



## Public Policy Proposals

# Poverty and Racism: Overlapping Threats to the Common Good

Catholic Charities USA renews its commitment to racial equity as a national goal and priority with a call to our sisters and brothers to advocate for some specific policy proposals. We want to address inequity and know that there are some critical ways to prod us to take concerted action toward and contribute to this goal.<sup>2</sup> It is our strong belief that any strategy to reduce poverty in America must also confront the deep connection between racism and poverty.<sup>3</sup> A new way of understanding what it means to be "American," and who is included in that self-understanding, is urgently needed for both the integrity of our faith and our survival as a nation. Given the momentous shift occurring in our racial demographics, tolerating racial injustice and economic deprivation are realities we can no longer afford to indulge.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, we will continue to advocate about these following issues:

### Improved Fair Housing Laws

- Stricter enforcement of fair housing laws and adequate funding of those agencies charged with administering, monitoring, and enforcing existing laws against racial housing discrimination;
- Greater accountability and transparency in the mortgage industry (e.g. Community Reinvestment Act);
- More effective oversight of lending agencies to ensure equal access to the funding necessary to obtain housing financing.

### Increased Federal Funding for Affordable Housing

- Increased federal support in building more affordable housing, including full funding of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit and its related programs;
- Expanding other opportunities for people of color to purchase their own homes;
- Intentionally include Communities of Color in federal mortgage guarantees.

### Stronger Laws to Punish Predatory Lenders

- Stronger laws to punish predatory lenders;
- Cap the interest that can be charged for short-term loans;
- Greater transparency of the conditions of such loans in a language that is accessible for those who might have limited education or English proficiency.

### Progressive Affirmative Action Policies in Education and Employment

- Sustain affirmative action in employment and education which will address and rectify the pervasive discrimination and social stigma suffered by people of color and women;
- Increase aggressive recruitment and targeted advertising campaigns;
- Offer remedial education and job training programs;
- Vigilant enforcement of nondiscrimination laws;
- Flexible hiring goals, recruitment targets, and promotion timetables.

### Quality Educational Opportunity for Poor and Disadvantaged People

- Equalize the funding of public education across metropolitan areas to enhance quality public instruction for all.

### “Digital Inclusion” and Access to Technology

- Increased measures that provide low-cost or free Internet access to impoverished communities of color.

### Comprehensive Immigration Reform

- Create greater legal avenues for necessary workers to enter the United States;
- Promote the success of newcomers;
- Improve the economic prospects, health care access, and safe working conditions for all U.S. residents.

### Comprehensive Criminal Justice Reform

- Comprehensive support for newly released individuals so that they can make a better transition back into their communities and become economically productive citizens;
- Restore voting rights for returning citizens.

### Investments in the Nation’s Social Safety Net

People of color disproportionately rely on the social safety net of our country. Programs such as food stamps (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), Medicaid, and Medicare are essential to the survival of many low-income families. Catholic Charities USA continues to call upon the federal and state governments to strengthen and protect these vital programs. We further call for programmatic reforms to address barriers that keep eligible families from accessing these programs:

- Address each Catholic Charities USA 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;
- 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.



<sup>1</sup>Catholic Charities USA. Poverty and Racism: Overlapping Threats to the Common Good. (Alexandria, VA, 2020), pg. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pg. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pg. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pg. 28.