

# THE PROGRESSIVE NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION, INC.

601 - 50th Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20019  
202-396-0558  
1-800-876-7622  
202-398-4998 (FAX)

[EMAIL:OFFICE@PNBC.ORG](mailto:EMAIL:OFFICE@PNBC.ORG)

**DR. JAMES C. PERKINS**  
PRESIDENT

**DR. KIP BANKS**  
INTERIM GENERAL SECRETARY

EQUIPPING PASTORS  
AND CHURCHES  
TO BE EFFECTIVE IN MINISTRY;  
LIFTING OUR VOICE ON  
BEHALF OF THE VOICELESS

## SO, WHAT'S NEXT FOR FERGUSON?

(Washington, D.C.) September 8, 2014. No spiritually and socially sensitive soul could examine the events that occurred in Ferguson, Missouri, without simultaneously feeling the pain and deep hurt that the family of Michael Brown must have felt, and the deep anger and frustration that erupted into riots in the streets.

To pump six bullets into an unarmed 18-year-old boy who was standing more than six feet from the offending officer is inexcusable. To add insult to injury, the policeman did not come forward before the public and give an account of his actions. Being black in America can make anyone paranoid given our history of race-based mistreatment. However, it appears as if a story is being compiled that skews the facts in the officer's favor. For now, all of America must wait upon the decision of the grand jury to determine if justice will prevail.

More than a tragic incident, Ferguson represents what America has become: a tinderbox of the emotions of African Americans, which is fueled by years of social and economic injustice. The racial profiling by white police, which occurs all across the land, coupled with the economic disparities that continue to exist in black communities, serve to intensify frustrations and a sense of hopelessness.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of July 2014, the unemployment rate in Detroit (my current residence) is 8.5%. The Pew Research Center states in a 2013 article by the same name that the "Black unemployment rate is consistently twice that of whites." Therefore, it is safe to assume that Detroit's unemployment rate for African Americans is a staggering 17%. In Ferguson, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the unemployment rate went from 5% in 2000 to more than 13% in 2010, meaning that more than a quarter of the African Americans were without jobs. These statistics are not anomalies.

Michael Brown was planning to enter trade school in pursuit of a career in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems (HVAC). His desire was to gain the skills to become among the employed.



Seeking long-term and full-time employment and at a minimum, a living wage, is still a dream for too many African Americans. Along with pushing for legislation to change law enforcement policing tactics, we need legislation that will create jobs. Representative John Conyers (D-MI) has introduced H.R. Bill 5330, the "Bridging Urgent Investment to Local Development Act," along with H.R. 1000, the "Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment and Training Act." These bills provide funds to hire public-service workers to meet pressing social and environmental needs. According to the American Society of Engineers, our nation needs to invest approximately \$2.7 trillion in roads, bridges, water/sewage systems, electrical grids, and ports by 2020. Left unaddressed, it will mean more frequent power outages, traffic jams, and continued dangerous accidents of bridges collapsing, as have been occurring in recent years.

As President-Elect of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., I have been asking myself what our response to Ferguson should be. It's not enough to continue to accentuate the negative, but to accentuate the positive by becoming proactive. August 28 marked the 50th year of the March On Washington and Dr. King's immortal "I Have a Dream" speech. The marchers were there to call the nation's attention to the need for jobs and justice. I will be asking all PNBC pastors and churches to join me in collaborating with other groups to push for the passage of these two above-noted bills. Unless we can help our people find respectable employment, the gulf between the wealthy and the poor will only continue to widen.

Additionally, we must have strong voter registration efforts. We have to impress upon our people the power of their vote. To not vote is to concede victory to people who do not have our best interest on their agenda. The PNBC is collaborating with the African-American Clergy Network and the Congressional Black Caucus to conduct a nationwide voter education, registration, and participation campaign. Freedom Sunday is scheduled for September 21. On this day, churches from around the country will participate in planning meetings to prepare for Turnout Sunday (November 2) events that will lead to robust Black voter engagement on November 4. Your assistance is needed. If your church would like to participate in Freedom Sunday and the entire voter registration campaign, please call the PNBC offices at 202-396-0558 or email [info@pnbc.org](mailto:info@pnbc.org).

We have to sound the alarm of the urgency of this moment. We must elect people into office who will set policies that reflect our best interests. The best way to respond to Ferguson is to actively participate in movements that will eliminate the conditions that are the cause of African American unrest – lack of jobs and racial injustice!

PNBC currently operates throughout the United States in four national regions (Eastern, Midwest, Southern, and Southwest) and one international region. The PNBC membership is estimated to be 1.5 million members in the United States.

**Rev. Dr. James C. Perkins**  
**President**  
**Progressive National Baptist Convention**