



Where Justice and Truth Meet

October 2016

“Following in the footsteps of Jesus, we commit ourselves to examine the root causes of injustice...” (2016 LCWR Resolution)



Commitment to examine roots of injustice

Grounded in our belief that action on behalf of justice is a

constitutive element of the Gospel, we, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, affirm the interrelatedness of the justice concerns addressed by our recent assembly resolutions. Following in the footsteps of Jesus, we commit ourselves to examine the root causes of injustice, particularly racism, and our own complicity as congregations, and to work to effect systemic change as we struggle to establish economic justice, abolish modern-day slavery, ensure immigrant rights, promote nonviolence, and protect Earth and its biosphere. We pledge prayer, education, and advocacy and commit to using our collective voice, resources, and power in collaboration with others to establish justice which reflects God’s abundant love and desire that all may have life.

This resolution, adopted at the 2016 annual Assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in August, commits us to

1. examine the root causes of injustice,
2. examine our own complicity in it as congregation, and
3. to work toward systemic change.

This commitment, particularly around racism, has long been a part of our congregational study and justice stances. The General Chapter of 1993 called us into community study of racism and an option for direct experience with people of diverse cultures. In 2001 we challenged ourselves to understand our racial biases and embrace cultural diversity in our congregation,

church and world. By 2005 we committed ourselves to be on the path to becoming an anti-racist congregation and authorized SDART (the Springfield Dominican Anti-Racism Team) to lead us in that effort. Last year our SDART team celebrated its 10th anniversary. And the effort continues...

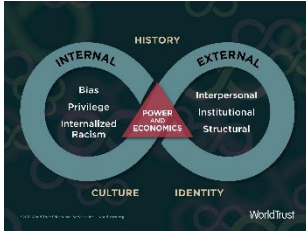
Examining root causes of injustice, particularly racism, and effecting systemic change is not for the faint of heart. It takes a community effort, not only within our congregation but in the broader community. Our congregational effort could not happen without our partners on SDART who collaborate with us and challenge us to move forward; we are blessed in this work by their presence.



Through training with [Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing and Training](#), we have a common definition of racism so that we can be on the same page in our conversations. Focusing on [systemic racism](#), we see that racism is more than just racial prejudice and discrimination. These individual acts feed into the continuation of racism, but they are not the whole picture. While [diversity training](#) can help individuals be more sensitive to those they see as “other,” of itself, it will not dismantle racism.

The mission of SDART is to help our community to be on the path to becoming an anti-racist institution. In addition to discussion, discernment, and planning, members work to deepen their own understanding and analysis of racism. Saturday nights of SDART gatherings are often devoted to just that through movies and speakers. A recent event was viewing [Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequality](#). This excellent video has been used

with Sacred Heart Convent employees and sisters to stimulate discussion, explore understandings and share insights.



A great tool from the Crossroads' process that has facilitated growth in our team is the

[Four Transforming Values](#). We struggle to shed the values of either/or thinking, secrecy mode, scarcity worldview, and individual action and to establish the values of both/and thinking, abundant worldview, transparent communication & decision-making, and cooperation & collaboration.

Over the past half year, the team has developed additional tools to focus our work of dismantling racism. The [Anti-Racism Lens](#) is a tool that uses questions under the four transforming values as a guide in decision-making. The guide for [Hiring Practices](#) shares the results of an SDART conversation about how to recruit a racially diverse pool of applicants and increase diversity in the workplace.

An emerging work of the team is the establishment of an *Accountability Committee*. This grew out of a question and a desire – where are we in the process and how do we fulfill our vision. And the journey continues...

Examples of Systemic Racism

1. Efforts to Protect White Supremacy

A fundamental demographic shift in racial and cultural identity is presently occurring in the United States: by 2040, the U.S. will no longer be a white majority nation and, instead, will be made up of a majority of minorities. This change underlies much of what we read and hear daily in the news and in politics. These demographic changes cannot be reversed. But there are many fighting (consciously or unconsciously) to protect the status quo and obstruct and delay changes that new racial demographics might bring to American life and politics.

[Strategies for protecting white supremacy](#) in the United States include: 1) racial gerrymandering to diminish the impact of minorities, 2) fighting comprehensive immigration reform to prevent

an earned path to citizenship for new voters, 3) mass incarceration linked to voter disenfranchisement of prisoners when they return to society, 4) voter suppression based on new voting regulations deliberately targeted against minority voters, and 5) encouraging a political resurgence of white nationalism.

2. Doctrine of Discovery

The [Doctrine of Discovery](#) stemmed from a series of papal bulls, or decrees, in the 15th century that gave Christian explorers the right (theologically and legally) to lay claim to any land that was not inhabited by Christians and was available to be “discovered.” If its inhabitants could be converted, they might be spared. If not, they could be enslaved or killed. This led to the conquest of non-Christian lands and people in every corner of the world.



This Doctrine has been used as the basis, theologically and legally, to subjugate native peoples all over the world and its impacts are ongoing. Even in the 21st century, the Doctrine of Discovery, either explicitly or implicitly, has been used to disenfranchise, displace, and ultimately devastate Indigenous peoples around the world. As recently as 2005, a U.S. Supreme Court justice cited the Doctrine of Discovery in a land-claim ruling against the Oneida tribe.

3. Standing Rock and Dakota Pipeline

Today we see sacred and historic lands of the [Standing Rock Sioux](#) (not to mention countless homes, farms and communities in both North and South Dakota, Iowa and Illinois) being



threatened by the Dakota Access Pipeline. Our hearts are moved hearing reports of violence by armed private security forces against unarmed peaceful protesters who want to protect their land and water.

We stand together with the Dominican Sisters Conference and many others in [solidarity with the indigenous people](#) in Standing Rock, North Dakota.