POVERTY AND RACISM

Overlapping Threats to the Common Good

FACILITATION GUIDE ON RACIAL JUSTICE AND ANTI-RACIST WORK FOR DIOCESAN DIRECTORS OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Catholic Charities USA.
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Our society is in a new moment confronting the persistent sin of racism. As leaders of Catholic Charities, how are we called to engage? Catholic Charities USA recently published a revised version of its policy paper, “Poverty and Racism: Overlapping Threats to the Common Good,” as a means to re-think and integrate our personal, agency and larger Church institutional work for racial justice. We recognize that racial justice involves a long-term commitment.

This facilitation guide provides a framework for engaging in this challenging anti-racist work. It requires that we look at our own personal journey, assist our agency by asking questions and engage our staff, board and community in dialogue and action.

This guide, like the policy paper, is based on the Church’s methodological tradition of “See, Judge and Act” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2423), rooted in prayer and the mission of Catholic Charities to Serve, Advocate and Convene. Through the following actions, you and your team will be better able to see the world around us: reflecting on our own experience and engaging in social analysis; making judgments about our reality through the lens of Scripture and Catholic social and moral doctrine; acting through the means of services that empower and heal; advocating for just social structures; and convening the Church and others of goodwill to do the same.

As a Catholic Charities leader, it will be important that you don’t try to do this alone as you face racial pain and move toward healing and justice within yourself, your agency and your community. This is hard work. Find allies, mentors, support groups and friends to ensure you have the energy, commitment and support to move forward. This journey is not about “checking the box” on diversity but is about honestly and humbly facing and healing deep-seated wounds of racism. In short, it is nothing less than working to transform our society (cf. National Catholic Charities, Cadre Report, 1972) beginning with ourselves and our own agencies.
You will face resistance, denial, rage, deep sorrow, fervor, cynicism, fatigue and resignation. You will also encounter creativity, commitment, good will and support in unexpected places. In this process, we will accompany each other as we do the work of the Gospel.

What follows are a series of reflective questions and suggestions to guide you on your journey. It may be helpful to first answer the questions for yourself, followed by sharing with your leadership team and/or board as appropriate, and then engaging with staff in dialogue sessions. Each step in the guide is structured to start with the individual leader, then to address the agency's internal situation and its work within and for the Church, and finally to help you engage your community. If the questions make you uncomfortable, sit with the discomfort. Don’t try to soften it. You don’t need to follow this guide in a linear way or utilize all the suggested questions and action steps. If you or your agency need to face a particular aspect of racism at this time, then go to that section. You may have better questions and better resources to lead the dialogue you need; you may have different action steps that worked or failed. Finally, trust that God's abundant love surrounds you, your team and your community throughout this effort.
PRAY

This entire process should be rooted in prayer and reflection. You may find it helpful to select a specific passage of Scripture to reflect on personally and as a board, leadership team and staff as you seek to see, judge and act. (see Lectio divina process for insights).

Lectio Divina

*Lectio Divina* (literally *divine reading*) is a way of becoming personally immersed in the Scriptures. It draws on the way Jews read the *Haggadah*, a text read during Passover that retells the Exodus story. *Haggadah* means “telling” and along with being a physical text, the word captures the practice of telling and retelling a story. This is only one method of engaging the Scriptures.

You do not have to be a Catholic, a Christian or hold to any faith, to engage in this process. This method can also be used with any text.

One Scripture passage often used in the Catholic Charities ministry is the Parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10: 25-37*). (See “CCUSA New Moment: Envisioning the Ministry of Catholic Charities, 2017” for an analysis and reflection on this passage; also, see page 13 for other scriptural passages).

If you select this parable regarding the Good Samaritan, here are some focused questions for discussion and reflection:

On one level: where do “you” or “we” fit into the story? Are you the attacked, the attacker, the bystanders, the one who “passes on the other side,” the Samaritan, the animal or the Innkeeper?

On another level: In reflection, some readers might identify with a character while others may explore an experience or a feeling. For example, in light of hearing and seeing incidents of racism or discrimination (knee on the neck or “I can’t breathe”) do you find yourself content to play the part of the unnamed player in the story, perhaps feeling disconnected, self-satisfied, righteous, afraid, or a safely-positioned beneficiary observer of the unfolding drama?
SEE

“To See” is to continuously reflect on “my” and “our” (group, agency, community) experience and observations on racism and racial justice. This includes: a) reflecting on past and present experiences and b) using social sciences to analyze local, national and global realities. “Seeing” involves developing awareness, gathering information and data, and speaking with people (especially those most impacted by your/our work) to understand current realities. Catholic tradition calls this “reading the signs of the times.” (Gaudium et spes, 4)

Read the Signs of the Times

“The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World” (Gaudium et spes, 1965) was one of the last documents published during the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II).

Paragraph 4. “To carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which (people) ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often-dramatic characteristics.

Paragraph 9. “However, it must not be forgotten that the passing of time and the changing of social circumstances will require a constant updating of the reflections on the various issues raised here, in order to interpret the new signs of the times.”
Preparatory Reading

To help develop a “heart that sees,” ground yourself in the teachings of the Church and of Catholic Charities on racism.

Start by reading two statements:


Reflect on your own experiences with racism. Here are some questions for personal reflection:

- How has my life been shaped by race? What was I taught about race growing up in my family, church, school, culture or social clubs?
- Have I spoken up to counter a racist statement, action, joke or policy?
- Have I spoken up to support a different point of view, or a non-traditional candidate for a job?
- How have I responded when a person said, “I am not a racist, but…”?
- When have I acted in a manner that another may consider to be racist?
- Can I remember a time when I failed to act or speak up when I encountered a racist comment, action or policy?

Pastoral Letter Against Racism – Examining our sinfulness

Read this quote from the USCCB “Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love - A Pastoral Letter Against Racism” (2018).

“Examining our sinfulness—individually, as the Christian community, and as a society—is a humbling experience. Only from a place of humility can we look honestly at past failures, ask for forgiveness, and move toward healing and reconciliation. This requires us to acknowledge sinful deeds and thoughts, and to ask for forgiveness. The truth is that the sons and daughters of the Catholic Church have been complicit in the evil of racism.” (page 21).
How have I suffered from racism?

Have I accompanied those most impacted by racism? If so, how?

Have I seen institutions governed by persons of color decline? If so, was the decline due to racism?

Book Club Idea


Other books and articles can be found at these links:

NCR On-line bibliography
With whom have I spoken to recently that may have had a different experience from me about racism? What did I learn?

What does “color blind” mean to me? Might being “color blind” be insufficient to address racism?

How do I react when I hear “white privilege”? “white space”? “white supremacy”? What does that mean to me?

Have I benefited from or suffered from white privilege?

For group reflections:

What insights about yourself would you like to share with the group?

Engage in social analysis and read the “signs of the times.” Here are some questions for group dialogue and research:

Do racial discrimination “embers” burn in our agency or community? If so, what incident could “spark” into full disruption?

Does disaggregated data show a correlation between poverty and race in your community?

When we disaggregate the data in our community (housing, health, education, poverty, etc.) what story is it telling us?

What might your community’s pain index look like?

Community Racial Pain Index

A racial pain index is a method that analyzes various data points focusing on racial discrimination and income inequality in your community. The San Jose State University Human Rights Institute (https://www.sjsu.edu/hri/) developed such a report for Santa Clara County.

You might want to consider connecting with a local university or research center to engage in a similar study in your community.
**Segregated by Design**

Watch and discuss *Segregated by Design*

How is this happening or how did this happen in your community?

What forces are at work in your community that may be racist?

Other resources you may want to consider to probe this issue in more depth:


[www.youtu.be/yOoIlK_okWw](http://www.youtu.be/yOoIlK_okWw)

Is our agency a safe space in which staff and community members can openly discuss race, racism, their personal experiences, and other related topics? Do we listen? Consider using Listening Circles to organize such a safe space. To learn more about how you can use Listening Circles, please visit:
[www.co-intelligence.org/P-listeningcircles.html](http://www.co-intelligence.org/P-listeningcircles.html)

In what ways might the written or spoken words we use communicate racial bias?

How has our Catholic Charities agency been engaged in racial justice work?

How does our agency's board of directors reflect the community we serve?

Do you think we make assumptions about the people we serve? Do those assumptions perpetuate inequities?
JUDGE

“To Judge” is to engage in a continuous process of ethical reflection on my/our experiences, social analysis and actions. In the biblical sense of the term, “to judge” means to bring into the light and throw into sharp relief. As Catholic Charities we rely on a) Scripture, b) the teachings of the Catholic Church, and c) reason for insights.

What does Scripture say?

One key insight comes from the first chapter of Genesis.

Read and discuss:

“Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness.” (Gen 1:26)

What does this passage mean to you? How do we live it out? If we believed this, how would it affect our work for racial justice?

A Reflection on the Image and Likeness of God (Genesis 1:26)

God's word proclaims the oneness of the human family -- from the first words of Genesis, to the “Come, Lord Jesus” of the Book of Revelation. God’s word in Genesis announces that all men and women are created in God’s image; not just some races and racial types, but all bear the imprint of the Creator and are enlivened by the breath of His one Spirit.


Scripture passages to read and discuss:

Genesis 1:26-27
Mark 12:28-34
Acts 10:34-36
Galatians 3:27-29
1 John 2:7-11
1 John 4:16-21

You may find it helpful to consult with someone knowledgeable about Scripture when considering these or other passages. Local diocesan, parish, or school staff may be willing to help.

How authentic and transparent is our resolve to end systemic racism?

How do we embrace reconciliation within our agency?

How have I used my role to foster racial equity?

What does our Tradition say?

The “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church” provides a rich resource on the social teachings of the Church.

What does Catholic social doctrine teach about racism?
Discussion Resource Guide

Consider using The Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center, Open Wide Our Hearts—the Enduring Call to Love, a four-session process on the USCCB Pastoral on Racism.

[Website Link]

Read and Discuss:


2. Your local Bishop’s/Diocese’s Statement on Racism or related document.


How does this selection from the CCUSA Policy Paper (2020) impact you?

“Our reflection leads us to conclude that our national commitment to racial equality has been half-hearted, at best. Thus, we call for a new commitment to the project of genuine racial equality. We believe that the proposals we advocate (here) will contribute to this goal. Yet, until the reality of white privilege is forthrightly acknowledged and addressed, genuine racial equality will be unattainable. Therefore, we call upon scholars, activists, theologians and pastors to help all Americans to deepen our understanding of white privilege and the ethical challenges it poses for a nation struggling to commit itself to genuine racial equality.” (page 21).

How can we make our “commitment to racial equality” front and center in our work?
How does using our Reason (social, political and economic theory) give insights?

Based on your social analysis (“See”), what philosophical arguments are used to justify inequality and racial distinctions in general? What philosophical arguments are being used to justify inequality and racial distinctions in your local community?

What are some philosophical arguments for anti-racist understandings?

Insights from Political and Economic Philosophy

Read and discuss:

“All human societies must justify their inequalities; unless reasons for them are found, the whole political and social edifice stands in danger of collapse. Every epoch therefore develops a range of contradictory discourses and ideologies for the purpose of legitimizing the inequality that already exists or that people believe should exist.”

“From this historical analysis one important conclusion emerges: what made economic development and human progress possible was the struggle for equality and education and not the sanctification of property, stability or inequality.”


For other insights and reading lists:


The Institute for Black Catholic Studies and The Center for Equity, Justice, and the Human Spirit, Xavier University of Louisiana, Research and Tools https://xula.edu/research-and-tools.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1podP8zuCo6q3WkWV3dXXPljNOqKvShFyv3VpL0rL5bkU8/edit
As a ministry, Catholic Charities calls for the commitments listed below in our Policy Paper, (page 27). How have we lived these out? How can we live these out?

Address each strategic initiative from the perspective of how this program or policy will benefit the lives of persons of color;

Incorporate in our publications a conscious and intentional advocacy for racial justice as a constitutive aspect of our self-understanding;

Through candid discussion and study, deepen our understanding of the reality of white privilege and how it affects our agencies, policies, and relationships with employees and clients of color;

Engage in a serious examination of our own recruitment, employment, promotion, and vending practices to ensure that we are exemplary models of the anti-racism stance we advocate for others (see CCUSA Cultural Assessment Guide for some insights.)

Cultivate a stance of proactive solidarity and strong partnerships with communities of color, both nationally and locally, as a step toward overcoming our blindness to racial privilege and becoming better advocates for racial justice in both our Church and society.

Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), Cultural Assessment Guide

"To Act" regards the concrete responses we take predicated upon “seeing” and “judging.” As Catholic Charities we are called to act by 1) serving, 2) advocating and 3) convening. We can do these three elements as a) individuals, b) as agencies and c) as leaders in the community and within the Church itself.

Here are some action ideas for your consideration:

**As an Individual Leader of a Catholic Charities Agency (Serve, Advocate, Convene)**

Consider publishing a statement, with your bishop’s support and in collaboration with your board of directors, on racial justice.

Be available in the community. Show up. Be seen but LISTEN.

Engage with the community to cooperatively plan, support and participate in annual Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) days; Hispanic Heritage Month observances, Juneteenth Celebrations, etc.

Engage in community coalitions seeking racial justice.

Help support, expand, create, or support local Police-Civilian Review Boards in your community and support efforts to counter racially-biased law enforcement and training for de-escalation.

Help with or set up a Coalition for Community Reinvestment regarding the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA).
What is the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA)?

The Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), enacted in 1977, requires the Federal Reserve and other federal banking regulators to encourage financial institutions to help meet the credit needs of the communities in which they do business, including low- and moderate-income (LMI) neighborhoods.

To learn more about the CRA and building community coalitions to ensure its compliance in your community, visit the National Community Reinvestment Coalition. https://ncrc.org/about/

Actively engage in fair housing issues and preventing NIMBYism.

Actively engage in anti-predatory lending coalitions.

Work with a community credit union or Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI).

Work with local Equal Employment Opportunity Commissions (EEOC).

Work with local Public Housing Authorities.

Engage with local Health Boards.

Engage with local Education Boards.

Clearly and respectfully point out institutional racism in my agency, church and community. Speak up.

Leadership Insights

An interesting article on leadership lessons for reflection and discussion:

As a Catholic Charities Agency (Serve, Advocate, Convene)

How might you develop an anti-racist culture within your agency?

Review the composition of your board and your leadership team. How does your board and management represent the community you serve and the makeup of your staff?

Catholic Charities USA Resource

Read, discuss, consider: “Assessment Guidelines for Culturally Responsive Organizations or Programs” to review your organizational culture and processes.

www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/resource/assessment-guidelines-for-culturally-responsive-organizations-or-programs/

What are some ways that your board and management team actively promote anti-racist policies, behaviors and attitudes?

What strategies have you found to be successful in including the voices of those who are marginalized in your decision-making process?

How does your staff reflect the community you serve?

What cultural competency programs have you found successful?

Review your investment portfolio. Where is your money invested? Does the bank you use actively promote and implement the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA)?

Are there minority-owned or community-owned credit unions in which you can invest in and use?
Review your buying power: What type of vendors do you use? How do you advertise opportunities to be a vendor with your agency? Do you specifically advertise in communication channels that reach minority-owned businesses? Do you prioritize minority-owned vendors?

Engage with your Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) staff to reach out to funded groups working in this area of racial justice; or, find or start groups to be funded by local/national CCHD.

Analyze agency programs:

Has using a racial justice lens impacted your services’ locations, outcomes and processes?

How do your programs model cultural sensitivity and competency?

Have you considered incorporating an integral human development perspective in your planning and actions?

**Integral Human Development**

Articulated by Pope Paul VI in “On the Development of Peoples” (Populorum Progressio, 1967, paragraph 14), integral human development is the holistic development of the human person covering all aspects of life: social, economic, political, cultural, personal and spiritual.

While the pursuit of integral human development may not directly lead to the eradication of racism, it can help our society be more human so that people of color might enjoy a better quality of life. Basing our programming on the integral human development model will help overcome the effects of racism by helping our clients to reach their full potential.

Social Policy Priorities

What steps do you take to develop your public policy advocacy platform? Do you involve people of color in that process?

Review the public policy issues in Catholic Charities USA’s “Poverty and Racism: Overlapping Threats to the Common Good” (pages 21-25).

Develop a process to advocate for these issues at the local, state and national levels.

Connect with the CCUSA Social Policy team for analysis of various issues and tools for advocacy.

Role as Convener: A Case Study

Consider becoming a funding source for impacted communities of color to organize themselves. In this manner, you could empower these groups to convene others in the community with whom they want to engage. That process could greatly assist local communities, governments and businesses in collaborating together for the common good.

For a case study, visit Catholic Community Services of Western Washington’s (Seattle) Village Spirit Center for Community Change and Healing and their work with the Black Community Impact Alliance.

https://ccsww.org/get-help/housing/permanent-housing/village-spirit-center/

www.bcia-intl.org/
Have you convened other agencies in your community to be active in the work of racial justice?

How do you show up as a humble ally while demonstrating responsible leadership in anti-racist work?

Catholic Charities within Leadership of the Church (Serve, Advocate, Convene)

Offer your individual and agency services to the Office of the Bishop and invite him to collaborate with you.

Offer to help your bishop convene racial justice leaders in the community at the chancery, deanery or local parish to listen, learn and engage with them.

Assist your bishop to engage in Martin Luther King Jr Days or Hispanic month activities, etc.

Engage with your Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) staff to reach out to funded groups working in this area of racial justice or poverty reduction; or find or start groups to be funded by local and national CCHD.

Engage with your (arch)diocesan leaders of various multicultural ministries, including the National Black Catholic Congress and the Encuentro processes.

Engage with local religious orders and congregations of women and men who are involved or want to get involved in anti-racist work.

Convene pastors and parish leaders to engage and collaborate with local racial justice groups (NAACP, Urban League, Hispanic groups, Black lives matter grassroots movements, UNIDOS US, Asian organizations, Community Action Agencies, etc.) and to participate in community events (MLK day, Hispanic month, etc.). Organize volunteer opportunities connected to these events.

Convene ecumenical and inter-faith leaders to engage in racial justice work.

Utilize the Church calendar to work with your diocesan Office of Worship to offer General Prayers of the Faithful to all parishes on certain holy days, etc.
September 9-Feast of St. Peter Claver

Consider convening your staff and others to pray and learn together on or about September 9 each year to reflect on the life and work of Saint Peter Claver.

Black Catholic History Month

Find ways to educate, celebrate and engage the agency, parishes and the community at large in celebrating Black Catholic History Month in November. The Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. and other dioceses have developed resources for this month:

Offer catechetical opportunities at parishes, Catholic schools and other venues, on Catholic social doctrine related to racial justice.

Clearly and respectfully point out institutional racism in your church. Speak out.
Conclusion

See, Judge, Act is a cyclical process. Once you have done these or various “actions” of Service, Advocacy and Convening, rooted in prayer, you can start the process again to “see” and “judge” their effectiveness in dealing with racial justice and healing at the personal level, the agency level, and the community level. And continue to Act. And See. And Judge. And Act. . .

Other Resources

Catholic Charities USA Racial Justice Member Resource Page
www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/forums/forum/racial-equity-and-inclusion/


The Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center, “Open Wide Our Hearts—the Enduring Call to Love”, a four-session process on the USCCB Pastoral on Racism.
www.ipjc.org/open-wide-our-hearts-the-enduring-call-to-love/

www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/resource/racial-justice-resources-by-sr-janet-schaeffler-op/

USCCB Racism Page

The mission of Catholic Charities is to provide service to people in need, to advocate for justice in social structures, and to call the entire church and other people of good will to do the same.