

FORUM

Pope Francis' advice about equality and justice, which 2016 hopefuls can use



**Bill
Turner**
*Guest
Columnist*

If the world looks like it's going to hell in a hand basket, Pope Francis preaches that the path and speed there are driven by the excesses of capitalism. The 78 year-old Argentina-born-and-bred pontiff, who worked among his country's most marginalized citizens before becoming pope two years ago, spoke out against poverty, inequality, and official corruption recently while in Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay.

South America, which holds 40 percent of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, was an appropriate place for His Holiness to condemn the greed for money and call for "a global movement against the new colonialism that is



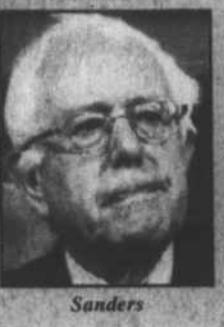
Clinton



Bush



Pope Francis



Sanders



Warren

rooted in an inequitable world economic order." Pope Francis will likely repeat those words when he visits America – ground zero for capitalism's excesses – later this summer when he addresses the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, and then carry his message on to NYC and DC.

Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-Vermont), a self-described revolutionary and socialist, sings from the Pope's songbook on income equality and is pushing front-runner Hillary Clinton on how the gap between the haves and have-nots is corrupting

everything and everybody.

Senator Sanders got a loud ring of cheers from a crowd of 10,000 in Wisconsin recently when he denounced the facts of income inequality in America: "58 percent of new American income goes to the top 1 percent, the top 10th of that 1 percent have more wealth than the bottom 90 percent, and the gap is wider than at any other point since just before the Great Depression."

Pope Francis' concern for the poor in South America applies, relatively speaking, to African-Americans: the typical

black household has just 6 percent of the wealth of the typical white household. On average, white households had \$111,146 in wealth holdings in 2011, compared to \$7,113 for blacks, according to the U.S. Census Bureau Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Pope Francis' perspective on these matters places him in the center of global activities. He calls out the masterminds of capitalism around the world, whom he says are not good stewards of the environment and are too greedy to share their wealth to create the conditions for equality, justice

and decent lifestyles for the poor. He visits Africa – Uganda and Kenya, where Catholicism is the fastest-growing religion – in November, just behind his trip to the USA.

On the other side of the Pope's world view is Republican presidential hopeful, Jeb!, one of five Catholics on the crowded GOP podium, who said recently, "I don't go to Mass for economic policy or for things in politics. I've got enough people helping me along the way with that."

Even if Mr. Bush's way doesn't consider His Holiness' advice about the

wickedness that springs from economic inequality, it's quite likely that he, like most, recognizes the lines written by a modest friar canonized in the 12th century from whom the man born Jorge Mario Bergoglio took his papal name: "Lord make me an instrument of Thy peace" and the well-known saying also attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words."

Pope Francis' necessary words, to be repeated again and again during the 2016 presidential campaign, which will be in full swing when he gets here in early fall, might well be: "It's the economic inequality, stupid!"

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Growth of the North Carolina solar industry is in jeopardy



**Rhone
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*Guest
Columnist*

Earlier this year, North Carolina became just the fourth state in the nation to top 1,000

megawatts (MW) of installed solar capacity, trailing only California, Arizona and New Jersey as America's solar leaders. But despite the state's rapid progress, the looming expiration of the federal investment tax credit (ITC) for solar energy is creating angst in the marketplace, threatening to eliminate good-paying jobs statewide.

It's no coincidence that North Carolina is ranked No. 1 in the entire South in installed solar capacity. Effective public policies, like the state's investment tax credit, renewable energy portfolio standards (RPS) and the federal ITC, are paying huge dividends for the state's economy, creating thousands of new jobs and generating hundreds of millions of dollars a year in economic activity.

Powered by a booming utility-scale market, North Carolina added 58 MW of new solar capacity in the first quarter of this year, bringing its statewide total to 1,011 MW – enough to power nearly 110,000 homes. Most impressively, the 58 MW added represents a robust 66 percent

increase over the same quarter last year. The report went on to point out that North Carolina had increases in Q1 across all solar sectors, with installed residential and commercial system prices dropping 12 percent in the last year – and down nearly 50 percent since 2010. All totaled, \$95 million was invested in North Carolina in the first quarter in new solar installations – and \$747 million since the beginning of 2014.

A lot of this economic activity is a direct result of the federal investment tax credit. Consider what's occurred since it was enacted in 2006:

* 150,000 new solar jobs have been added across America.

*Enough new solar has come online to power 4 million homes.

*More than \$66 billion has been invested in new solar installations.

*And one-third of all new electricity added to the U.S. grid last year came from solar.

North Carolina has benefitted greatly from this ramped-up activity, with thousands of new jobs being created statewide. To put North Carolina's remarkable progress in some context, the 1,011 MW of solar installed in the state today is twice

as much as the entire country had in 2004!

Currently, there are 177 solar companies at work throughout the value chain in North Carolina, employing more than 5,600 people. What's more, from an environmental perspective, solar installations in North Carolina are helping to offset more than 1 million metric tons of harmful carbon emissions, which is the equivalent of removing 200,000 cars off the state's roads and highways.

As it stands now, the 30 percent federal ITC will expire at the end of 2016, threatening to derail the rapid progress solar energy is making across North Carolina. By contrast, competing energy sources, such as fossil fuels, have had preferential treatment in the U.S. tax code for up to 100 years, while solar has had the federal ITC as an incentive for private investment for less than 10.

As an industry, we're strongly urging North Carolina's Congressional delegation to support extending the ITC for at least five years. By then, many analysts are predicting, solar will reach grid parity in most electricity markets, helping to create a level playing field among energy produc-

ers, which will benefit consumers, the U.S. economy and our environment. That's a win-win in anyone's book.

Rhone Resch is president and CEO of the Solar Energy Industries Association, the national trade organization for America's solar energy industry. During his 10-year tenure at SEIA, solar has experienced record-breaking growth, becoming one of the fastest-growing industries in the United States with more than 8,000 companies and more than 174,000 employees.

Veto the 'Historical Artifact and Patriotism Act,' Governor McCrory



**William J.
Barber**
*Guest
Columnist*

This afternoon [Tuesday, July 21], the North Carolina House of Representatives voted to pass the "Historical Artifact and Patriotism Act," which makes it virtually impossible for local communities to move Confederate monuments. The measure, which came out of the House Homeland Security Committee, was fast-tracked to Gov. McCrory's desk to be signed.

The NC NAACP and Forward Together Moral Movement call on Gov. McCrory to veto this bill. The Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II has issued the following statement on their behalf:

Rushing to protect monuments of the Confederacy rather than readily protecting the citizens of our state is extreme and wrongheaded. The

urgency with which the majority of our state representatives raced to protect Confederate monuments is appalling and shameful, given that hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians live without health insurance due to the General Assembly and Governor's refusal to expand Medicaid; given that thousands of North Carolinians need a living wage, that teachers need job security, that public schools need adequate funding, that our environment needs adequate protections.

The extreme leadership of our General Assembly fast-tracked a bill to protect symbols of the past that embody division and secession from the Union while they remain at an immoral standstill on the critical issues of our day that would help the poor and working poor as well as address the continuing reality of racial disparities and inequality.

In these perilous days, it would seem that the Homeland Security Committee might be protecting our lives instead of

the Lost Cause. While it cannot rank with public safety or public schools as a priority, communities should be able to discuss moving Confederate monuments off prominent public places like courthouse lawns. These conversations would do more to advance historical understanding than any number of monuments to the Confederacy.

Museums, which are able to explain and contextualize exhibits, might well be the best place for Confederate statuary. Government-run shrines to an army that sought to overthrow the United States of America by force do not make sense. Nor can they ever represent the North Carolinians whose ancestors suffered under the system of slavery that the Confederacy left America to defend.

If we are putting up Civil War-era monuments, it would be well to include a monument to the enslaved Africans who built the South and helped bring down the Confederacy – almost 200,000 African-Americans, many of whom

escaped from slavery, fought for the Union. We could consider a monument to Abraham Galloway, for example, who escaped from slavery, served as a Southern spy for the Union, and after the war helped to write the North Carolina Constitution that we still use.

We might also consider a monument to the roughly ten thousand Heroes of America, better known as the "Red Strings," a secret society of white anti-Confederate guerrillas across the state. Hundreds of thousands of ordinary white North Carolinians believed that the Civil War was "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight," objected to the tyranny of the Confederacy, which they have never voted to support, and resented Confederate conscription laws that exempted wealthy white men and their sons. As the war raged on, Gov. Zebulon Vance – who has a monument on the Capitol lawn – acknowledged that "the great popular heart is not now and never has been in this war. It was a revolution

of the politicians and not the people."

Likewise, there ought to be a monument to the Fusion Coalition of the 1890s, an interracial political force that swept every statewide election, captured the legislature, won both U.S. Senate seats, and elected a governor, too.

This Fusion alliance between mostly black Republicans and mostly white Populists was imperfect, to be sure, but was also an important experiment in interracial democracy. They could not be beaten at the polls, and their extreme opponents turned to violence, intimidation and fraud. The leaders who overthrew the state government in the 1898 "white supremacy campaign" are represented by statues on the Capitol grounds; their Fusionist adversaries, who are a much better example for us today, are largely forgotten. Public memorials are important.

Rep. Marilyn Avila, a Raleigh Republican, states of this pro-Confederate bill: "When you talk about memorials and remem-

brances, the point of time at which they were erected is extremely relevant. A lot of these things were done shortly after the War Between the States."

In fact, virtually none of the Confederate monuments were constructed until nearly fifty years after the war. If the state had tried to build Confederate monuments shortly after the Civil War – "War Between the States" is the pro-Confederate term – there likely would have been civil conflict.

The real heroes of North Carolina are the public school teachers for whom this legislature has shown contempt or indifference. The real heroes are those who keep struggling without living wages or health care. The General Assembly would do well to protect them before they start protecting their own "right" to tell communities what to do with their public monuments.

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II President, N.C. NAACP Working in Raleigh



Ron Rogers illustration for the Chronicle