Moral Mondays leader starts 'moral revolution' tour

by Adelle M. Banks

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(RNS) The leader of the "Moral Mondays" movement and a prominent New York minister are joining forces for a 15-state "moral revolution" tour to counter the nation's conservative voices.

"Way too much of our national discourse has been poisoned by hateful language and policies," said William J. Barber II, who brought thousands to weekly protests at the North Carolina General Assembly, in an announcement. "True faith and true evangelicalism place love, justice, and compassion at the center of our public life."

James A. Forbes Jr., senior minister emeritus of New York's Riverside Church, will join Barber for the tour beginning April 3 in New York and continuing through 14 more states.

Barber and Forbes hope to galvanize clergy and others to gather at state capitols on three consecutive Mondays in September, as well as after the Republican and Democratic national conventions, the Associated Press reported.

"We will be crying out that America's problems cannot be solved without looking at the moral and spiritual values which are presently driving this nation," Forbes said.

The ministers will be joined by Traci Blackmon, a United Church of Christ executive and leader in the response in Ferguson, Missouri, to the 2014 police shooting death of Michael Brown; and Sister Simone Campbell, who started the Nuns on the Bus tours of the country in 2012 to protest budget cuts that affected the poor.

The new tour will feature training in "moral political organizing," followed by revival services, the first of which will occur at a Reform synagogue in Raleigh, North Carolina, on April 4, the anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, and his sermon at Riverside exactly a year before.

"In reference to the Vietnam War in his 1967 sermon, Dr. King told the nation that 'silence was betrayal,'" Barber said. "If silence was betrayal in the 1960s, revival is a necessity in 2016."