, the Justice ter, and begun requiring specific voter suppression and ensure Department used that au- forms of identification - docu- that any proposed election

Unfortunately, after a biparti-From shortening the hours the san process in which members The Supreme Court's deci- polls are open to moving polling of both parties had a hand in heaviest on people of color, the House Republican leaders and the fix and refuse even to hold The Supreme Court's ruling hearings on the legislation.

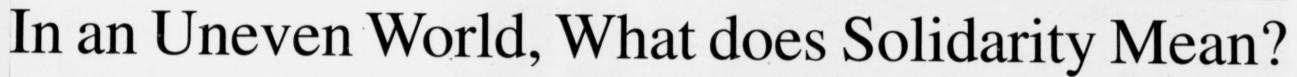
our democracy.

PINION

Voting rights shouldn't be a The ruling gutted the Voting through a range of methods. of representatives have been partisan issue, and representa-Rights Act provision that required Since Shelby, states and munici- working to do just that with the tives from both parties should be applauded for doing the hard work of repairing one of our nation's most important laws. Now it's up to ordinary people across the political spectrum to take a lesson from the civil rights movement and call out the lawmakers standing in the way of an important bill.

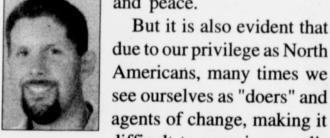
> With grassroots pressure, there's no reason the Voting Rights Amendment Act can't become law this year, restoring and strengthening our civil rights protections.

Marge Baker is the executive vice president of People That's very bad news for vot- for the American Way.



Understand privilege as starting point

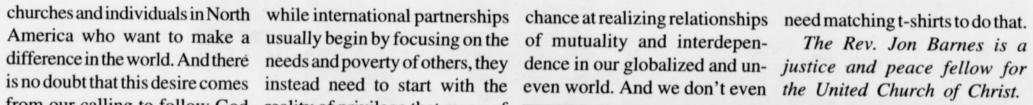
BY REV. JON BARNES I recently returned from a trip visiting international partners in



from our calling to follow God reality of privilege that many of and to work for a world of justice us in the West take for granted. and peace.

She goes on to note that "be-But it is also evident that cause a first-world ethic of solidue to our privilege as North darity begins from a position of Americans, many times we privilege rather than a position of marginalization, analyzing and understanding privilege must be its starting point" (Peters, Solidarity Ethics: Transformation in a Globalized World, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014). Yes, there are needs around the world. And yes, God calls us to minister to the "least of these." But when our solidarity with others begins with the premise of their poverty, it is very difficult for us to relate in any form other than donors or patrons. We must begin to understand that in a globalized world, it is not always our direct assistance or direction that others need. Rather we must recognize that our culture of hyper individualism and over consumption is tied, both directly and indirectly, to the social realities and deprivations faced by millions around the world (including here in the United States). If we begin with our privilege as the starting point so that we might be encouraged to fight for change here, we may just have a

America who want to make a usually begin by focusing on the of mutuality and interdepen-





Haiti. On the flight to Port au Prince, passengers boarding in

that the plane leaving Atlanta was full of church groups going on mission trips. One t-shirt read "GO.LOVE.HAITI!" Another. with the words emblazoned on a cross, said "Mission to the Least of These."

When my wife and lived and worked on South Africa, we of the comments we heard over would see the same phenomenon on planes bound for especially after the 2010 earth-Johannesburg, many of the shirts referring to the need to "save" Africa.

others, matching t-shirts and all, may be easy targets for us to mock. But I wonder if we mainline Protestants are that different? At Global Ministries, we partner with international churches and organizations in relationships of mutuality and solidarity.

In addition, we have the op-

agents of change, making it difficult to experience solimatching t-shirts made it evident darity and learn from these relationships.

> When we meet with international partners, one of the most important lessons we can learn is how U.S. political, economic, and military policies affect the lives of the most vulnerable.

During the visit to Haiti, one and over is how Western aid, quake, has actually served to undermine Haiti's ability to respond to the many issues cur-These group journeys to help rently facing the country.

> Rev. Patrick Villier, president of the National Spiritual Council of Churches of Haiti, noted that true partnership is not about building independence in either Haiti or the United States, but should instead be rooted in our mutual interdependence.

Similarly, in Solidarity Ethics, portunity to work with many Rebecca Todd Peters writes that



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