

TWO AMERICAS • LUMINARIES • ACTIVIST

Forward Together

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II and the Moral Movement

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Contribution Track • ERA VII • Living Record • Goldsboro & Fayetteville, North Carolina

Who He Is

William J. Barber II was five years old in 1968 when his father, a Disciples of Christ minister, moved the family from Indianapolis to rural eastern North Carolina specifically to take part in school desegregation. Barber grew up to become the president of the largest state NAACP conference in the South, the architect of the weekly "Moral Monday" protests that made national news, and — with Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis — co-chair of a revived Poor People's Campaign carrying Martin Luther King Jr.'s unfinished 1968 agenda into the present.

Durham and Goldsboro

Barber earned his B.A. at North Carolina Central University in Durham, where he served as student government president, organized MLK Day programs, and led a successful campaign to establish an on-campus voting precinct. He went on to Duke Divinity School for his Master of Divinity and later a Doctor of Ministry from Drew University. In 1993 he was installed as pastor of Greenleaf Christian Church in Goldsboro, Wayne County — the pulpit he held for roughly thirty years while under his leadership the congregation invested more than \$1.5 million in community housing, senior care, and preschool development.

Moral Mondays

Barber became president of the North Carolina NAACP State Conference in 2006. Starting in December 2006 he convened Historic Thousands on Jones Street, an annual coalition march on Raleigh that grew from roughly 3,500 participants in 2007 to an estimated 15,000 by 2012. In April 2013 that coalition-building became something more confrontational: weekly "Moral Monday" civil-disobedience protests at the North Carolina General Assembly, opposing rollbacks to voting rights, Medicaid expansion, education funding, and unemployment benefits. More than a thousand people were arrested over the course of the campaign — exact cumulative counts vary by source and cutoff date, but the number consistently runs past one thousand. He stepped down as NC NAACP president in 2017 to help lead a national relaunch of King's Poor People's Campaign.

"We are being called like our foremothers to be the moral defibrillators of our time... We must shock this nation with the power of love." — Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II

The Poor People's Campaign

Co-chaired with Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, the revived Poor People's Campaign staged forty days of coordinated state-capitol actions beginning in May 2018, culminating in a rally on the National Mall on June 23, 2018, with more than two thousand arrests recorded across the campaign. Barber was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship in 2018 "for building broad-based fusion coalitions as part of a moral movement to confront racial and economic inequality," and in 2021 delivered the homily at the Presidential Inaugural Prayer Service. Since 2022 he has directed the Center for Public Theology & Public Policy at Yale Divinity School while continuing to organize from the pulpit.

Love Forward Together

Barber's organizing has never stopped being a North Carolina project even as his platform went national. In February 2026 his organization, Repairers of the Breach, ran a six-city "Love Forward Together" mobilization tour — Durham, Asheville, Greensboro, Fayetteville, Greenville, and Wilson — building toward a fifty-mile march from Wilson to Raleigh. On the tour he told crowds plainly what the strategy was: turning out infrequent, low-wage, and poor voters as a bloc large enough to decide elections on its own terms.

"If poor and low-wage, infrequent voters can be organized around a moral agenda, they have the power to shift the outcome of every election, up and down the ballot!" — Rev. Dr. William J.

Barber II

NC Local Lens

Barber's home base has always been North Carolina — Durham for his education, Goldsboro for three decades in the pulpit, Raleigh for the movement he built — but the documented Cumberland County connection is specific and recent rather than a long-standing local tie, and this entry represents it at that scale rather than a larger one. On Thursday, February 5, 2026, the Love Forward Together tour held a "Moral Mass Meeting" at Crossroads Church of Fayetteville on McArthur Road, drawing roughly 125 people. Local outlet CityView NC covered the event directly, reporting Barber's remarks on turnout and gerrymandering alongside a featured local speaker, seventeen-year-old Fayetteville mother Kimberly Rocha. The Fayetteville Resistance Coalition, a local organizing group, listed the same event independently, and Repairers of the Breach's own tour schedule confirms it as one leg of the six-city tour. No earlier Fayetteville or Cumberland County visit, arrest, or organizing presence by Barber was found in this research pass — this entry treats February 5, 2026 as a genuine, documented, single-night visit, not a sustained local base.

Sourcing Caveats for Future Sessions

NC NAACP presidency start year: most sources converge on 2006, though a minority (including NPR and the MacArthur Foundation) cite 2005 — not fully reconciled here.

2013 Moral Monday arrest totals: sources range from "more than 1,050" to "over 1,200" — present as "more than a thousand," not a precise figure, unless a firmer count is located.

Repairers of the Breach founding year: the organization's own site says 2015; outside sources say 2014 — unresolved.

The Feb. 2026 tour's culminating march dates: WRAL and the organization's own schedule give slightly different date ranges for the Wilson-to-Raleigh march itself; this does not affect the Feb. 5 Fayetteville date, which all sources agree on.

Citations

Chicago Notes-Bibliography style, primary and institutional sources.

1. "A Fiery Force For The Left: North Carolina NAACP Chief William Barber To Step Down," NPR, May 11, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/05/11/527901054/a-fiery-force-for-the-left-north-carolina-naacp-chief-william-barber-to-step-dow>.
2. "William J. Barber II," MacArthur Foundation, Class of 2018 Fellows, accessed September 13, 2026, <https://www.macfound.org/fellows/class-of-2018/william-j-barber-ii>.
3. "Our Founder," Repairers of the Breach, accessed September 13, 2026, <https://breachrepairers.org/about-us/our-founder/>.
4. "Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II: On a Mission to Serve," North Carolina Central University News, accessed September 13, 2026, <https://www.nccu.edu/news/rev-dr-william-j-barber-ii-mission-serve>.
5. "Rev. William Barber urges people in Fayetteville to vote," CityView NC, accessed September 13, 2026, <https://www.cityviewnc.com/stories/civil-rights-leader-urges-fayetteville-residents-to-make-change-by-voting/>.
6. "Love Forward Together Mobilization Tour," Fayetteville Resistance Coalition, accessed September 13, 2026, <https://www.fayettevilleresistancecoalition.org/events/love-forward-together-mobilization-tour>.
7. "Love Forward Together Mobilization Tour," Repairers of the Breach, accessed September 13, 2026, <https://breachrepairers.org/get-involved/events/love-forward-mobilization-tour/>.

Prepared by the Two Americas research process. Verify all figures against primary sources before publication if stronger originals become available.