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## **The State of Black Poverty: A Pan-African Millennial Perspective on Ending Hunger by 2030**

*Over the past year and a half, about two-dozen young adults from the United States and countries in Africa and the Caribbean, have gathered virtually and in person to reflect on the effects of hunger and poverty in black communities. The working group has been considering socio-political and theological frameworks from which to achieve the U.N. Sustainable Goal to end hunger by 2030.*

### **Seeking a Holy Strategy for Ending Hunger (1 Peter 4:10-11)**

Young adults from the African diaspora are deeply concerned about the state of black poverty across the globe. To effectively achieve a hunger-free world by 2030, the working group holds that policymakers and people of faith must consider (1) the actual state of black poverty, (2) the “beloved community” articulated by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and envisioned in the Gospels, and (3) a refined and holy strategy to achieve a world free from hunger.

### **Black Poverty Is Interconnected and Historic (Jeremiah 22:3-5 & Isaiah 10:1-34)**

Poverty is systemic and systematic. In the black community, the impact of poverty takes many forms, such as obesity and malnutrition, trauma, violence and crime, prostitution, student debt, human trafficking, predatory lending, poor educational opportunities, inequitable housing, food deserts, and low wages. While causes for some of these effects may vary, we must not engage them as isolated issues. They are interconnected. These manifestations of injustice are rooted in racism, hate, sexism, bigotry, and discrimination. It is imperative that race be centered as common in each of these disparities. Given the remnants of slavery and bondage towards people of color in the United States and elsewhere, we must properly foreground race, and reflect on the ways in which race continues to inform today’s injustices.



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## **We Must Do Our Part to End Hunger and Poverty (Matthew 14:15-21)**

God is on the side of the oppressed and the poor. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. popularized the phrase “the beloved community” in reference to a society that is based on justice, equal opportunity, and love for one’s fellow human beings. The beloved community is a global vision where indices of injustice are not tolerated because human standards of decency do not allow them. King’s view of the world is informed by King’s theological underpinnings which sees God as a liberating force for all people, particularly the poor. People of faith must take Jesus seriously when He says “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. And whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.” The essence of Jesus’ divinity and God’s glory is seen most clearly in impoverished spaces. In Jesus’ interactions with the widowed, the children, the leper, the prostitute, the woman with the issue of blood, and the hungry, Jesus demonstrates God’s perfected grace and calls all of creation to engage in the work of liberation. We must see God in each other and especially in the eyes of those existing on the margins of any society. While we work to end hunger, it is important to recognize that “the Beloved Community” and the world that God wills for all of creation is not merely a hunger-free world. Rather, God’s will is that the world be transformed in such a way that injustice ceases to exist.

## **Recommendations**

- 1) A strategy to end hunger and reduce poverty must be rooted in prayer and spiritual revival for and with all of God’s children.
- 2) Public policy has to be a priority for addressing the systemic issues of hunger and poverty. We must actively engage our government leaders and promote the global Sustainable Development Goals and a moral U.S. budget—featured in Bread for the World’s 2017 Offering of Letters: Doing Our Part to End Hunger.