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Discomfort and Justice

...You were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness.

Pope Benedict XVI

There has been nothing comfortable about the newspaper headlines over the last two years, from the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri to Philando Castile in Falcon Heights, Minnesota. These tragedies—along with other events, conversations, and movements—are calling us to open our eyes and our hearts, once again, to the uncomfortable reality of racial inequality.

Sadly, the words of the United States Catholic Bishops in their 1979 pastoral letter on racism, *Brothers and Sisters to Us*, still ring true today: “Because the Courts have eliminated statutory racial discrimination and Congress has enacted civil rights legislation, and because some minority people have achieved some measure of success, many people believe that racism is no longer a problem in American life.”

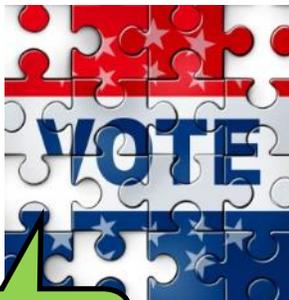
In Minnesota, African Americans make up approximately 6% of the population but 46% of those experiencing homelessness. (See page 6 for more data.) Research on poverty, employment, housing patterns, incarceration, and education reveals similar imbalances.

So what does this mean for people of faith?

Catholic Social Teaching, particularly the preferential option for the poor and marginalized, remains an important guide to engage our faith in response to the signs of the times. It reminds us of the need to recognize the inherent human dignity of our brothers and sisters of color. But it is not enough to merely recognize the dignity of others.

With the capacity to speak and the privilege of being heard comes the responsibility to act. Action can take many forms—seeking out and listening to those narratives that are different than

(Continued on page 3)



Are YOU registered?

Legislative Update: Dorothy Day Center

The Minnesota Legislature ended its 2016 session without passing a bonding bill to provide funding to many important public projects—including the St. Paul Opportunity Center and Dorothy Day Residence. While we were hopeful that our state’s legislative leaders would resolve their differences in time for a special session this summer, one was not called. Despite the funding challenges this presents, we will move forward with Phase 2 of the new vision for the Dorothy Day Center and use the upcoming November elections as an opportunity to educate candidates and newly-elected officials about the causes of homelessness and effective ways to address it.

Please stay tuned for information about next year’s legislative session and how you can use your voice to advocate for this new vision. If you are part of our Sower’s advocacy network, expect to hear from us via email about opportunities to contact your elected officials on timely legislative issues. If you do not currently receive Action Alerts and would like to, please contact us at osj@cctwincities.org with your email address.

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(651) 647-2588

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Everyone Has a Voice



As a social services case manager, I observed a common thread among the people I worked with: their circumstances were governed by systems that diminished their sense of agency and dignity. Systems of public assistance, corrections, and housing restrictions were wrapped up in a web of intergenerational

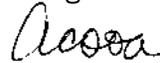
poverty. I longed to help my clients move beyond their learned sense of helplessness, to encourage them to work for change within the systems that dictated their daily lives, but I didn't know how. My eventual pursuit of a career in public policy was fueled by a consistent prayer: to be a voice for those without a voice.

Experience and humility gained over the years has helped me see a few things more clearly. First, everyone has a voice. Second, the experience of feeling voiceless is not unique to our brothers and

sisters living in the margins. Sometimes we need help finding the space to speak truth to power; that space is often found in the intentional formation of community. This is the perspective that I bring to bear on my work as Director of Social Justice Advocacy.

I joined Catholic Charities this time last year. Amidst a period of tremendous change and transition, I am encouraged by the team we've built. They are talented, and they are fierce in their love for humanity. I am also excited for the opportunity to explore and grow in this work together. We will build on the foundations of the past and work to advance social justice in new and creative ways. Thank you for your support and partnership.

With gratitude,



Acooa Ellis
Director of Social Justice Advocacy



Catholic Charities' Advocacy Staff
from left to right:

Kaying THAO
Public Policy Advocate

Michael RIOS
Community Education Advocate

Amelia BOULWARE
Social Justice Communications Manager

Acooa ELLIS (standing)
Director of Social Justice Advocacy

Vanjelis NGWA
Community Engagement & Education Manager

Ibtisam BROWN
Administrative Assistant

Nicole LINDEMYER
Policy & Public Affairs Manager

How We Create Our Annual Policy and Advocacy Agenda

With thirty-five programs serving nearly 30,000 people in need each year, Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis has no shortage of advocacy opportunities. Not unlike the process of milling wheat into flour, we at the Office for Social Justice have a careful method of filtering and refining the many important issues of social justice into the select number of priorities that we advance through our policy and advocacy agenda each year.

The process begins with identifying the numerous issues faced daily by people struggling with poverty, homelessness, and other barriers. We conduct listening sessions with program staff throughout Catholic Charities. We also seek input from allied organizations and other stakeholders in the community and from our grassroots network of advocates.

Once we have identified key issues, we then assess each issue separately. We consider how widespread the issue is, its impact on clients, its fiscal impact on our operations, our potential to have a positive impact on the issue, and whether our advocacy will advance our strategic vision of ending poverty and creating opportunities for prosperity.

The next step is to identify possible solutions to the issues raised, and which among these solutions involves policy advocacy through legislative, administrative, or budgetary means. Of course, not every issue will require a policy change; some issues may require education and awareness efforts, while others may warrant partnerships with other service providers or internal changes in service delivery.

Once the issues are assessed and proposed and policy solutions are identified, we then weigh several critical considerations:

- Should our involvement be to lead, support, or endorse the policy advocacy on this issue?
- What is the political landscape?
- What partners or collaborations exist on this issue?
- Which principles of Catholic Social Teaching pertain to the issue?
- What other relevant factors affect our understanding of the people living with this issue?
- How have other states with similar issues addressed this issue?
- Is there a disproportionate impact on people within protected classes like race, national origin, age, disability, or family status?

Through this broadly inclusive, intentional process of consideration, the advocacy team is able to refine the important into the necessary, the possible into the feasible, and the potential solutions into strategically sound policy priorities that will produce lasting, meaningful change in the lives of those most in need.

Of course, each identified policy priority requires concerted effort to achieve, and relies on people like you advocating with their lawmakers and other decision makers. We look forward to a robust policy and advocacy agenda for 2017 and to the many advocacy opportunities it will bring, and we enthusiastically invite your input at every stage.

Nicole Lindemyer
Policy and Public Affairs Manager

(Discomfort and Justice, continued from page 1)

your own, having difficult conversations with family and friends, or writing letters to elected officials; however, silence is compliance.

We are on a journey here at Catholic Charities to lend our resources, time, and energy to those most in need. As we consider our advocacy priorities for the coming year, we are committed to addressing the systemic problems that underlie these needs. We acknowledge that we cannot do this work alone and

that progress requires temperance. In the words of the 1979 U.S. Catholic Bishops, “There must be no turning back along the road of justice, no sighing for bygone times of privilege, no nostalgia for simple solutions from another age.”

We hope you will join us on the road as we lean into the discomfort of fighting for racial justice.

Michael Rios
Community Education Advocate

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development

It is a pleasure to write to you as my summer internship with the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), the Catholic Church's national anti-poverty program, comes to a close.

St. Paul–Minneapolis is a national leader for CCHD and has built a program responsive to the community. This experience has been formative for me as I have witnessed firsthand what happens when people work together for justice in their communities. A large part of my work has been spent analyzing and optimizing CCHD processes in the Office for Social Justice (OSJ). By leveraging this momentum and engaging community and business leaders around the Twin Cities, CCHD continues to support exciting community advocacy projects and agencies.

Each of the eight groups being funded this year are doing vital work in community and economic development with help from CCHD. Together, OSJ, CCHD, and all of the funded groups have a positive impact on the Twin Cities by supporting those who experience poverty and by developing relationships with people from all backgrounds. I feel blessed to have contributed to the work of this office and am very thankful for this opportunity.

Adam Weinzetl
CCHD Intern

Here is an overview of the 2016-2017 grant recipients.

NATIONAL GRANT RECIPIENTS

Appetite for Change (AFC) uses food as a tool to build health, wealth, and social change. They strengthen the community by focusing on community ownership and youth leadership.



La Asamblea de Derechos Civiles (La Asamblea) is a statewide, faith-based organization that organizes immigrants to build power for changes in the immigration system and underlying political and economic structures.



Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA) exists to advance the prosperity of Hmong American farmers and their families through economic development, capacity building, advocacy, and research.



Neighborhood Development Center (NDC)

uses entrepreneur training, lending, technical assistance, and small business incubators to annually empower over 600 people to start or expand their own businesses.



Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON)

works collaboratively with a network of technical assistance providers in administering services to more than 200 aspiring entrepreneurs, startups, and established small businesses.



Rondo Community Land Trust (Rondo) is undertaking a commercial land trust project to stabilize the cost of spaces for small businesses and help retain, stabilize, and promote small and minority-owned businesses.



LOCAL GRANT RECIPIENTS (CHRISTIAN SHARING FUND)

Elpis Enterprises (Elpis) provides job training, work experience and job placement for homeless or precariously-housed youth ages 16-23. Through social enterprises the youth build skills, experience, and community relationships.



Inquilinxs Unidxs Por Justicia brings together tenants from Minneapolis' most exploited rental properties to analyze their housing problems, organize around these problems, and build affordable, dignified living spaces in Minneapolis.



Be the Change: The Importance of Community Advocacy Work

“Be the change you wish to see in the world.”

Mahatma Gandhi

While influencing law and policy is crucial to our social justice advocacy work, it is not the only kind of advocacy work we do. At Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, we strive to support community efforts to increase the power and resources of low-income or marginalized people.

The advocacy team at the Office for Social Justice does this through building relationships at the grass-roots level. We participate in many community partnerships and coalitions and with many organizational allies. The knowledge we gain from our colleagues in and outside of the agency deepens our understanding of the barriers many of our clients face, and helps us better represent the hopes, dreams and needs of those most in need when we interact with local and state government.

Community advocacy is a critical part of building the public will for change and can happen in a variety of contexts. Local organizations and residents coming together to address issues that matter to them, neighbors joining together to support or oppose certain occurrences in their community, and members of faith communities working together to build affordable housing are all examples of community organizing and advocacy.

Members of a community who advocate on their own behalf are also an essential group because they represent their own experiences and points of view. CCHD-funded groups (see facing page) are excellent examples of this principle. It is crucial that community voices are at the table at every level of government, from neighborhood groups to city commissions to county boards. All play a critical role in raising awareness and influencing policy.

Additionally, a person can choose to advocate on behalf of a group that she or he doesn't belong to but supports. Catholic Social Teaching reminds us of our right to be treated with dignity but also challenges us to exercise our responsibility to stand up for the rights of others. One way to do this is through the exercise of our personal power. Personal power in this context refers to any expertise you may have accumulated over time. Are you good at organizing? Lend your services to help your neighborhood organize an event. Does writing come easy to you? Help your community articulate their grievances. Is being persuasive one of your strengths? Help build a broader base of support for an issue you care about. We can each come up with innovative ways to advocate for the common issues we care about; harnessing our expertise or personal power is one way to do so.

It is often said that all politics is local. Advocacy must start at the local level. Community advocacy work is essential for civic prosperity. Many local communities have been the sites of inventive advocacy efforts. Individuals, informal alliances, and formal organizations have been directly responsible for positive and quantifiable social and economic outcomes, and are repositories of extensive information about what works and what doesn't.

Community demographics are changing. It is important that representatives of marginalized communities increase their influence at the neighborhood, city, and state levels of government in order to amplify their voices on issues of importance to them and to our community at large. What is happening on your block, in your neighborhood, or in your district? How can you get involved?

Kaying Thao
Public Policy Advocate

Thank you, Marty! Since our last issue, the Office for Social Justice bid farewell to **Marty Roers**. Marty not only brought his expertise and extensive professional experience to our office but also his love for people. Thank you, Marty, for your humility, compassion, and tireless work. Your devotion to peace and justice is inspiring, and your presence at the Office for Social Justice will be greatly missed. We wish you all the best as Justice Co-Director of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in St. Paul.

Racial Disproportionality in the Experience of Homelessness

Comparing Minnesota's Homeless Data with Census Data

In almost every measure of economic wellbeing, there is evidence that people of color are disproportionately represented among those who struggle. Housing instability is one such example. For the first time in the ten-plus years that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released data on people experiencing homelessness, its 2015 Point in Time (PIT) data contains information about race and ethnicity.

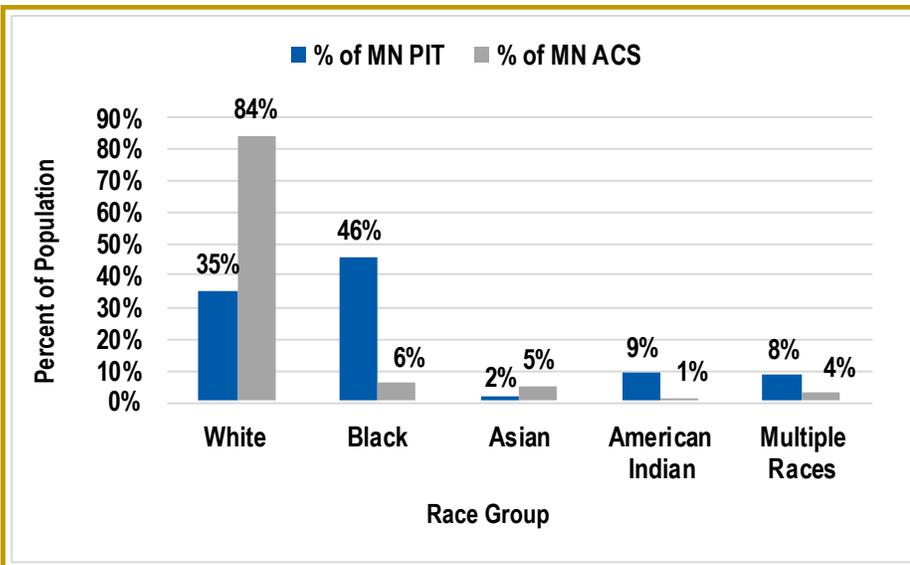
The annual PIT count is a count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single night in January. HUD requires that Continuums of Care (regional or local planning bodies that coordinate housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals) conduct this annual count.

To the left is a table that uses the 2015 HUD PIT data and 2014 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates for the state of Minnesota to compare reported presence of racial and ethnic groups in the homeless population versus presence in the population at large.

While the data paints a stark picture, we believe it is incomplete. HUD does not count people who are “doubled up” or “couch hopping” as homeless. Many homelessness researchers believe that the relatively lower number of people from certain low-income refugee and immigrant communities reflects the existing cultural practices of taking unhoused members of the community into households with relatively more stable housing. This practice is also widespread among low-income Native American households, both on and off reservations. In addition, Hispanic/Latino households experiencing homelessness may be under-reported for reasons concerning documentation status.

In conclusion, it is possible that racial disproportionality in the experience of homelessness is even more pronounced than we are able to capture.

	State of MN		
	PIT Count	% of Total Homeless Population	# or % of General Population
Race			
African American/Black	3,466	46%	6%
White/Caucasian	2,641	35%	84%
American Indian	663	9%	1%
Asian	117	2%	5%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	29	0%	0%
Multiple Races/Other	630	8%	4%
Ethnicity			
Hispanic/Latino	609	8%	7%
Not Hispanic/ Latino	6,937	92%	93%
Total	7,546		5,457,173



Data compiled by Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis' Department of Policy Analysis, Performance Evaluation, and Research (PAPER). General population data is taken from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014.

LETTER FROM CATHOLIC CHARITIES PRESIDENT & CEO

A New Civic Compact



I am so grateful to those who have contributed to the advocacy efforts of our Office for Social Justice over the years. The talented staff who have moved on over the last year (Kathy Tomlin, Marie Ellis, Ana Ashby, Marty Roers, and others) and you, our dedicated network of Sowers, have accomplished much. You have helped lay the foundation for our talented and passionate new team who will work with you and others to accomplish even more. Thank you!

Although direct service to those most in need will always be a critical part of the work of Catholic Charities, we know that direct service (or charity) alone will not solve poverty or create opportunity. We cannot “serve our way out of poverty.” So advocacy—amplifying the voices of those most in need to our public officials, civic leaders, and the broader community, and offering solutions that will work, big and small, that prevent and solve poverty—is a fundamental element of advancing our mission in the community. We must work towards systemic change and build alliances along the way.

To do this work—to do it well, and for it to have impact—requires your continued commitment and involvement. Thank you for your continued efforts. We will honor your commitment by being strong and reliable partners with you.

The mission of Catholic Charities’ Office for Social Justice is to engage, inspire, and develop leaders to create substantive, positive change on behalf of and in solidarity with our region’s most vulnerable residents. Each of us can be a leader. It is not always easy or comfortable to advocate for the rights of others. For

many of us, there are often deeply-rooted and unexplored questions about privilege that complicate our call to witness truths we see but cannot personally know. Community Education Advocate Michael Rios writes about this eloquently on page 1.

Because our highest calling is to respond to the real needs in our community and focus our attention where need is most dire, we continually seek the input of our knowledgeable staff, who possess insight into the needs, hopes, challenges, and realities of those we serve. You can read more about the role of that feedback in Policy Manager Nicole Lindemyer’s article about the creation of our annual policy and advocacy agenda (page 3).

Our strategy and approach calls for a new civic compact, changing and elevating the public will to hear the cry of the poor and then harnessing that will into meaningful change—new policies and practices as well as resources that improve lives and strengthen communities. While change often comes in small bites, and we must be grateful for each victory of the journey, many of the challenges of today require large, intense changes that proceed with speed.

So please stay involved, stay connected, celebrate the small victories along the way, and be prepared to take some “giant leaps.” If we leap together, the chasm from here to greater justice won’t seem as deep or long.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Marx'.

Tim Marx
Catholic Charities President and CEO

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Letter from Birmingham, Alabama jail



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**If you want
peace,
work for
justice.**
POPE PAUL VI

Finding Common Ground Between Public Safety and Racial Justice

Wednesday, September 14, 2016 from 4-6 PM; reception from 6-6:30 PM
University of St. Thomas School of Law—Schulze Grand Atrium, 1101 Harmon Place, Mpls, MN 55403

You are invited to a candid, critical dialogue on public safety and racial justice as we seek to understand other perspectives, foster mutual respect, build bridges across differences, and promote community engagement. This event is free and open to the public.

Seating is limited; please register by noon on Friday, Sept. 9. This event is co-sponsored by the Holloran Center for Ethical Leadership in the Professions and the Terrence J. Murphy Institute for Catholic Thought, Law, and Public Policy. Visit www.stthomas.edu/law/ to link to event information and registration.

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SEEDS will be published four times a year: September, December, March, and June.

**A Muslim-Christian Conversation:
Coming Together to Overcome Culture Clash**

Join Call to Action—MN to learn about the Islamic faith.

- 9:00 AM: Muslim speakers followed by questions and comments
- 10:30 AM: Join Muslim speakers and guests for interfaith table conversation
- 11:30 AM: How to respond to racist and Islamophobic remarks: a practice session

Saturday, September 24, 9 AM–12:30 PM
St. Frances Cabrini Catholic Church
1500 Franklin Avenue SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414

Questions? Contact Art Stoeberl, Call to Action—MN Coordinator
651-636-7356 | artstoeberl@yahoo.com

