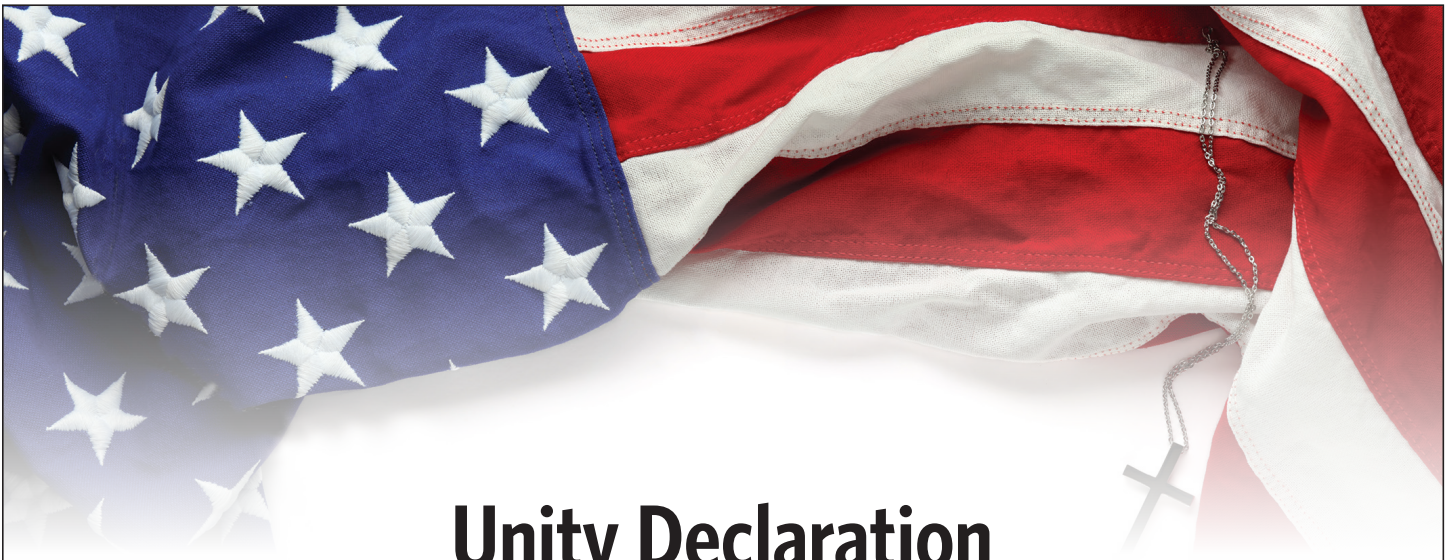


Unity Declaration on Racism and Poverty

*A diverse body of Christian leaders
calls on the churches and Congress
to focus on the integral connection.*



Unity Declaration on Racism and Poverty

As leaders from diverse families of U.S. Christianity, we are called by the Spirit to work together with new urgency against the resurgence of racism and the persistence of poverty in America. We see around us an increase of harmful attitudes and policies toward people of color and people in need. That painful reality and the current push for trillions of dollars in cuts to anti-poverty programs are bringing us together in a new way. While we have different positions on other questions, we are united on the gospel and biblical teaching on poverty and racism—feeling invited to do so by the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

We believe that racism and poverty are theological issues.

The integral relationship between poverty and racism unifies us against both. They are both issues to which the gospel of Jesus Christ speaks—which also calls us to love our neighbors, without exceptions. Our unity on these issues is because they are theological issues for us, not merely political or partisan ones. These fundamentally biblical concerns challenge all of us and both of the major political parties.

Racism is a sin that goes back to the founding of our nation. At its root, racism is in conflict with the opening declaration in Genesis 1, that we are all made in the image and likeness of God. Racism literally throws away the biblical principle of *imago dei*—the image of God in all of us, with no exceptions. Racism is a sin against God and all of God’s children. Therefore, the whole counsel of God calls us to preach against the sin of racism from all of our churches’ pulpits and call for repentance.

The body of Christ is perhaps the most diverse racial community in the world. When people of color in the body of Christ suffer—while many white members of the body of Christ do not acknowledge their pain—we are violating the principle laid down in 1 Corinthians 12: that we are one body with many parts, who suffer with and honor one another. As Galatians instructs us, “there is no more Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female, because we are all united as one in Christ” (3:28).

The historical sin of racism lingers on in America today, continuing and evolving in our social systems of economics and education, policing and criminal justice, housing and gentrification, voting rights and suppression, in our racial geography, and, painfully, in the continued segregation of our churches, which adds to our own complicity. Racism is more than individual behavior, language, and overt hostility toward particular people. Racism is systematic and structural in America and harms people of color in very specific, measurable, and tangible ways.

The failure to defend the lives and dignity of people living in poverty, by individuals or governments, is also a sin against God, with 2,000 verses in the Bible clearly outlining God’s fundamental concern for people who are poor, vulnerable, and oppressed, instructing the people of God to protect and help them and holding political leaders responsible for them. Jesus says, in Matthew 25, that how we treat the “least of these” is how we treat Christ himself.

The world and our country have made progress against poverty in recent decades. It is possible to make further progress—perhaps virtually end—hun-



ger and extreme poverty in our time. We see the alleviation of material misery as an experience of God's loving presence in our own time, and believe that God wants us to seize this opportunity.

**To our churches:
What we are doing and can do.**

Most of our churches are active in helping people in need, struggling people within their congregations or in their communities. We need to do more, but many of our churches directly help millions of people every day. Local church leaders often work to bridge the racial divides in our communities, and many are searching for authentic and specific ways to address the rise of white supremacy.

Since the God of the Bible requires social justice and charity, our churches and many of our members also work to influence public policies. Christians have a wide array of political viewpoints. But a majority of the leaders of national church bodies have spoken out repeatedly against cuts to programs that provide help and opportunity to hungry and poor people in our country and around the world. We have also spoken out against renewed expressions of white racism, ethnic nationalism, and hateful attitudes toward people of color, immigrants, refugees, Jews, and Muslims. Many of us are active in support of immigration reform, criminal justice reform, and voting rights for all.

We are deeply troubled by the budget proposals coming from Congress and the president. They outline more than \$2 trillion of cuts in programs for hungry and poor people in our country and around the world. These cuts would hurt struggling people of all races, including millions of low- and middle-income people who need safety-net programs at some time in their lives. The hardest hit would be African American, Latino, and Native American communities, where the poverty rate is already high, and

among people in the poorest countries in the world.

The threat over the coming year of this broad assault on anti-poverty programs that support families struggling to make ends meet is unifying us—bringing us together in a more vigorous, multiracial Christian movement to maintain a circle of protection around all people in poverty and God's children of color in particular, who are disproportionately impacted.

**To Congress and the White House:
Our united appeal for healing and reform
in our nation's politics.**

We appeal to the president and Congress to work together for the common good. We especially call upon political leaders who are also people of faith to protect all the people in our country and world who are struggling with economic deprivation and frustration, hunger and poverty, disability and disadvantage—and racial bigotry that often contributes to inaction and hard-heartedness.

God's love for all people moves us to reach out to people and leaders all across the political spectrum. We respect and pray for all those who are in authority—that our nation and world “may lead a quiet and peaceable life” (1 Timothy 2:1-2). Conservative and liberal people, and those with differing political philosophies, may disagree on how to live up to our nation's ideals, but our loving God calls all of us to work together for liberty and justice for everyone.

We appeal to all people, especially Christians, to actively work against racism and poverty—in their personal and local engagement and as advocates for public policies that foster racial equity and healing, shared prosperity, and peace in our country and worldwide. The spiritual power of a fresh, energetic, multiracial Christian movement against both racism and poverty is our prayer. So help us God. ■



SIGNATORIES

Rev. Eddy M. Alemán, Strategic Director of Leadership Development and Hispanic Ministries, Reformed Church in America

Rev. Dr. David Anderson, Founder/Senior Pastor, Bridgeway Community Church; President and CEO, BridgeLeader Network

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director, Armenian Orthodox Church

Bishop Carroll Baltimore, President and CEO, Global Alliance Interfaith Network

Dr. Jay Barnes, President, Bethel University

Bishop George E. Battle, Senior Bishop, AME Zion Church

Rev. David Beckmann, President, Bread for the World

Rev. Traci D. Blackmon, Executive Minister of Justice and Local Church Ministries, The United Church of Christ

Bishop Charles E. Blake, Presiding Bishop And Chief Apostle, Church of God in Christ

Rev. Samuel Borbon, Associate Missioner for Latino/Hispanic Ministry and Program Development, Episcopal Church USA

Rev. Dr. Peter Borgdorff, Executive Director Emeritus, Christian Reformed Church in North America

Carol Bremer-Bennett, Director, World Renew USA

Dr. Amos Brown, Chair, Social Justice Commission, National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.

Bishop Rosetta Bryson, Presiding Prelate, The Reconcile Group

Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Dr. Tony Campolo, Co-Founder, Red Letter Christians

Rev. Galen Carey, Vice President of Government Relations, National Association of Evangelicals

Mr. Patrick Carolan, Executive Director, Franciscan Action Network

Mr. John Carr, Director, Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life, Georgetown University

Dr. Iva Carruthers, General Secretary, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference

Dr. Fernando Cascante, Executive Director, AETH & The Justo Center

Rev. Noel Castellanos, President, CCDA

Rev. Walter Contreras, Vice President, NaLEC; Pasadena Presbyterian Church

Dr. Leslie Copeland-Tune, Director, Ecumenical Poverty Initiative

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church

Rev. Joshua Dubois, Founder and CEO, Values Partnerships

Rev. José García, Senior Advisor for Prayer and Strategic Initiatives, Bread for the World

Mr. Vince Gonzales, Chair, Racial and Social Justice Task Force, Churches Uniting In Christ

Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, General Secretary Emeritus, Reformed Church in America; Chair of Board of Directors, Sojourners

The Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Atlanta

Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, Executive Director, American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Dr. Cynthia Hale, Founding Pastor, Ray of Hope Christian Church; Member, Disciples of Christ

Forest E. Harris, Sr., President, American Baptist College; Director of Black Church Studies, Vanderbilt University Divinity School

Dr. Frederick D. Haynes, III, Chairman, The Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference

Richard B. Hays, George Washington Ivey Professor of New Testament, Duke Divinity School

Rev. Mitchell Hescox, President and CEO, Evangelical Environmental Network

Dr. Roberto Hodgson, Director, Multicultural Ministries Church of the Nazarene

Dr. Shirley Hoogstra, President, Council of Christian Colleges & Universities

Rev. Teresa Hord-Owens, General Minister, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Dr. Joel C. Hunter, Faith Community Organizer; Chair, Central Florida Commission on Homelessness; Chair, Community Resource Network

Hyepin Im, President and CEO, Faith and Community Empowerment

Rev. Dr. Dale T. Irvin, President and Professor of World Christianity, New York Theological Seminary

Rev. John K. Jenkins, Pastor, First Baptist Church of Glenarden and Board Member, National Association of Evangelicals



SIGNATORIES (cont.)

Sister Carol Keehan, DC, President and CEO, Catholic Health Association of the United States

Eric LeCompte, Executive Director, Jubilee USA Network

Rev. Dr. Jo Anne Lyon, General Superintendent Emerita, The Wesleyan Church

Mr. John Lyon, President, World Hope International

Rev. Carlos Malavé, Executive Director, Christian Churches Together

Sister Donna Markham OP, PhD, President and CEO, Catholic Charities

Rev. Dr. Walter Arthur McCray, President, National Black Evangelical Association

Rev. John L. McCullough, President and CEO, Church World Service

Bishop Vashti McKenzie, 117th Elected and Consecrated Bishop, AME Church

Bishop Darin Moore, Presiding Prelate of the Mid-Atlantic Episcopal District, AME Zion Church

Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Co-Convener National African American Clergy Network

Rev. F. Salvador Orellana, National Coordinator for Latino Ministries, Intercultural Ministries American Baptist Home Missions Society

Rev. Rubén N. Ortiz, Latino Field Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

The Most Reverend Richard E. Pates, Roman Catholic Bishop of Des Moines

Rev. Dr. James C. Perkins, President, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

Rev. Daniel Prieto, M.A.R. Chairman, National Hispanic Commission; Missional Coach & Hispanic Multiplication Coordinator, Foursquare Church

Agustin Quiles, Orlando, Florida

Soong-Chan Rah, Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism, North Park Theological Seminary

Ms. Diane E. Randall, Executive Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation

Senior Bishop Lawrence Reddick, CEO, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

Bishop Frank Madison Reid III, Presiding Bishop, AME Ecumenical & Urban Affairs

Rev. Amy Reumann, Director of Advocacy, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Dr. W. Franklin Richardson, Chairman, Conference of National Black Churches

Jose Luis (Pepe) Romero, Hispanic Affairs Specialist, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Andrew Ryskamp, Executive Director Emeritus, World Renew

Dr. Stephen Schneck, Director of the Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies, The Catholic University of America

Dr. Ronald Sider, President Emeritus, Evangelicals for Social Action

Rev. Arthur Simon, President Emeritus, Bread for the World

Dr. T. DeWitt Smith, Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network

Rev. Eldridge Spearman, Pastor, Mt. Jezreel Baptist Church, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Gregory E. Sterling, Henry L. Slack Dean and Lillian Claus Professor of New Testament, Yale Divinity School

Ervin R. Stutzman, Executive Director, Mennonite Church USA

Rev. Lori Tapia, National Pastor for Hispanic Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Adam Taylor, Executive Director, Sojourners

Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director, Christian Reformed Church in North America

Bishop Joseph W. Walker, III, International Presiding Bishop, Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International, Inc.

Rev. Jim Wallis, President and Founder, Sojourners

Colin P. Watson, Director of Ministries and Administration, Christian Reformed Church in North America

Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network; President, Skinner Leadership Institute

Rev. Jim Winkler, President and National Secretary, National Council of Churches

Bishop Jesse Yañez, Director, Church of God of the Prophecy N.A.