

JOURNEY TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

Catholic Charities Inaugural Symposium

Good Trouble: Alliances for Racial Justice Reflection Guide



Dear Friends:

On behalf of the Education Committee of the Associated Catholic Charities' Centennial Celebration Committee, we welcome you to our inaugural symposium, "Journey to Social Justice: A Call to Action." This year's topic is "Good Trouble: Alliances for Racial Justice." It is the hope of the members of the committee that you will find our interactive conversations helpful in the formation of vibrant alliances, for addressing current and future racial justice issues.

The materials that follow are intended for reflection on pressing racial justice concerns. Noting that we come from a variety of backgrounds, the package is designed to have us reflect on, and/or gain insight into, seminal issues of our day. As you review the materials, you are asked to record your responses so that you will be better prepared to bring your thoughts, insights, and feelings into the Symposium conversation. If possible, you may want to consider committing your responses to a journal for longer term reference with your notes from the Symposium.

We are excited about our gathering, and we are hopeful about the potential it represents in the future directions of the ministries of social justice and our work together. We are grateful for your willingness to participate in this significant event. We look forward to seeing you.

With Best Regards,

Rodney Lee and Val Twanmoh,
Centennial Education Committee Co-Chairs

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INTRODUCTION

In order to engage with others in the work of racial justice, it is necessary for people to have an awareness of their own motivations and perceptions thereby, increasing their ability to cross-over into the experiences of others. With this deeper understanding of ourselves, we become more inclined toward recognition and acceptance of difference, which is an essential component of the work of racial justice.

Racial justice, like all other aspects of justice, requires a commitment to the mandate that all human beings be:

- 1) treated with dignity;
- 2) allowed to seek the common good in and through the formation of communities and families;
- 3) afforded the protection of their fundamental human rights, and the exercise of their accompanying responsibilities;
- 4) assisted in basic survival, with the poor and most vulnerable given priority;
- 5) given the opportunity for dignified work, and fair wages;
- 6) allowed to live in solidarity without regard to nationality, race, ethnicity, and ideological and economic differences; and
- 7) required, out of a moral and ethical necessity, to care for the earth.

The **Good Trouble Reflection Package** is designed to assist participants in beginning the process of self-discovery, and alliance building, for the work of racial justice. It is a simple tool for reflecting upon the complex relationship between justice and righteousness, equality and fairness, discrimination and xenophobia.

Instructions:

It is suggested that you:

- 1) select a time when you can be calm;
- 2) write down your responses;
- 3) share your responses with others, but only to the extent and degree to which you are comfortable; and
- 4) bring your responses with you to the Symposium.

Reflection Component One:

Justice and Righteousness

The concept of justice has its roots in the ancient term “righteousness”. In an over simplified manner, righteousness may be referred to as a life posture of giving that which is due to the other. It is a moral/ethical standard by which human life is regarded as having intrinsic value, in and of itself. That intrinsic value, inner worth, forms the basis for how human activity is regulated. People are, therefore, expected to treat one another with the respect accorded them by virtue of their fundamental humanity. In terms of justice, we are to treat one another rightly. We are not to wrong one another by devaluing the humanity of a person.

1. How do you regard your humanity; that is, to what degree do you treat yourself as having intrinsic value? Be specific.
2. How is your humanity regarded by those around you; that is to what extent are you treated by others as having intrinsic value? Be specific.
3. In your opinion, and based on your experience, are Asian and Pacific Islander Peoples treated justly in the United States? What if any legislations need to be enacted for their protection? Why?
4. In your opinion, and based on your experience, are members of the Muslim Tradition treated justly in the United States? What if any legislations need to be enacted for their protection? Why?
5. In your opinion, and based on your experience, are members of the LGBTQ Community treated justly in the United States? What if any legislations need to be enacted for their protection? Why?

Reflection Component Two:

Equity and Fairness

By virtue of their existence, human beings have a fundamental right to be treated with equity and fairness; that is, a right to be treated in an impartial fashion, free from bias, and dishonesty in the pursuit of opportunities and resources. This is foundational to every human person, without regard to: economic status, racial and/or ethnic background, religious beliefs, or ideological perspectives, or differing abilities. For this reason, we are not to treat people in an unfair or inequitable fashion.

1. What is your understanding of what it means to be treated with fairness? How does the unfair treatment of others impact your life?
2. Why is equity an issue in the systems of public education?
3. Why are policies that provide oversight of mortgage lending necessary tools for equity and fairness?
4. Why are legislations necessary for the treatment of people with differing abilities?
5. What is the significance of the Supreme Court case *Brown versus the Board of Education*?
6. Based on your observations and experience, are members of the LGBTQ Community treated with equity and fairness? Why?
7. Based on your observations and experience, are members of the Black Community treated with equity and fairness in housing? Why?

Reflection Component Three:

Discrimination and Xenophobia

Discrimination and xenophobia consist of systematic strategies and ideologies designed for the sole purpose of de-humanizing groups of people, who are of a different: race, culture, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, and/ or different abilities. Driven by hatred, racial discrimination and xenophobia seek to reduce human persons to objects or things, not living breathing, self-reflective beings. Through the use of hate-speech, cruel nicknames, tactical bullying, and gas-lighting, perpetrators select specific groups of people for mistreatment, and death. Their discriminatory attitudes are spread through the rhetoric of fear, and even claims of unsubstantiated needs for protection from various racial and/or ethnic groups. As such, the perpetrator's brand of hatred is passed on to others, like a contagion. Hatred is a learned behavior.

Anti-Semitism

One of the most highly developed forms of discrimination is rooted in the hatred of the religious and cultural identity of members of the Jewish Community. This is an ancient hatred that some Jewish scholars cite as having existed for at least 2,300 years. Because of its devastating and destructive impact, this form of xenophobia is known as Anti-Semitism.

1. How aware are you of the members of the Jewish Community in your neighborhood? Why are you aware of their presence?
2. What do you know about such prominent historical figures as: Gamaliel I, Maimonides, Abraham Rice, Golda Meir, and Abraham Joshua Heschel?
3. What do you know about: Dachau, Buchenwald, and Birkenau? Why are these important?
4. When you have been in situations where anti-Jewish sentiments have been expressed, what was your response? Why did you respond in such a fashion? [Remember: not all responses are verbal.]
5. What do you know about the Tree of Life in Pittsburgh?
6. What do you know about the relationship between members of the Jewish Community and members of the Civil Rights Movement?
7. What do you know about Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner?

Reflection Component Four:

Racism and Indigenous Peoples

One of the well-established, and perpetuated, forms of racial discrimination is the systematic relocation and reeducation of Indigenous Peoples. This type of racism designated Indigenous Peoples as less than human, and thereby disposable. Because of this racial hatred, The Indigenous Peoples of North America were not only mistreated and killed, but also had their native homelands taken; as they were forced onto less prosperous (often arid) reservations, which still exist. Since the arrival of European explorers and the “founding of the New World,” without regard for their tribal differences, Indigenous Peoples have been and continue to be discriminated against.

1. What do you know about the re-education schools for Indigenous children and youth?
2. How aware are you of the events of Wounded Knee, and the Trail of Tears?
3. In our current age, what is the relationship between the United States Department of the Interior and the Indigenous Peoples? Why does that relationship still exist?
4. What do you know about such prominent historical figures as: Matoaka, Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Wilma Mankiller, Markwayne Mullin, and Deb Haaland?
5. Why is one of the highest rates of poverty and Covid deaths in the United States among the residents of reservations?

Reflection Component Five:

Racism and African-American and/or Black People

The racial discrimination to which the African-American Community has been subjected is designed to be protracted and systematic. For, it is rooted in monetary policies, social constructs, and legal systems that have trapped African-American People in a seemingly endless cycle of dehumanization. The protracted nature of the dehumanization is such that the Black Community's endless trauma has resulted in various inter-generational, self-destructive manifestations of untreated post-trauma and depression; thereby extending the effects of the racial discrimination. Treated as less than human, over-worked, beaten, abused, raped, and even murdered, people of African ancestry are, in the opinion of many, the most discriminated against race of people on the face of the earth. Without regard for their ethnic differences, African and/or African-descended peoples across the globe experience discrimination. It does not matter if a person is Igbo, Yoruba, Bantu, Jamaican, or African-American. The racism is ever-present.

1. What do you know about the system of enslavement that had a legal prohibition against teaching African-American People to read?
2. What do you know about Social Segregation, and Jim Crow Laws?
3. What do you know about the historical and current use of lynching Black People? What do you know about Ahmaud Arbery?
4. What is the relationship between the de-humanization of Black People and police brutality? What do you know about: Freddie Gray, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Alton Sterling, Ronald Greene, and Tyre Nichols?
5. What has been your experience of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities?
6. What is the relationship between the de-humanization of Black People and the escalating murder of African-American People by other African-American People?
7. What do you know about such prominent historical figures as: Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, Thurgood Marshall, Elijah Cummings, and Barbara Clementine Harris?

Reflection Component Six:

Xenophobia

European Cultures

By definition Xenophobia is hatred of the stranger; that is, hatred of anyone who is different from the perceived majority community. These differences may be in terms of gender, ethnicity, language, sexual identity, religion, or differing abilities. Although metropolitan areas such as Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York are known for their dynamic mixture of European cultures, it is a known fact that in the process of their assimilation into American society, members of these communities experienced intense ethnic discrimination because of their immigration from Ireland, Italy, Poland, and other Eastern European countries. Even today, remnants of these xenophobic attitudes still exist in certain areas.

Spanish Speaking Communities

With the insights from above, it is of little wonder that members of the Spanish Speaking Communities throughout the United States are experiencing xenophobia. The xenophobic reactions of the majority population are exacerbated by the large numbers of people seeking entrance to the U.S. on any given day. The seeming commonality of language, Spanish, presents the false impression that these new immigrants are one people; when in fact they represent a broad spectrum of nationalities and cultures.

1. What is the difference between immigration through El Paso and immigration through Ellis Island?
2. What do you know about the displacement of peoples due to hurricanes and volcanic eruptions in Central America?
3. What is your understanding of the current climate of political unrest that is feeding immigration movements to the United States?
4. What is your understanding of the level of poverty in Mexico and Central America? What economic incentives and foreign aid might the United States consider as a means of encouraging less immigration?
5. How does the current displacement of people due to natural disasters compare to the past displacement of people due to pathogens in potatoes?
6. How are the experiences of non-English speaking people from Spanish speaking countries different from the experiences of non-English speaking people from Italian, German, or Polish speaking countries?
7. What is the correlation between U.S. consumption of illegal drugs, and violent gang activity in Mexico and parts of Central America? What can the U.S. do to reduce American dependence on illegal drugs?

Reflection Component:

Conclusion

Good Trouble is a process. Once alliances are formed, we begin to see ways to challenge systems and people who claim that hatred and hostility are acceptable. The collective strength of alliances of **Good Trouble** allows us to stand against the de-humanization that fuels racial discrimination and xenophobia. **Good Trouble** is conscience driven. It is rooted in personal integrity, generosity of heart, and a desire to foster the common good.

In other words, **Good Trouble** is about good people doing good things for the sake of building a society in which justice and righteousness are normative. **“Good Trouble”** is the conscience-coined-utterance of the late civil rights leader and United States Congressman, John Lewis (d. 2020).

The Catholic Charities planning team deeply appreciates your having taken the time to reflect upon the materials provided here. Your insights and experiences will assist us in the process of forming alliances for the work of racial justice. Please bring your reflection package and responses with you to the symposium.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Thank you.

Dr. Greer G. Gordon
2023 symposium presenter

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