

DECLARATION OF AREKIA BENNETT-SCOTT

I, Arekia Bennett-Scott, declare the following under penalty of perjury pursuant to 28 U.S.C § 1746:

1. My name is Arekia Bennett-Scott. I am the Executive Director of Mississippi Votes.

My Organization and the JXN Undivided Coalition

2. Mississippi Votes was founded in 2017. Mississippi Votes is a nonprofit organization led by young people that registers people to vote, organizes and encourages civic engagement, and educates communities on voting rights through grassroots organizing, programming, and outreach strategies that empower young people.
3. My organization and I are members of the JXN Undivided Coalition.
4. The Coalition was founded to resist state encroachment and takeover of many of the rights and resources of residents of Jackson, Mississippi, which is a majority-Black and Black-led city, by the state of Mississippi and its lawmakers, who are majority-white. The Coalition stands for supporting—through protests, other direct-actions, and community and legal engagement—the right to vote and the right of political self-determination for Jackson residents.
5. When I, my organization, and the JXN Undivided Coalition organize and participate in protests, we primarily protest in and beside places occupied by the state government, including on adjacent streets or sidewalks, so that our message may be seen and heard by Mississippi state officials. We also protest in such places so that the public will understand the protest is directed toward state officials.
6. We have demonstrated in small groups on sidewalks without permits and in larger groups in city streets with a City of Jackson permit.
7. Organizing and participating in expressive activities next to state government buildings is a foundational means by which we attempt to educate and influence lawmakers, build electoral and political power, and organize our members and supporters, particularly in support of Black and marginalized communities.
8. One of the primary ways we organize protests and other direct-actions in Mississippi is through creating digital flyers about the action and disseminating them through our organizational and personal social media networks. That is the most important way we transmit our message and protest plans to others. Before making an event public, we often first circulate draft digital flyers internally and to other key partner organizations which may be interested in co-sponsoring or supporting the event; if they are interested, we often add their logos to the flyers. As we co-develop the content of the actions, it is not unusual for organizers to circulate many revised drafts to co-organizers as additional descriptions and details are added. Selectively circulating draft digital flyers to potential

co-organizers is often a tool we use to build cross-organizational support for an event. When there is consensus that the flyer is finalized and ready to be shared publicly, the broad base of co-organizers and supporters push out the digital flyer to their online networks. Flyer recipients in turn share our event flyers, and that is an effective way to get the word out about our actions. This is how we reach individuals and other organizations that are likely to want to participate, support, or encourage others to learn more about our message, which in turn supports our broader work to build electoral and political power, and to organize our volunteers and supporters towards actions, particularly in support of young people and Black, Brown, and marginalized communities in Jackson and Mississippi.

9. Unless otherwise noted, the information in this Declaration is about my political protest activities as an individual, as well as in my capacity as a leader of my organization. Where the event was a JXN Undivided Coalition event, my organization and I were also participating as Coalition members.
10. Unless otherwise noted, my protest and direct-action activities listed here were undertaken in my individual capacity, in my organization's capacity, and/or in my and my organization's capacity as members of the JXN Undivided Coalition; however, for events taking place on or after January 31, 2023, they were undertaken in all of those capacities.

Past Protest Activity in and Around Places Known to be Occupied by Mississippi State Entities or Officials in Jackson, MS.

11. I have often in the past protested in and beside places occupied by Mississippi state entities or officials in Jackson, Mississippi, and I plan to do so in the future. For example, I protested by the State Capitol with others in response to several deaths in Mississippi prisons; outside of the Governor's Mansion on one or more occasions in June of 2020, including against police violence, and outside of the Governor's Mansion in the fall of 2022, including to call on the Governor and state government officials to address a clean drinking water crisis in Jackson. I also joined the Coalition's demonstrations at the Capitol on January 31, 2023, February 27, 2023, and March 14, 2023, to support Jackson's right to political self-determination and oppose state government action to dilute the political power of Black voters.
12. Attached to this declaration as Exhibit A are selected flyers of protest and direct-action events that took place in and/or beside Mississippi state government buildings that I have organized and/or participated in, along with some relevant press articles. These include:
 - (1) Mississippi Prison Reform Now rally on January 24, 2020;
 - (2) Black Lives Matter event on June 6, 2020;
 - (3) Mississippi Moral Monday event on September 26, 2022;
 - (4) Mississippi Moral Monday event on October 10, 2022;
 - (5) Mississippi Moral Monday event on October 31, 2022;
 - (6) Stop State Takeover of Jackson event on January 31, 2023;
 - (7) JXN Undivided Coalition event on February 27, 2023; and
 - (8) BVM event on March 14, 2023.

13. During these and other protests and direct-action events in and by Mississippi state government buildings, I have submitted petitions to officials, marched, hosted speakers, distributed flyers, held signs, educated people about their legal rights, registered eligible people to vote, coordinated to wear matching t-shirts with protest slogans, and engaged in symbolic speech actions (like taping one's mouth shut to indicate being silenced).
14. During the above protests and direct-action events in and by Mississippi state government buildings, I have not personally witnessed any property damage or physical violence or arrests allegedly arising from protester actions.
15. During the above protests and direct-action events in and by Mississippi state government buildings, I have not personally witnessed protesting groups in conflict due to needing to use the same space at same time and having no way to resolve the issue.

Future Protest Activity in and Around Places Which Are or May Be Occupied by Mississippi State Entities or Officials in Jackson, MS.

16. Mississippi Votes and I plan to continue to protest on sidewalks and streets in Jackson, beside state government owned and occupied buildings, in the future, including during July of 2023. For example, Mississippi Votes plans to protest by such properties, including the State Capitol, the Mississippi Supreme Court, and the Governor's Mansion, during Coalition actions on July 6, 8, 18, and 27, 2023. We plan for one or more of these actions to include walking on sidewalks, without blocking pedestrian traffic, along the east and south sides of the State Capitol; with a City of Jackson permit, we also plan to march in North Congress Street and have a rally in front of the Governor's Mansion. One or more of our protests will take place by or pass by privately-owned properties and office buildings downtown which may be occupied by state government officials. I cannot tell by looking at them if they are, and I do not know how to find out.
17. Mississippi Votes plans to, and wants to begin, helping to publicize future Coalition actions, including those listed above in July of 2023. During those, we plan to engage in protest activities that we have in the past; some are listed Paragraph 13. Mississippi Votes and I are co-organizing the Coalition events on July 18 and 27, 2023. The City of Jackson informed us that our special events permit application for those events has been approved.
18. The JXN Undivided Coalition has already created a digital flyer listing some of the protest and direct-action activities that we have planned for the month of July of 2023.
19. I have read the language of SB 2343 that requires us to obtain Commissioner Tindell or Chief Luckey's written authorization if we want to protest on a sidewalk or street beside a building owned by the state or occupied by state officials, or if we want to protest anywhere if movement into or out of such a building might be somehow hindered. I do not believe we should be required to obtain prior permission from them to protest. I believe the written permission requirement of SB 2343 is unconstitutional. I am concerned that if we do not comply with the requirement and do not obtain written permission and still exercise our right to protest, some or all of those who participate, including me, will be arrested, prosecuted, and convicted of a crime related to not

complying. I am concerned that if we do not comply with this law, we could be arrested. In the future, we could also be prosecuted in the new CCID court and, if convicted, be sent to prison in Mississippi.

20. Because of these concerns, we have not yet begun to circulate the digital flyer that has been created to publicize the July 2023 protest events, which is critical for us as organizers to already be doing.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the statements above are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Dated: June 3, 2023

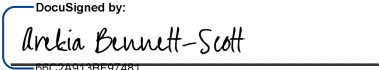
Signature: 
Arekia Bennett-Scott of Rankin County, Mississippi

Exhibit A

MISSISSIPPI PRISON REFORM RALLY

★ ★ ★ #MSPRISONREFORMNOW ★ ★ ★

MISSISSIPPI ST & N. CONGRESS ST, JACKSON, MS 39201

JANUARY 24TH | 11AM



TEAM ROC



MISSISSIPPI
PRISON REFORM
COALITION



THE GATHERING FOR
JUSTICE

NAACP
Youth & College

Clarion Ledger

POLITICS

'This is a war': Protesters demand accountability over Mississippi prison deaths



Giacomo Bologna

Mississippi Clarion Ledger

Published 3:51 p.m. CT Jan. 24, 2020 | Updated 5:18 p.m. CT Jan. 24, 2020

Several hundred protesters gathered outside the Mississippi Capitol building Friday morning, screaming and seething in anger over a state prison system that is failing to stop people from killing each other and themselves.

The rally was organized by Team Roc, a philanthropic arm of Yo Gotti and Jay-Z's company, Roc Nation. Lawyers for the artists filed a lawsuit on behalf of 29 Mississippi inmates on Jan. 14 and took out a full-page ad in the Clarion Ledger on Wednesday calling for reform.

Prison crisis: Jay-Z, Yo Gotti lawyers ask judge to visit Parchman, appoint third-party prison overseer

The rally was the largest public showing so far of fury over recent violence in Mississippi prisons — though speakers pledged more sustained action, including more protests at the Capitol on Monday.

Much of the ire was directed at state leaders who protesters say created a deadly mix of corrupt guards, lack of supervision, disgusting living conditions and dilapidated prisons through under-funding and neglect. Several speakers called out Gov. Tate Reeves by name.

Ten men have died in custody of the Mississippi Department of Corrections since Dec. 29, most of them killed in fights or riots.

Contraband phones: Good or bad?

People held up cellphones to livestream the rally, and some speakers directly addressed the inmates in prisons and knew that they were watching using contraband phones.

A woman who said her husband was currently at Parchman told the crowd that "Unit 29 is watching you," referencing a run-down section of the prison where much of the deadly violence has been concentrated.

She ended her speech by looking straight ahead at the cameras and cellphones and saying: "I love you, baby."

The fight over contraband phones — and public access to conditions inside the prisons — appears to be heating up.

A day before the rally, Reeves held a press conference where he pledged to bring transparency to the prison system and quickly release information following the deaths of any state inmate.

Prisons: Gov. Tate Reeves announces changes to 'stop the bleeding' in Mississippi prisons

Reeves also pledged to clamp down on contraband cell phone use, a move that protesters decried. They said the main reason people are aware of inhumane prison conditions is because inmates risked penalties to film and photograph prisons using contraband phones.

Cracking down on cellphones will simply allow state officials to hide the problem, speakers said.

"Thank God they had cellphones in the penitentiary," said Benny Ivey, a prison reform advocate. "We got evidence. We got proof. And we ain't gonna sit quiet."

Rukia Lumumba, executive director of the People's Advocacy Institute, said the incarcerated people using contraband cellphones are "the whistleblowers of the prison system."

What to do about Parchman?

Over and over again, the crowd broke into chants of "Shut it down," referring to the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman, which opened in 1901 and has long been one of the most notorious prisons in America.

Organizers passed out shirts and signs that read, "CLOSE PARCHMAN."

Of the 10 recent deaths, eight have taken place at Parchman.

"This is a war, ladies and gentlemen," state Rep. Robert Johnson III said. "It's a war, and it gets fought on every front. This is a front."

Johnson, of Natchez, the House Democratic leader, was one of handful of Democrat lawmakers at the rally.

"Mississippi hasn't done their job. The governor hasn't done his job. MDOC hasn't done its job. The Legislature hasn't done their job. We underfunded MDOC by \$35 million. We don't pay people at MDOC at living wage," Johnson said.

According to Johnson, there are too many people in prison for non-violent offenses, and Reeves could take actions today that would address this.

'Leadership crisis': Mississippi searches nationwide for prison commissioner, names interim

"Tate Reeves talks about the inmates are 99 percent of the problem. I'll tell you how to eliminate that problem. You've got an executive order. There are people who shouldn't be there," Johnson said. "Send them home."

Who was at the rally?

Local officials, musicians, pastors, organizers, formerly incarcerated people and people with family currently in prison took turns at a microphone on a stage with the Capitol dome behind them.

Some talked about being "pissed off," called Parchman a plantation, and referred to violence there as "state-sanctioned murder."

Mississippi native Big K.R.I.T. said he felt he had a responsibility to use his platform as a rapper to shine a brighter light on the Mississippi's prisons.

"I feel like I had to be here today, because I knew a song wasn't going to change this," he said. "... I started to lose a lot of sleep... I knew that being from Mississippi, we were going to be ignored, anyway. It wasn't on mass media. People weren't talking about this. I got friends on the East Coast, West Coast and I'm asking them, 'Have you heard about this?' 'No, we haven't heard about this at all.'"

Amelia Johnson, 47, stood close to the stage, holding a poster that showed one of her sons. Johnson said she has two sons who are currently imprisoned at Parchman, one of whom was recently stabbed in the back.

She tried to visit her sons in late December, but Johnson said she was turned away by staff. She didn't realize at the time the extent of violence that was roiling the prison.

Johnson only learned about the subsequent stabbing from her son's girlfriend.

"I'm afraid," Johnson said. "... There are people (in prison) afraid to close their eyes. I never thought it was like this."

The people in prison are there for a reason, she said, but that doesn't mean they should be forced to drink toilet water or eat moldy, spoiled food.

"You don't deserve to be treated like dogs," Johnson said. "... I don't treat my dog like that. I even feed my dog better than that."

Standing next to Johnson was Linda Williams, 53, who said her son has been locked up in state prison for 20 years and only has a few more years of his sentence left — if he makes it.

"I can't sleep at night," Williams said. "... Nightmares."

Aric Shells, 46, said he has a friend in Parchman that he talks with regularly. Shells said his friend describes seeing open sewage, rats and cockroaches.

"It makes me feel bad because you know people make mistakes, but that's like a concentration camp," Shells said.

Update on lawsuit filed by Jay-Z, Yo Gotti

Lawyers for Team Roc sued prison officials on behalf of 29 inmates last week. The federal lawsuit alleges inmates are being kept in unconstitutional and inhumane conditions.

They filed an emergency motion filed in federal court Thursday, claiming state prison officials do not have the "resources, energy or inclination" to correct deteriorating conditions at Parchman and that a third party is needed. It also makes an unusual request for a judge to visit Parchman to speak with inmates and get a better sense of the scene inside.

Thursday's emergency motion underscores many of the worst problems attorneys and others have already recently described at Parchman, including units subject to flooding, black mold, rats, lack of running water, little food and severe understaffing. It states conditions — especially in Unit 29, where much of the violence has occurred — are "far more appalling and egregious" than what's been reported in the media.

Last week, Reeves appointed former Boyle mayor and former chair of the House Corrections Committee Tommy Taylor to serve as interim MDOC commissioner after the agency's top two officials stepped down. A search committee is looking for a new permanent leader for the state's prison system.

As the violence at Mississippi prisons continues, it is drawing increasing scrutiny across the country.

Rep. Ayanna Pressley, a prominent Democratic congresswoman from Massachusetts, said Parchman is emblematic of the systemic problems across the country.

"What is happening in Parchman and in jails across this country is cruel, inhumane and downright criminal," Pressley said in a statement. "Mass incarceration hasn't made us any safer. We need to fight to dismantle and radically transform this country's criminal injustice systems is fundamentally unjust."

Contact Giacomo "Jack" Bologna at 601-961-7282 or gbologna@gannett.com. Follow him on Twitter @gbolognaCL.

Mississippi
deserves to be
heard. We must
speak up against
injustice!



PROTEST

At the Governor's Mansion

SATURDAY, JUNE 6TH
3:00 P.M.

**LOCATION: 300 E. CAPITOL ST
JACKSON, MS**

What You Should Know:

- Bring PPE (masks, gloves, etc). No exceptions!

- Wear comfortable, flexible clothing. We'll be on the move.

- This is a PEACEFUL protest. Violence in any capacity is strictly prohibited and is not the purpose of this protest.

Clarion Ledger

NEWS

'No justice, no peace': Protesters rally in downtown Jackson against police brutality

Alissa Zhu and Justin Vicory Mississippi Clarion Ledger

Published 3:48 p.m. CT June 6, 2020 | Updated 8:22 a.m. CT June 7, 2020

Thousands of protesters rallied against police brutality and for equal justice in downtown Jackson Saturday afternoon marching in front of the Governor's Mansion, before making a loop downtown, past Jackson City Hall and then the Mississippi Capitol.

At all points of the rally, the chant of "No justice, no peace" was echoed by the diverse crowd, all wearing facial masks despite the heat, but sweating because of it.

The protest was organized by Black Lives Matter Mississippi, following a wave of protests and unrest that swept the country after the death of George Floyd, a black man who was handcuffed and prone as a white Minneapolis police officer pinned him to the ground, with his knee crushing Floyd's neck, for at least eight minutes.

"When Mississippi changes, America changes. When America changes, the world changes. And we're about to get moving on change," said Calvert White, an event co-organizer, one of several who addressed the crowd from a podium in front of the Governor's Mansion on Capitol Street.

Protesters are fueled by outrage over high-profile killings of unarmed black Americans, a long list that has grown in recent months to include Floyd, Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old emergency room technician who was shot and killed by police as they executed a "no knock" search warrant, and Ahmaud Arbery, who was shot to death while jogging by white men who chased him down in a pickup truck.

"We welcome you to build with us beyond this movement in sustainable way," said another event organizer, Jarrius Adams. "Truly nurture us and make investments in us as stewards of our collective future. We hope that you can show up for us now and beyond."

As he spoke, protesters packed in to listen, most holding up signs.

"You can help make Mississippi and Jackson a destination of human rights, racial justice and economic justice," Adams said, prompting applause from the crowd.

(Story continues after photo gallery.)

Taylor Turnage, the president of the Mississippi Youth and College NAACP, spoke next, posing questions.

"Did you come because your friends were coming? Did you come because you thought it would be a fun experience?" asked Turnage.

"Or maybe, just maybe, you felt like there was an ongoing issue not only in Mississippi but the rest of the country that you needed to do something about by any means necessary. I want y'all to think about that. Think about why you are here today," she said.

"Justice," someone yelled from way back in the crowd.

Mississippi has had its own share of controversial cases. Last year, the Jackson Police Department came under scrutiny for the homicides of George Robinson and Mario Clark, unarmed black men who died after separate encounters with officers. Witnesses had alleged officers used excessive force on Robinson and Clark.

On Friday, demonstrators in Jackson called for justice in the case of a Columbus black man killed by a white officer, Canyon Boykin, in 2015. Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch recently decided to drop the prosecution against Boykin.

Public outcry: Jackson protest condemns AG decision in Ricky Ball case

Several protests in other parts of the country have turned violent. Police have used tear gas, rubber bullets and other forms of force against protesters. Looters have taken

advantage of the unrest to ransack and destroy businesses in Minneapolis, Los Angeles and other cities.

Jackson Police Chief James Davis told the City Council on Tuesday his officers had been taking a hands-off approach to protesters. He said his officers have riot gear if necessary but have been instructed to keep the equipment in their patrol cars to avoid "intimidating" protesters.

On Saturday, there was no obvious police presence at the peaceful protest.

Behind peaceful protests: Jackson police chief cites monitoring, 'hands-off approach'

Jackson Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba threw his support behind BLM and Floyd protesters in a Thursday night statement.

"I stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and all of those engaging in civil disobedience against police brutality and the abuse of black bodies across the country and around the world," Lumumba said.

Lumumba and Mike Espy, a Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate, were among the demonstrators Saturday. The mayor said his administration is putting together a citizen's police review board to monitor the police department and implement steps to ensure equal justice, similar to other cities.

Earlier this week, Gov. Tate Reeves said he was "disgusted and dismayed" by the video of Floyd's arrest. Reeves said he supports people's right to protest and applauded the peaceful nature of the protests that have taken place in Mississippi so far. He spoke out against "anarchists and antagonists from other parts of the country who seem committed to violence."

On Friday, Reeves tweeted that the Mississippi State Highway Patrol would distribute face masks to protesters. One of the organizers of the protest, Maisie Brown, tweeted back: "Hey Governor, thank you but no thank you. Highway Patrol does not need to be present. We have 1000+ extra masks & gloves for those who need them. We even have a hand sanitizing station. We got this."

In addition to passing out masks and gloves, volunteers set up snack and water stations on Saturday.

Joshua Starr was helping people register to vote. "When people are energized and angry we do what we can to affect change," he said.

Protester Valerie Archie Bouldin said she was impressed with the rally's turnout and the sense of community she felt there.

"Change is going to come and Mississippi is powerful, we just have to show up in numbers," she said.

Bouldin's nephew, 3-year-old Alex Smith, held a sign that read: "My life matters." At the urging of his family, he thrust a tiny fist in the air and proclaimed, "Black power!"

As the rally wound down Saturday evening, music replaced the voices of protesters over the speakers.

A familiar line dance song came on and a few people began to shuffle their feet and sway their arms. Men in matching purple fraternity shirts kicked their legs high into the air and twirled their bodies in time to the beat. It didn't take long for the number of dancers to grow from a dozen to nearly 100.

Jackson's protest concluded joyously and peacefully, with dancing in the streets.

(Story continues after photo gallery.)

Mississippians rally across the state

Since Floyd died on Memorial Day, there have been protests and rallies in cities and towns across the state, including Jackson, Biloxi, Hattiesburg, Starkville, Oxford, Petal and Columbus and Vicksburg.

Protesters rallied in other parts of Mississippi on Saturday as well. Thousands marched in Starkville, carrying signs that read "Black Lives Matter" and "Say her name."

'Moving forward': How Starkville, Mississippi State joined for a peaceful protest

We're here because racism is here: Ole Miss athletes, coaches march for unity

Ole Miss student-athletes, coaches and staff came together for a "Unity Walk" in Oxford in support of racial unity.

People also participated in a Unity March in Petal Saturday, where there had been days of protests as residents called for the resignation of Mayor Hal Marx who ignited a firestorm of criticism after he posted on social media he "didn't see anything unreasonable" about Floyd's arrest and "if you can talk, you can breathe." Marx has since apologized, but has refused to resign.

USA Today contributed to this report.

This is a developing story. Check back for updates.

Contact Alissa Zhu at azhu@gannett.com. Follow [@AlissaZhu](https://twitter.com/AlissaZhu) on Twitter.



POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN MISSISSIPPI MORAL MONDAY



LED BY NATIONAL CO-CHAIRS BISHOP WILLIAM J. BARBER II & REV. DR. LIZ THEOHARIS

"FREE THE LAND, CLEAN THE WATER AND KEEP IT PUBLIC"

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI MORAL MONDAY MARCH SEPTEMBER 26TH, 2022

STARTING POINT: MT. HELM BAPTIST CHURCH

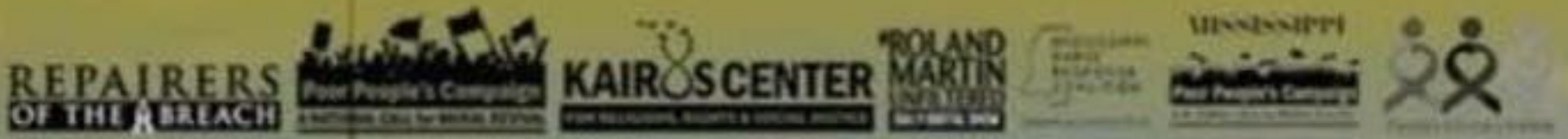
300 E CHURCH ST
JACKSON, MS 39201

GATHERING 4:00PM CT | **START 4:30PM CT**

RALLY 5:30PM CT

DOWNTOWN JACKSON, MS
INTERSECTION OF CAPITOL ST & CONGRESS ST.





**FREE THE LAND, CLEAN THE WATER
& KEEP IT PUBLIC!**

**POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN
MISSISSIPPI MORAL MONDAY**

LED BY NATIONAL CO-CHAIRS BISHOP WILLIAM J. BARBER II
& REV. DR. LIZ THEOHARIS



OCTOBER 10TH, 2022

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI MORAL MONDAY MARCH

STARTING POINT: SMITH ROBERTSON MUSEUM

528 BLOOM STREET | JACKSON, MS 39202

GATHERING 5:00PM CT | **START 5:30PM CT**

RALLY 6:00PM CT

DOWNTOWN JACKSON, MS

INTERSECTION OF CAPITOL ST & CONGRESS ST.

300 E. CAPITOL ST., JACKSON, MS 39201

CO-SPONSORS



MISSISSIPPI STUDENT WATER CRISIS ADVOCACY TEAM

MS VOTES

SLA

SupportEd MS

One Voice

WE'VE GOT THE TRUTH, WE'RE TIRED OF THE TRICKS!

Free the Land, Clean the Water & Keep it Public

POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

MISSISSIPPI MORAL MONDAY



LED BY NATIONAL CO-CHAIRS
BISHOP WILLIAM J. BARBER II
& REV. DR. LIZ THEOHARIS; &
DANYELLE HOLMES, NATIONAL
SOCIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZER

OCTOBER 31, 2022



JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI
MORAL MONDAY MARCH
GATHERING 4:00PM CT
START 4:30PM CT

STARTING POINT:
SMITH ROBERTSON MUSEUM
528 BLOOM ST.
JACKSON, MS 39202

RALLY 5:00PM CT
DOWNTOWN JACKSON, MS
INTERSECTION OF CAPITOL ST.
& CONGRESS ST.
300 E. CAPITOL ST.,
JACKSON, MS 39201

Streaming live at poorpeoplescampaign.org/livestream



Clarion Ledger

NEWS

Moral Monday organizers call on Jackson residents to hold state accountable on water crisis

Ross Reily

Mississippi Clarion Ledger

Published 10:50 a.m. CT Nov. 1, 2022

More than 200 people came out on a cool and comfortable Halloween night in front of the governor's mansion to hear the Rev. William Barber make the case that the people of Jackson should do more to hold the State of Mississippi accountable for the water crisis that has engulfed the Capital City.

"You hold the power," Barber told the people from the stage of the latest in a series of events that have been called Moral Mondays. "Gov. Tate Reeves won his position by less votes than the number of registered voters in Jackson who did not vote."

This was the third Moral Monday that Barber, who is a pastor and co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign, has presided over in Jackson. Barber said it is likely the last rally he will hold in Jackson, at least for the foreseeable future.

The estimated 200 people in attendance was down from the nearly 250 people in attendance three weeks ago but more than the first Moral Monday rally held in Jackson in September.

More: JACKSON'S WATER HISTORY Jackson water crisis flows from a century of poverty, neglect and racism

More: LEAD IN WATER Clarion Ledger investigation for lead in Jackson water reveals broader issues. See results

“The State of Mississippi wants you to forget. They want you to move on just like they have moved on from you,” Barber said. “Gov. Reeves has moved on. He called a special session of the Legislature this week to bring a new business to the state, but he wouldn’t call a special session to handle the water crisis that is poisoning the people of Jackson. He has moved on.”

Those who marched through Jackson to attend the event brought bottles of what they said was cloudy Jackson tap water to deliver to the front steps of the governor’s mansion.

No one from the governor’s mansion came out to acknowledge the rally or collect the bottles.

In his previous Moral Monday, Barber said he fully expected his organization to file a fair housing lawsuit against the State of Mississippi before his organization's next rally in Jackson.

Instead, he read a letter he said had come from The Center for Constitutional Rights and Forward Justice.

In part, the letter read, “Forward Justice and the Center for Constitutional Rights proudly stand with partners at the Poor People's Campaign of Mississippi, the Rapid Response Coalition, and Jackson community residents as they demand community-driven solutions for a fully-funded and functioning public water infrastructure. Time and time again, majority Black and Brown low-income communities are left to suffer the devastating consequences of crumbling, outdated water infrastructure. These crimes against humanity are immoral and must stop! Forward Justice and Center for Constitutional Rights are steadfastly examining all potential legal intervention. We are dedicated to standing with this community’s commitment to hold Mississippi state actors accountable for intentionally depriving resources from the Community.”

The Moral Mondays are modeled after a series of events Barber set in motion in 2013, when he called on people in North Carolina, where he was then-president of the state's

NAACP chapter, to protest many state government policies that he saw as immoral based on how they impacted low-income people, including voting rights and healthcare policies.

"The goal is to nationalize a state problem," Barber said. "The battle for justice, in this case, for water safety in Jackson, can have national implications. The Montgomery bus boycott was a national issue, even though it was in Montgomery."

Barber hopes the movement in Jackson will be as successful as the one in North Carolina, which he said started with 17 people. Those rallies ended with 15,000 people marching.

In a press conference earlier in the day, Jackson Mayor Choke Antar Lumumba said the City of Jackson is in compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Lumumba said he was given the information by the Unified Command Group early Monday.

"That was certainly welcome news by the EPA," Lumumba said. "The EPA, in conjunction with the Mississippi Department of Health performed a series of tests on our drinking water over the last several months and revealed that our water is, in fact, safe to drink."

The lead and copper results, however, have not yet been released, but have been completed, according to Lumumba.

Despite that Barber said The Center for Constitutional Rights and Forward Justice will continue to push for what he called, "recognition of human rights abuses."

"This is about the impact on people's lives, regardless of their color," Barber said. "This is about more than just race. There are those who are disabled and sick who cannot fight for themselves and if Gov. Reeves cannot see that, then we have a lot more to talk about than just water."

Stop House Bill 1020

Press Conference

AT THE STATE CAPITOL
(NORTHSIDE)
10 A.M.



A 30 Minute
Discussion

Free &
Open to
the Public

Tuesday
January
31st

State Capitol
10:00 am
400 High St.
Jackson, MS 39201

PEOPLE'S
ADVOCACY
INSTITUTE



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PEOPLE'S
ASSEMBLY



A NEW DAY COALITION FOR
EQUITY FOR BLACK
AMERICANS



Opposing House Bill 1020 on the steps of the Capitol



By Christopher Young,

Contributing Writer,



**Anti-HB1020 Rally at Mississippi Capitol – City of Jackson Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba at podium.
Photo BY CHRISTOPHER Young**

Push-back from members of the community, justice and advocacy groups, lawmakers and elected officials from the City of Jackson and Hinds County rallied on the Capitol steps Tuesday, January 31 at 10 a.m. against HB 1020 – which would create a separate judicial system for the Capitol Complex Improvement District (CCID) and expand the CCID to the northeast.

Danyelle Holmes of the Mississippi Poor People’s Campaign and Rukia Lumumba of the People’s Advocacy Institute led the press conference/rally of approximately 250 people in thirty-eight-degree weather and overcast skies.

Mayor Chokwe Lumumba indicated that this Bill (HB1020) “allows for a military force to be placed over the City of Jackson...taking the power out of the hands of the residents who elect the officials that have the authority to make decisions, such as our judges and places it in the hands of a Supreme Court that does not think the

same way that the people of Jackson think...it is colonization is what it is...and they would do this with your money; additional tax dollars that come out of the City of Jackson...the City stands strong with you and we will fight to the very end.” The Mayor also called out black contractors, saying “if you’re going to enjoy this black wealth, then you need to support this black city.”

Representative Edward Blackmon Jr. (D-57) harkened the crowd to “1961 when over 300 people walked the streets of Jackson and gathered at the fairgrounds for one thing – the right to vote. To hear the people back here behind us, this Bill is all about safety – that is not what it is about. No other residents are being asked to prop up a government within a government. I call this CCID district New Jack City – a city within a city. Once you get in the practice of taking away votes, then it’s not going to stop in Jackson, Mississippi.”

Brook Floyd, coordinator with Jackson People’s Assembly, spoke about “expanding the reach of the Capitol Police and creating a new court will not stop the violence. We have to get to the root – we know



Representative Edward Blackmon, Jr.



Danyelle Holmes, Miss. Poor People’s Campaign

this and all the research and evidence support this. Communities with fully funded education, healthcare, quality and affordable housing, and jobs with livable wages have lower incidences of violence. All these things our state has refused to fund.”

Rukia Lumumba never hesitates, “I’m talking about the elephant in the room – this is about race. HB1020 would require that over 18% of Jackson’s normal tax revenue be given to the CCID. The proposed expansion of the CCID goes into the residential northeast Jackson, miles



Paloma Wu, deputy dir., Impact Litigation at MS Center for Justice



Brook Floyd of Jackson People’s Assembly

from downtown, where the Capitol Police who have shot or killed numerous black people recently have no right or reason to be." She reminded us that the plan calls for all key people to be appointed, not elected. "HB1020 is ruthless. It is an attack on our rights as people of this place, who love this place, who love our city and who love our state. It is dangerously anti-democratic, and it is something that must be stopped."

A handout was distributed titled Jackson-based Groups Oppose Capitol Police, Expansion Bill. In part it reads, "Our coalition of Jackson organizations and residents is adamantly opposed to House Bill 1020. This bill is another unprecedented attempt to strip power away from the City of Jackson. We have opposed the state's other attempts to undermine Jackson's leadership during the attempt to take over the Jackson airport, school system and water system. We remain opposed. Our message to the state is simple: We support Black Leadership!



Bishop Dwayne Pickett holding map depicting proposed expansion of CCID.

“Additionally, we are opposed to the existence of Capitol Police, who have shot and/or killed several unarmed black men over the past year. We are also opposed to the section in HB1020 that would empower a slate of all-white Mississippi state officials to appoint unelected judges and unelected prosecutors in majority-black Hinds County. The Sheriffs’ duties of the new CCID judicial system would be carried out by the unelected Chief of the Capitol District Police.”

The handout listed needed programs such as credible messengers, more mental health workers, program to help engage youth, violence interruption programs – all with the goal of helping families in trauma and dealing with crime and mental health issues.

Supporters of this rally included Peoples Advocacy Institute, Mississippi Poor Peoples Campaign, Mississippi Prison Reform Coalition, Jackson NAACP, One Voice, Clergy for Prison Reform, MacArthur Justice Center, Mississippi Center for Justice, and A New Day Coalition for Equity for Black America (ANCEBA).

There were eighteen speakers in all over the course of the seventy-five-minute-long rally.

Rukia Lumumba reminded the crowd that the Hinds County District Attorney Jody Owens has spoken out against HB1020, as well as Hinds County judges, the Hinds County Legislative Black Caucus and all of Hinds County Board of Supervisors.

You could feel a sense of unity and determination flowing, perhaps summed up best by State Representative William “Bo” Brown, who was not one of the speakers, but numerous times throughout was heard shouting – “The day the City of Jackson came together.”



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, February, 27, 2023

Contact: jxnundivided@gmail.com

**Press Conference to Discuss Public Safety and Democracy
Regarding House Bill 1020**

Jackson, MS - The Jackson Undivided Coalition is pleased to announce a press conference on Monday, February 27 at 3:30 pm to discuss public safety and democracy as it pertains to House Bill 1020 (HB1020). The press conference will be held in front of the Capitol and will include members of the JXN Undivided Coalition: Rukia Lumumba, Maisie Brown, Courtney Body, and Arkela Lewis, mother of 25-year old Jaylen Lewis who was murdered by Capitol Police officers.

HB1020 has been a contentious issue in the Jackson community, with proponents arguing that it will improve public safety and infrastructure, while opponents argue that it undermines democracy and concentrates power in the hands of a few.

At the press conference, the speakers will address the potential impact of the bill on public safety and democracy, and provide their perspective on the issue. Attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions following the remarks.

We welcome all media outlets to attend the press conference, and we encourage members of the public to attend as well. This is an important issue that affects us all, and we hope to have a productive and informative discussion.

Event Details:

What: Press Conference on Public Safety and Democracy Regarding House Bill 1020

When: Monday, February 27, 2023 at 3:30 pm

Where: The State Capitol Building, 400 High Street, Jackson, MS 39201

Jackson residents speak out against several bills that target the city

Caption

Credit

A coalition of citizen's rights activists are calling on Mississippi's legislature to block several bills that directly would affect the City of Jackson. These bills aim to address systemic problems in the city, but residents say it is at their expense.

Members of the Poor People's Campaign, Mississippi Votes, and other non-profit Jackson advocacy groups are calling on lawmakers to kill legislation that would grant the state more power over the city. The bills in question would reshape the judicial system for parts of Jackson, block the city from using a new water billing system, and give the state control over the troubled water system. Community activist Rukia Lumumba says all of these measures would hurt Jacksonians.

"So what we see here is amendments that continue to disrupt our democracy. Continue to threaten our current judicial process. And absolutely threatens our ability to have municipal police take care of public safety and municipal matters," says Lumumba.

One bill the activists claim can not be fixed is HB 1020 which is waiting to be taken up in the Senate. Senate lawmakers recently drafted an amendment to the bill that would eliminate language for a permanent inferior court, replacing it with temporary aid. But it also would expand jurisdiction for the Capitol Police Force. Jackson resident Arkela Lewis says her son, Jalen Lewis, was killed last year by Capitol Police and is still waiting on answers.

Lewis says "It hurts for my son to have lived here and been a resident here, and get killed by a police task force that [the governor has] put together to kill my son. And I have no reason, and nobody has said anything."

Many of these bills that target Jackson were authored by lawmakers who do not live or have constituents in the capital city.

MISSISSIPPI BVM DAY AT THE CAPITOL

MARCH 14 | 8:00 AM - 11:30 AM CT

FIRST FLOOR ROTUNDA

400 High Street, Jackson, MS 39202

Join us for BVM Day at the Capitol in Jackson, Mississippi! Let's urge legislators to reject HB1020, a proposed bill that threatens the majority Black city of Jackson by taking away their voice and resources.

It's time to demand that lawmakers address the needs of Jackson's residents and protect their political power.

**BLACK
VOTERS
MATTER**

Black Voters Matter protests against HB 1020

JACKSON, Miss. (WLBT) - A national advocacy group and local leaders gathered today at the State Capitol to urge lawmakers to vote no on House Bill 1020.

Arguably the most talked about bill this legislative session, House Bill 1020, continues to spark protests.

Black Voters Matter and other supporters of killing House Bill 1020 came to the capitol today to show their opposition to the bill.

"Our rights are under attack. What are we gonna do? Stand up, fight back."

Black Voters Matter says they are dedicated to keeping Black voters and their issues at the forefront of the election process.

The issue they're tackling right now? **House Bill 1020.**

"Mississippi is always the test case by the rest of the country. So we need everybody around this country to pay attention to what's going on in Mississippi."

The organization believes that HB 1020 is a hostile takeover attempt by the state and that Jackson's citizens are not being considered.

"And now we have folks in that do not live in Jackson, and do not live in Hinds County that see fit to try to take those powers away from the elected officials. You can't have that kind of hypocrisy and call yourself a child of God. You cannot make legislation that discriminates against people based on

race. That is a violation of the law. And you know it."

Many lifelong Jacksonians stepped up to the mic and offered their thoughts on the bill and the people who support it.

"But we have to come to the table and create a solution around safety that actually meets all of our needs. And not just some of us. We're not attacking you because you want to be safe. We're telling you that we want to be safe, too, and what you're doing now through these bills is not going to keep us safe. If only some of us are kept safe, then it is not enough."

To learn more about the most updated version of HB1020, click [here](#).

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