

How We Got Here, What We Face, and Where We Go From Here

By Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II

In any nonviolent campaign, Dr. King said there must be four basic steps: 1) gathering facts about injustice, 2) negotiation, 3) self-purification, and 4) direct action.

Our Moral Revival tour spent nine months in 2016 listening to testimony of directly affected people across America. They expressed real fear, naming ways that extreme policy at the state and federal level both have and could impact their lives. A part of today is dedicated to listening to these testimonies.

In response to the real harms that our most vulnerable sisters and brothers have experienced since Trump's election and the potential harm of extreme policy proposals, over 10,000 moral leaders and directly-impacted persons requested that Trump come down from his tower to meet with us. We have attempted negotiation only to see that the goodwill efforts of respected elders like Rep. John Lewis have been met with contempt and attack.

So we have dedicated this Inauguration Day to self-purification and preparation for nonviolent direct action.

As we prepare ourselves, I want us to take time to consider how we got here, what we face as a nation, and where we who are committed to a moral agenda must go from here. Thank you for setting aside this day to prepare yourself for the months and years ahead.

How We Got Here

Today American bids farewell to the first African-American President—a man of integrity who pulled us out of recession and attempted to give health care to millions. As we fast and focus ourselves, a con man who did little to spurn endorsement by forces of xenophobia and white supremacy will become president. It is impossible to react to this moment with anything less than revulsion and profound anxiety.

Trump is vulgarity unbounded, and his inauguration strikes fear into the hearts of the vulnerable, the weak, and, above all, the many varieties of Other whom he has so deeply insulted. The African-American Other. The Hispanic Other. The female Other. The Jewish and Muslim Other.

Trump ran his campaign sensing the feeling of dispossession and anxiety among millions of voters—white voters, in the main. And many of those voters—not all, but many—followed Trump because they saw that this slick performer, once a relative

cipher when it came to politics, was more than willing to assume their resentments, their fury, their sense of a new world that conspired against their interests. He articulated their fears rooted racism and classism, but offered no real answers. He merely said, “You are right to be afraid and very afraid. Obama is the boogey man of coming diversity that will undo the world you grew up knowing and I alone can save you.”

Some of you are like me: when you saw results come in, you said what Jesus said to the fig tree: “Damn.”

But while we do, indeed, face a dire situation, this is not new. Trumpism is as American as apple pie. There could be no Donald Trump without America’s first black president. Brother Van Jones is right: we have experienced a “Whitelash.” And we must be clear: every stride toward freedom in American history has been met with this same backlash.

Indeed, Jesus himself met just such a backlash after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. This is the context of the new commandment that is recorded in John’s gospel. This brown-skinned Palestinian Jew built a movement from the ground up—from Bethlehem up, from the Galilee up. He started free clinics everywhere he went, and he never charged a leper a co-pay. Everywhere he went, Jesus was sowing a revolution of love.

But when he got to Jerusalem, he met a backlash. He met some religious folk who wanted to “Make Israel Great Again.” He met some Pharisees who were determined to take back their country by any means necessary. Jesus met a democratic election before Pontius Pilate that chose Bar-Abbas for freedom and sent him to the cross. No, the pattern is not new. But we would do well to pay attention to its contours in our context. For the only thing that can meet and challenge a revolution of hate is a revolution of love. In these times, we need to know what the radical love ethic of Jesus can look like in America’s public square.

Rick Lischer, who wrote a great book on *The Preacher King*, once said that Dr. King didn’t get in trouble for preaching love, but for preaching it in all the wrong places. If my brother Cornel West is right that justice is what love looks like in public, then the public square can be a dangerous place to preach love in times like these.

But America has a name for facing the love question in our public life. We faced it in the shadow of slavery and amid the wreckage of the Civil War. “Reconstruction,” we called it. African-Americans joined hands with whites in the North and in the South who were willing to see one another as allies. Within four years after the end of the Civil War, white and black alliances controlled every state house in the South. Together, they elected new leaders, some white, many of them African-Americans, former slaves. Almost all of the Southern legislatures were controlled by either a predominantly black alliance or a strong interracial Fusion coalition. They hammered out new constitutions from a deeply moral perspective. Last December

6th was the 150th anniversary of the 13th Amendment, which ended slavery and led to the 14th Amendment, which requires states to provide equal protection of the laws; and the 15th Amendment, which guarantees the right to vote regardless of race, color or previous condition of servitude. Upon these we later get the 19th Amendment that guaranteed women the right to vote.

These Fusion coalitions 150 years ago also built the first public schools and in state constitutions gave all persons a constitutional right to public education—something that to this day has not been done in the federal constitution. In the state constitution of North Carolina they stated that “beneficent provision to the poor the orphan and the widow is the first duty of a civilized and Christian state.” They included labor rights and the right to “enjoyment of the fruit of your own labor” in 1868, long before the Knights of Labor came south with their first Southern campaign. They knew then –black and white together – from a moral Fusion perspective, that labor without living wages is just a different form of slavery. They expanded access to the ballot and wrote a new fairness into criminal justice. This is what love looked like in public.

But in four years, the experiment of the First Reconstruction faced powerful and immoral opposition. And we must understand that opposition then to understand America right now.

Many former Confederates saw black citizenship and interracial alliances—Fusion coalitions--as inherently illegitimate. They organized the Ku Klux Klan to terrorize white Fusionists whom they viewed as race traitors. They attacked black leaders. Conservatives began to wail against taxes. The cry about cutting taxes was an effort to end the First Reconstruction by keeping the state governments unable to fulfill the promises of the post-slavery economy and to lift up the former slaves. They wanted to keep the Fusion coalition from expanding opportunity and enlarging democracy and supporting public education. They could not outright deny, but did abridge the 15th Amendment. They worked to take over the courts. The enemies of the First Reconstruction slowly took over the courts and in 1883 they nullified the Civil Rights Act of 1875.

What was this group claiming to do? Listen to this ancient war cry that you can hear echoed today. Why were they doing all of this -- rolling back voting rights, taking away criminal justice reform, undoing equal protection under law? They wanted to “take back America.” They said “we came to redeem America.” Look at that word “redeem”-- they used moral messages for immoral activity. Sound familiar? And by the turn of the century, all of the gains of the First Reconstruction had been overturned.

A politics of agape was met by a backlash of hate and fear. What Jesus experienced in first-century Palestine, black and white preachers who worked together to forge Reconstruction in 19th century America suffered in this soil. My brother James Cone has named the deep connection well: “the cross and the lynching tree.”

But then in the decades following World War II, we saw the rise of a Second Reconstruction. Blacks and whites, Latinos, young people came together willing to march and to suffer, and built a Fusion movement with deep moral underpinnings, with leaders like Dr. King and Jewish rabbis who spoke of the urgent moral necessity of now. The language in the streets and the pulpits matched. From their jail cells they changed the language in the halls of power. Presidents and Senators, legislators and governors, editors and poets, all began to write and talk with moral urgency about the need to Reconstruction.

With the Second Reconstruction, we saw desegregation of public schools, Medicaid, Medicare, and the expansion of Social Security to finally include women and minorities. We got economic opportunity, the War on Poverty, the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, an increase in the minimum wage -- Fusion politics begins to gain tremendous ground. This Second Reconstruction required the blood sacrifice -- the blood sacrifice -- of whites, blacks, Jews, Christians and others fighting against Jim Crow, in order to pass the Civil Rights of 1964. Two years later, after Bloody Sunday in Selma, we passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, introduced by Mike Mansfield, a Democrat, and Everett Dirksen, a Republican. Its language is clear: to enforce the provisions of the 15th Amendment passed during the First Reconstruction. And this bill increased African-American voting participation and made it possible for African-Americans to be elected once again to political office in the South. In 1966, for the first time since the 19th century, a substantial number of blacks voted in in the South. We still had all kinds of problems with gerrymandering and second primaries, but it was the moral dawn of a new day.

During the Second Reconstruction, there came a moral commitment to lift the poor through a politics of love. Head Start. K-12 funding. Pell Grants for higher education -- anybody know anything about that around here? All of these programs began to enjoy public support. The War on Poverty had three parts: the first boosted wages through education and job training. The second part provided income support particularly for single mothers and [the] elderly. And the third part was to create a system of government healthcare to the elderly and the poor. So while you have the Civil Rights Movement breaking down racial barriers, the Second Reconstruction is helping everybody: the poor, women, children, and the elderly. Go back and read the speeches of Kennedy and Johnson when they talked about the Civil Rights Act or the Voting Rights Act or the War on Poverty, and they used words like "the poor" and they used words like "moral."

In 1960, before the War on Poverty, more than a third of American senior citizens lived in gut wrenching poverty. And 30% of our nation's kids. By 1975, even with all of the attempts to undermine the War on Poverty, child poverty had been cut in half and poverty among seniors was reduced by 60%. These issues weren't framed as Democrat or Republican, left or right, but they were championed at the deepest level from a moral perspective.

Just before his assassination Dr. King brought the moral visions of the civil rights movement and the War on Poverty together in his 1968 Poor People's Campaign. In one of his last speeches, King said there's a schizophrenia in America, there are two Americas: one beautiful America where millions drink the milk of prosperity and the honey of equality. But then there's this other America, a country of grinding poverty that transforms the buoyancy of hope into the fatigue of despair. And he used that as a moral framework for announcing the Poor People's Campaign. He did not live to see it.

The conservatives revolted against this Second Reconstruction. Once more, the politics of love was met with a backlash of hate and fear. They turned to violence and terror and they killed our leaders and four little girls and Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman. And then they launched the "Southern Strategy" and guess what the mantra of the Southern Strategy was? Listen again: "We must take our country back, we must redeem our country." I know y'all are religion professors. There's probably even a few preachers in the house tonight. "Redemption" is a theological term. But it once again became the language of the enemies of Reconstruction. The progress once popular became racialized. Programs that were benefiting black and white people were suddenly racialized. Backlash. Entrenchment. Attacking black leaders. Tax cuts to take away the tax base. Attacks on school integrations and instead draining public education dollars into private, segregated schools. The electoral attacks were developed by Kevin Phillips, a Nixon campaign aide and Republican strategist. He called "the Southern Strategy." The secret to American politics was knowing "who hates who," he said, and the Southern Strategy was designed to persuade Southern whites to leave the Democratic Party out of their opposition to the civil rights movement. Its success brought about the end of the Second Reconstruction.

In fact, in a revealing interview Republican strategist Lee Atwater described how it worked. He said this: "You start out in 1954 saying 'nigger nigger nigger' but in 1968 you cannot say 'nigger' -- that hurts you, that backfires. So you say stuff like 'forced busing,' 'states rights,' all that stuff. You're getting abstract now. You talk about cutting taxes. And these things sound totally economic, but the byproduct of them is that blacks get hurt worse than whites and whites blame their problems on blacks and those whom they are taught are getting free things for nothing." Atwater would manage George Herbert Walker Bush's successful run for the Presidency in 1988, deploying the Willie Horton ad that used frightening images of a black rapist to drive home its political wedge. He then became national GOP chair and he said that the target of the Southern Strategy was to develop a solid South where the majority of Southern whites would resist and repel any Fusion political alliances between African-Americans and whites.

Atwater acknowledged that the Southern Strategy originated with the presidential campaigns of Alabama segregationist Gov. George Wallace. Wallace did not win but he taught the new conservative extremists how to use the language of anti-elitism,

anti-communism and racial code words to inflame white voters reeling with fear and hatred of the black freedom movement, the anti-war movement, the counter-cultural movement, the women's liberation movement.

Wallace lost, but Richard Nixon learned how to out-Wallace Wallace. And if you think Donald Trump's campaign rhetoric was unprecedented, just go back and read George Wallace's speech in Madison Square Garden in 1968.

Strategist Kevin Phillips convinced Nixon that not only would they recruit the white South but he said so-called "white ethnics" in the North were also ripe for the picking, correctly predicting for example, that certain persons, even Democrats in New York, would turn Republican because they didn't like the Jews and the Negroes who run the New York Democratic Party. The South would become the base but the Southern Strategy would be used around the country.

And who finally capitalizes on this and concludes the end of the second Reconstruction? First, Charles Koch, when in 1973 according to an article in the New York Times, he had a meeting and said we're not going to invest anymore in "Messiah" candidates, we're going to invest in building a movement from the ground up, working to take over the courts, working to build think-tanks, working to change the narrative. And then in 1980, Ronald Reagan used this to the fullest. Reagan had become governor of California attacking the University of California at Berkeley, Martin Luther King, and the Black Panthers. He had become a champion of the movement to repeal the 1964 Rumford Act that prevented property owners from refusing to rent or sell property on the basis of race or religion.

When he got the 1980 Republican presidential nomination, where did his staff choose to open his campaign? Philadelphia, Mississippi -- known for only one thing: it was the place where three civil rights workers, Goodman, Chaney and Schwerner, had been murdered. He gave a speech and said that we have to take our country back. He calls the Civil Rights Act of '64 bad legislation. He said the Voting Rights Act was a humiliation to the South. He told the tales of welfare queens who drove fleets of Cadillacs purchased with food stamps and he claimed to have been in a grocery store line beside "a strapping young buck with a fist full of food stamps and a stack of porterhouse steaks." And using the language of the Southern Strategy, he won a landslide in the South and won all over the country. And the Second Reconstruction was for all intents and purposes, over.

We've glossed over this history too often. And so we're shocked by Donald Trump. We can't make sense of what's happening in front of us because, somehow, we've failed to see that this has been happening all along.

The Challenge We Face

The election of Donald Trump demonstrates that we as a nation have a heart problem. When America is weighed in the balance of God's desire for love and

justice, we are found wanting. We have seen again a theme which recurs too often in the American story—that we go forward only to step backwards, that every stride toward freedom is met by a backlash of hate and fear.

Here in the 21st century, racism and economic fear still too often conjure a powerful magic which compels this nation to seek safety in hating the other and security in the false nativism that has failed us before and will fail us again.

Long before any Russian hack, the American electoral process was compromised by racism and fear. The Southern Strategy's divide and conquer tactics touch something deep in our social DNA—a fundamental fear which is ever seeking to come forth and masquerade as normal.

One of the most under-reported stories of 2016 was that America experienced its first federal election in half a century without the full protections of the Voting Rights Act. We had 25 debates during the presidential primaries and general election and not a single question about the attack on voting rights. Fourteen states had new voting restrictions in place for the first time in 2016—including crucial swing states like Wisconsin and Virginia.

On Election Day, there were 868 fewer polling places in states with a long history of voting discrimination, like Arizona, Texas, and North Carolina. These changes impacted hundreds of thousands of voters, yet received almost no coverage. In North Carolina, as Joan Walsh reported, black turnout decreased 16 percent during the first week of early voting because “in 40 heavily black counties, there were 158 fewer early polling places.”

We must be equally clear that this is not just about a president. An entire web of money and influence has been working to tie up American democracy. Even as the divide between the rich and the poor is at its widest in our nation's history, our electorate is growing more diverse every year. Wealthy oligarchs know they cannot hold onto power in truly democratic elections; so we are witnessing an all-out assault—foreign and domestic—on the very heart of our democracy.

And this is not simply about the preservation of a government conceived by human beings. It is, fundamentally, about the well being of creation and the survival of those creatures who bear God's very image. We live in a moment when millions desperately need a government and society with a heart. Millions of Americans need health care, living wages, and protection from xenophobia, systemic racism, homophobia, religious bigotry, and climate destruction. This is about whether a government of the people and by the people will in fact serve the people. It's about whether we, as a people, can reconstruct the heart of our democracy.

We have been clear throughout our Moral Revival, which visited 22 states in 2016, that all of our faith and constitutional traditions point us toward the same fundamental moral values. We delivered our Higher Ground Moral Declaration to

both the Republican and Democratic National Conventions, and we held Moral Day of Action rallies at 32 state houses in September 12th to deliver it to sitting governors and candidates for statewide office.

All across the nation, we made clear what we believe a moral agenda should be: Number one, we want to secure pro-labor, anti-poverty, anti-racist policies that insure economic sustainability by fighting for full employment, living wages, the alleviation of despaired unemployment, a green economy, labor rights, affordable housing, targeted empowerment zones, strong safety nets for the poor, fair policies for immigrants, infrastructure development, and ceasing war-baiting and extreme militarism, and fair tax reform.

Then we should have educational equality -- that every child should receive high quality, well-funded, constitutionally diverse public education, access to community college and university.

Third, we should say we want healthcare for all—not just the Affordable Care Act, but just everybody having healthcare. We should defend Social Security and Medicare and we should protect women's health -- women's health -- and environmental justice should be at the center of a moral agenda.

We should also fight for fairness in the criminal justice system by addressing the continuing inequalities in the system that not only affect black people but black people, brown people and poor white people.

And then finally, we should provide for equal protection under the law. We should say that we're going to protect and expand voting rights, women's rights, LGBTQ rights, immigrant rights and we will never give up on the fundamental principal of equal protection under the law. For there even to be allowed on the stage a discussion about ending the 14th Amendment is sinister and unholy and we should be challenging it with the deepest part of our moral fiber.

What Is Needed for Moral Resistance

In light of this Moral Agenda, we wrote to Mr. Trump saying, “We do not believe that these are left or right issues. They are right or wrong issues. And while we know no human being is perfect, we wish to speak with you about these moral issues because far too much is at stake for you to succumb to your worst demons while in public office.”

Some things we stand for no matter who is in office.

We must build a movement that declares, “Standing down is not an option.”

We must bring poor people together—black, white, and Latino; Christian, Muslim, Jewish; people of faith and people who trust in a moral universe; gay and straight; civil rights and labor.

A moral, fusion movement is the only thing that has ever moved this nation forward. And we declare in the face of mean-spirited regressive forces that will bow to nothing but Mammon, “We will not stand down! We’re going forward together, not one step back!”

This is our resolution for 2017. We cannot stand down.

From the abolitionists to those who fought lynching to those who pushed back against Jim Crow, fascism, and apartheid in the 20th century, we stand in a long line of witnesses who declared, “We cannot stand down. For us, it is a matter of faith. As the New Testament letter to the Hebrews says, “we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.”

This movement must build a platform to lift the voices of every day people. A moral reconstruction movement must put a face on these injustices. It's not about speaking for people. It's about making sure that people have a platform so that when you say such and such number people died from [the lack of] healthcare, there's somebody there who needs healthcare talking about it.

And we have to recognize the centrality of race. If we're going to deal with any issue America, you can't find a way to step around race. Racism is America's original sin. And a Third Reconstruction must be decidedly anti-racist and anti-poverty both at the same time. When somebody asks you "is it race or class?" you say, "it is." That's your answer -- it is. You can never separate the two. Our class divisions can't be understood apart from a society built on white supremacy. And there's a difference between talking about white people -- I don't do that -- versus white supremacy. Because today, you even have some people who are black promoting policies that fuel and undergird white supremacy. So the critique has to be anti-racist/anti-poverty no matter what the face looks like when the policy is put forth. We've got to tell the truth about racism. We've got to understand. The people who elected Donald Trump aren't racists. They are as offended by the Klan as you are.

Eduardo Bonita-Silva wrote a book called *Racism Without Racists* where he concludes that there are no racists today. We don't have a real race problem because people have learned and perfected the language of the Southern Strategy. Bonita-Silva says that there are no racists today, but that only the willfully deaf cannot hear the dog-whistle politics of race: for instance when you call the President a “food stamp President,” a juvenile, unfit, a lie, a socialist and un-American. But even deeper than just the name-calling it's the politics, because racism is a power term, it's not just about prejudice. It's about the ability to implement your prejudice in public policy, in real ways that affect people's real lives. So we can never have a truly new South and a new country and a Third Reconstruction until we have a

grown up reality check and a diagnostic exam about the power of the reincarnated vestiges of the white Southern Strategy that continues to hold a lock on so much of the political consciousness of America and thereby ends up hurting black, white, Latinos, and our very future.

We must help people face this question: What is it that causes many whites that are poor -- since the census say 18.9 million whites are poor, that's 8 million more poor white people than black and 5 million more than Latino -- what causes many whites particularly in the South and sometimes in areas of the North to be against programs like Food Stamps and Medicaid when mostly whites are using them? What causes you to be against living wages when 400 families, according to the book *The Price of Inequality* make an average of \$97,000 an hour? What causes you to elect politicians that represent the poorest counties in the country north, south, east and west, who vote against programs like living wages and labor rights and unemployment benefits, and earned income tax credits that Ronald Reagan supported? What is it? We need a grown-up conversation about race and class. What is it? What is it? What is it in the South where you have the most uninsured people, you also have the most states denying Medicaid expansion. But as with the Southern Strategy, it's not just the South: eleven states outside the South have blocked Medicaid expansion. That's millions of people without access to healthcare—people dying unnecessarily because of that crazy policy.

What moral vision makes you stand against programs that preserve rural hospitals that serve construction workers, healthcare workers, farmers, and veterans, many of them white? In my state, we denied Medicaid expansion -- 500,000 people are being denied--346,000 of them are white. And white extremists supported politicians who are against the healthcare that would help the majority of white people. What myth, what myth has allowed you to support re-segregating high poverty schools? What myth makes you think that privatizing schools with public money is the way to go? What moral vision says to you it's safer to have a society where police feel they can assassinate people on the spot?

And then lastly, we must have a movement that focuses on voter registration, education, and voter participation. We ought to be bothered that we have had a three-year filibuster in Congress -- Strom Thurmond only filibustered a little over 24 hours and 30 minutes -- we've had three and half years and the Congress has refused to fix Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act which is their duty under the 15th Amendment. And here's why. Because an attack on voting rights is not a black issue. If you understand this history of reconstruction and deconstruction and how always to deconstruct the country there was an attack on voting rights, the fact is that the attack on voting rights is an attack on women. It's an attack on public education. It's an attack on labor rights. It's an attack on progressive policy, which is why everybody -- black, white, and every organization who believes in progress -- should be unified in demanding that the Voting Rights Act Amendment Act be passed that's sitting in Congress right now. That should be a moral outrage that 50 years after Selma, the Voting Rights Act has been taken from us, leaving us with less

protection than we had in 1966. This is not just an attack on black people, it's an attack on the power of Fusion politics. It's about being able to racially redistrict without any challenges on the front end. It's about being able to roll back progress in voting without any challenge on the front end. It is about stopping a Reconstruction of the nation that's gonna come -- they really can't stop it, but they're trying to slow it down. Slow it down. And we ought to be deeply concerned.

Which is why if we want a revolution of love toward a Third Reconstruction we need to demonstrate a commitment to resist the one-moment mentality. When you check the records, the same people who are fighting environmental justice are fighting public education. Same people fighting public education are fighting Medicaid expansion. Same people fighting Medicaid expansion are fighting women's health. The same people fighting women's health are fighting the LGBTQ community. The same people fighting the LGBTQ community are fighting the labor rights community. So if they are cynical enough to be together, we ought to be courageous and smart enough to come together. Not for one march or protest, but for a long-term movement.

We are taking this day to revisit Dr. King's methods because he learned in practice and from those who'd come before him that nonviolent social change requires long, hard and sustained work. It takes research, development of solutions, and on-going commitment. It demands far more than bringing folk together to march and wave banners.

Dr. King's involvement in massive demonstrations is invariably touted as his ultimate method for change, but nothing could be further from the truth. Many activists falsely believe we who are really concerned can create moments that inspire sudden change. But this is not how social change happens. We must look beyond feel-good moments to build a sustained, grassroots movement.

Such movements always begin in the least likely places. This weekend's massive rallies in America's cities must inspire us to go back to our communities and houses of worship—to our families and to our workplaces—to begin organizing moral fusion coalitions focused on state legislatures. Even as Trumpism dominates the headlines, the worst policy violence in America is still happening at the state government level. And if we do not challenge voter suppression and gerrymandering at the state level, we have no hope of changing Congress and the White House.

Moral fusion organizing takes time, which means we have to commit to keep going even when it doesn't look like we are winning. When we started fighting back with Moral Mondays in North Carolina, they said it didn't matter because the extremists had all the power. They'd taken control of all three branches of government, and they weren't backing down an inch. But we stood together and declared, "Standing down is not an option!" And we went into the fire together. We marched together

and prayed together. We went to jail together and we registered voters together. We petitioned our legislators and sued them in court together.

And we won. Just a few weeks ago, when Governor Pat McCrory finally conceded the election, the extremists in North Carolina had to cede control of the executive and judicial branches. I know the national news highlighted the undemocratic power grab the legislature waged in response. But that's not the whole story. Because a federal court already ruled their authority illegitimate because of racial gerrymandering. We've got a special election coming in 2017. What we're witnessing is the last gasps of a dying order.

In South Africa, during the struggle against apartheid, they used to say, "Only a dying mule kicks the hardest."

Today's inauguration is not the end. It is, instead, a sign of just how much is at stake in our common life. They would not be fighting us this hard if they did not know our strength. Today we center ourselves. We keep our focus and maintain discipline. America is in the throws of a Third Reconstruction, and we must learn from those who've gone before us even as we say to one another, "It's our time now."

We are going forward together, not one step back.

For a deeper analysis of Reconstruction history and moral fusion organizing, see my book with Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, [*The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement Is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear*](#).

If you would like to organize a study of these themes in your community, the UU Common Read has created this resource for group study and reflection: http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/thirdrecon_discguide.pdf