



Vermont Interfaith Power & Light
A faith-based response to global warming

Green Mountains, Blue Water

Earth Care News June 2020

Climate Justice is Racial Justice!

“Racism, in short, makes it impossible to live sustainably.”

- Dr. Robert Bullard, considered the Father of Environmental Justice



Photo courtesy Donna C. Roberts

We at Vermont Interfaith Power and Light are deeply saddened and outraged at the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, the latest in a series of despicable murders of black and brown people across our country. This must stop and we must do our part. There can be no climate justice without racial justice. Around the world, people of color and people with fewer economic means - typically people of color - are those most affected by climate change, while contributing the least to the causes of the climate crisis. This is injustice. Issues of climate, economic and social justice are intrinsically interrelated. In recognition of this moment, we share several letters, articles and other resources to deepen our thinking, understanding, and to prompt compassionate action.

These include:

- a statement from the Interfaith Power & Light (IPL) national board;
 - a letter from Alabama IPL leader Rev. Michael Malcom;
 - an essay from Georgia IPL; and
 - a writing by former VT IPL Board Member Rev. Arnold Thomas.
- A statement by Minnesota IPL is on our website.

We also share notes from a recent webinar about climate change and environmental justice, and a state racial justice organization's letter to Vermont's leaders regarding how COVID-19 disproportionately affects people of color, and what the State can do to address the situation.

First, the National IPL Board of Directors' statement:

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail, wrote, "I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: 'I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action'; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a 'more convenient season.' Shallow

understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will."

The concept of time is an important one. There is "chronos" time - the kind that is set by watches and calendars; and there is "kairos" time - sometimes called "God's time" - which speaks of ripeness, of opportunity, of something that can give the present moment new meaning.

We are in a Kairos moment.

We know that there are deep inequities in our communities, in our nation, and in our world. We are not blind to the grave injustices that have existed and that are even now being further brought to light with the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, one of many such killings borne of systemic racism in America. We grieve with our black and brown siblings who are afraid and angry, and who seek equality and equal protection under the law.

This is a moral issue, deeply tied to white supremacy, economic injustice, voter suppression, and even climate justice. Those who suffer first and worst are those living in communities that have historically been marginalized and excluded from policymaking and opportunities for growth.

We look for hope.

While we don't condone acts of violence and destruction, we know that protest and demonstrations of solidarity can and have led to social change in our society. Our IPL Board Chair, Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley, marched with Martin Luther King, Jr. during the civil rights movement in the 1960's. He saw firsthand the power of organizing and peaceful protest in order to make constructive change.

What will we do in our Kairos moment? It is our fervent hope that by coming together, standing with one another in solidarity in this time of great suffering and challenge, that we can be the moral leaders that communities need in this time. Let's take this moment of opportunity to develop a different

interpretation, rooted in a bold, meaningful vision for justice and love in our world.

With gratitude,

IPL Board of Directors
Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley – Chair
Rev. Susan Hendershot – President
The Rev. Sally Bingham – President Emeritus
Rev. Doug Bland
Morrow Cater
Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb
Melissa Gavin
Gregory Lopez
Rev. Vy Nguyen
Sam Schuchat
Sarah Spengeman
Nathan Willcox

From Local Leaders and IPL Affiliates

-This piece, *Crisis will only worsen until priorities change*, is by The Rev. Arnold Thomas. He is a former VTIPL Board Member, pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Jericho, moderator of



Silent vigil for George Floyd in Burlington, 6/7/2020.

the Racism in America Forums, and former Conference Minister of the VT Conference of the United Church of Christ. [VTDigger article.](#)

-*It's Up to Us to End This*, by Rev. Michael Malcom, Exec. Dir. of Alabama IPL. "Greetings Climate and Faith Leaders. I hope and pray that you're safe and well. I decided to put my thoughts to paper surrounding all that is going on in my African Diaspora world. I hope that it can help in the tension. All of this is a Human Rights issue that stems from a belief in white supremacy and a system of racism." (See notice below of webinar co-facilitated by Rev. Malcom.) [Full statement here.](#)

-*Sins of the Same Vine*, by Georgia IPL Program Director Codi Norred. "Our relationship to Creation is inherently bound up with our relationship to each other." [Full article here.](#)

-*Provide protection, relief to people of color*, by Steering Committee of VT Racial Justice Alliance, as sent to Gov. Phil Scott, Lt. Gov. David Zuckerman and legislators. See [VTDigger article.](#)

VTIPL and VT Sierra Club are collaborating on an upcoming Faith Climate Action panel. Stay tuned for details.

Additional Race-Related Resources

-**Today, June 8, is the Poor People's Campaign's National Call for Moral Revival & National Day of Fasting and Focus.** We are invited to stop between 5:00 -5:30 p.m. for 8 minutes and 46 seconds of silence acknowledging the time a police officer had his knee on the neck of George Floyd ultimately killing him. [Join here.](#)

-*Black Environmentalists Talk about Climate and Anti-Racism* by Somini Sengupta. This New York Times article states that an anti-racist climate movement should be led by "a real multiracial coalition that endorses environmental justice principles", while its "goals should be to uplift the most vulnerable". [Full article here.](#)

-*Climate Activists: Here's Why Your Work Depends on Ending Police Violence*. The piece, by Dany Sigwalt, appeared in Medium.com, June 2, 2020. [Article here.](#)

-*Mindful of Race: Transforming Racism from the Inside Out*, by Ruth King, is an important work to help us understand the complexities of racism. King's website has info about her Mindful of Race trainings, Racial Affinity Groups (RAGs) and more. [Ruth King website.](#)

-**A recent webinar on Environmental Justice** (prior to the George Floyd killing) featured Dr. Robert Bullard, and co-chairs of Poor People's Campaign, Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II and Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis. Here are a few memorable comments from the virtual gathering: "Some people have the wrong Complexion for protection." "Climate action plans must address sustainability, equity and racial justice." "Poor and marginalized peoples are hurt first and worst." "We must address issues intersectionally." "Center those most impacted in our work and conversations." The speakers also suggested several important resources including:

-*Unequal Protection: Environmental Justice and Communities of Color*

-*The Souls of Poor Folks Audit*

-*Fourth National Climate Assessment* (2018) [Download PDF.](#)

-Protest During a Pandemic Webinar, June 24, 1 p.m.

"Instead of becoming suppressed by the pandemic, the spirit of justice has arisen with fierce determination and become embodied in countless ways." Rev. Michael Malcom of Alabama IPL and Rev. Dr. Brooks Berndt of the UCC Environmental Justice Ministry invite us to join a webinar to reflect on how protest is manifesting during this time and the lessons that can be learned for communities of faith dedicated to answering the call of justice. Panelists include: Sophia Benrud, environmental justice organizer for Black Visions Collective, Minneapolis; Lindsay Harper, nat'l. coord. for Arm-in-Arm which centers economic and racial justice in addressing the climate crisis; and Austin Choi-Fitzpatrick, a researcher identifying how nonviolent actions are manifesting during the pandemic. Registrants will receive a recording.

[Register.](#)



Update on the Climate Caucus

(by VT IPL Board member Richard Butz)

- H. 688, the VT Global Warming Solutions Act remains in Chris Bray's committee where it is vying for attention with Act 250 reform. The concern is that we only have a few weeks before the legislature suspends at month's end - not much time to get these

bills out of committee, back to the House for negotiation and to the Governor. So we need to encourage people to contact their legislators (house and senate) to urge them to pass the legislation.

- Primary concern is to enact a three-month budget so the state can operate in the first part of the fiscal year beginning July 1.
- The legislature comes back for a short session in August to pass a final budget for the fiscal year.
- Sen. Tim Ashe says the Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI) might come back in August, but the Memorandum of Understanding between the TCI states is now not expected until after the election so action seems unwise. My Take: we are in a very precarious position with the significant climate bills. We need to keep the pressure on.

Film Screenings & Resources

- *The Human Element* film is back with free streaming June 8-17.

Co-sponsored by VT IPL & National IPL. Thrilled with the response to his film during Faith Climate Action Week, filmmaker James Balog offers another free viewing period of his gorgeous and compelling film today through June 17. In April, IPL helped bring the film to 7,000 viewers in all 50 states. There will be a Q/A with the filmmaker moderated by IPL President Rev. Susan Hendershot on June 17 at 8 p.m. [Click here for film resources.](#)

-PBS film, *Inventing Tomorrow*, streams Thurs., June 12, 3:00 p.m.
Join the filmmaker and a STEM educator for a Q/A following the screening about the power and inspiration that hands-on science can bring to young people. [Access the film here.](#)

-**On the occasion of World Oceans Day, June 8**, you may be interested in a documentary by VTIPL coordinator Donna Roberts. *Yemanja: Wisdom from the African Heart of Brazil* is narrated by Alice Walker and named for the Afro-Brazilian mother deity *Yemanja* associated with the oceans, seas, and life-giving sustenance. This is a timely story of resistance, resilience, faith, and valuation of traditional African culture. The film is available on-demand and via DVD loan or purchase. [See film website.](#) ([Email](#) to request on-demand link or DVD.)

-Finally, VTIPL invites you to review titles in our updated DVD lending library. [Click and scroll down page for list of VTIPL videos.](#)

PLEASE NOTE, VTIPL has a new phone number: (802) 829-0135.

We greatly appreciate your contributions to our ongoing work at the intersection of faith, climate and justice.

[Donate Now](#)



Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, where "Yemanjá" is honored.

