

NETWORK CONNECTION

THIRD QUARTER 2020



THE CALL TO BE A MULTI-ISSUE VOTER





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STAY ALERT FOR NEWS: WHO WE ELECT MATTERS

The 2020 election will have an enormous effect on our nation's policies at the local, state, and federal level. That's why big plans are in the works for Nuns on the Bus to make a nationwide impact this fall, even during this time of social distancing. Stay tuned for information!

ON THE COVER

Nuns on the Bus and NETWORK activists, partners, and staff advocate and rally for health care, immigrant rights, a fair Census, Black Lives Matter, voting rights, tax justice, and LGBTQ+ equality over the years.

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Grief, Anger, and Sacred Imagination

Confronting Injustices in our Midst

SISTER SIMONE CAMPBELL, SSS

The litany of horrors in the last few months has at times overwhelmed us. The murder of innocent Black people and police attacks on peaceful protesters. The pandemic and the failure of the Trump administration to engage and lead. The necessary closing of business to protect each other from the disease and the resulting economic crisis. The effort to respond to the needs of our most vulnerable people brought Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate together for a brief moment as they crafted emergency legislation to respond. More action is needed though, to begin the healing in our nation.

As weeks have gone on, we have learned how the Black, Latinx, and Native American communities have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In Wisconsin, Black people represent 6% of the population and nearly 40% of COVID-19 fatalities. In Kansas, 6% of the population is Black and yet Black people account for more than 30% of COVID-19 deaths. These are the communities who do not have the opportunity to work from home. The Labor Department reported 30% of white workers could work from home in 2017 and 2018, while only 20% of Black workers and only 16% of Latinx workers could do so. The front line workers who work in grocery stores, drive buses, work in hospitals are the most exposed, and their families and communities have paid a high price because of that. Native American communities have some of the highest COVID-19 rates per capita in the country. At the same time, tax revenues from tribal businesses used to operate hospitals and clinics have dropped to nearly zero.

Then we have the murder of George Floyd by the Minneapolis police and all of the reality of centuries of our original sin of racism. I don't want to write another statement or say another

lament, I want to CHANGE this behavior once and for all. Since it began tracking in 2015, the *Washington Post* has found that more than 1,000 people are killed every year by the police and Black people, while only 13% of the population, are more than twice as likely to be a victim of police killing.

Then we have President Trump's decision to use military force to clear peaceful Black Lives Matter protesters from Lafayette Square across from the White House so he could pose for a photo holding up a Bible in front of St. John's Episcopal Church. He violated both the constitutional rights and sacred human dignity of people so he could get a photo opportunity.

To me this was the ultimate exercise of authority to reinforce and flaunt his white privilege.

In our work at NETWORK, we see the structures of white supremacy that have controlled the economic reality *and* the political reality in this land since before the founding of our nation. Many of you have participated in our Racial Wealth and Income Gap experience, exploring 12 federal policies that created and perpetuate the inequality in our nation. Many of you studied our Recommit to Racial Justice guide that identifies and confronts the extent of white supremacy in our society, our politics, and our economy. I know that white people, like me, have so much to learn about racism and all of the small and large ways that my actions and my decisions perpetuate racial injustice. It is not a time just to lament, however. As we approach this year's election in the face of these challenges, we must move beyond lamentation and engage.

In *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis's Exhortation on Holiness, he calls us to a full engagement to protect the dig-



Protestors outside the White House in the days following the murder of George Floyd.

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Notable Quotables

What justice-seekers have been saying this quarter

"If we want to bring about real change, then the choice isn't between protest and politics. We have to do both."

President Barack Obama in a Facebook post following the murder of George Floyd and subsequent nationwide protests

"This false choice between safety and fair voting was avoidable, but the Wisconsin state legislature refused to act to protect the safety of Wisconsinites."

Sister Quincy Howard, OP writing in a NETWORK blog following Wisconsin's primary elections

"We all have a stake in dismantling systems of oppression; otherwise, we allow horrible injustices to go unchecked."

Giovana Oaxaca, NETWORK Government Relations Associate, in Justice for Immigrants' Faces of Migration series

"We need to be expanding, not slashing SNAP. We need monthly payments, not one-time relief. And we need to cancel rent and mortgages for the duration of this crisis. It's time to address this crisis on the scale this pandemic demands."

Rep. Ilhan Omar (@Ilhan) in a tweet explaining her support for financial assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic

"God, gird us for the coming days. Set our faces toward the ballot box where your people might lift the only weapons we have in defense of the least of these: our votes."

Lisa Sharon Harper's concluding prayer in NETWORK's Lenten toolkit: Becoming Spirit-Filled Voters

"ICE detention is cruel and inhumane under normal circumstances — in the midst of a pandemic, it's life-threatening."

Tweet from Rep. Barbara Lee (@RepBarbaraLee) supporting release of ICE detainees due to COVID-19 risk

"Essential workers have sacrificed for us, and it's time for us to give back."

NETWORK member Gerri DiLisi, writing in an Letter to the Editor of the Philadelphia Enquirer

"Achieving economic justice requires we work for racial justice, and vice versa. There is no way around it."

Michelle Alexander, author of The New Jim Crow, writing in a New York Times OpEd

"I warn America, if we don't change, God help us. If we don't turn from death and turn to life, God help us. If we don't undo every death-dealing policy, God help us."

Rev. Dr. William Barber II (@RevDrBarber) in a tweet urging the country to reform racist policies

"Until white people call out white people, there will always be safe places for racial ugliness to brew and fester."

Fr. Bryan Massingale, writing about the assumption of white privilege in National Catholic Reporter

"We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life."

Pope Francis addressing the United States during the June 3, 2020 Vatican General Audience

Voting under the Sign of the Cross

Putting Our Focus on the Margins

BY MEGHAN CLARK, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK

In the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, our communities powerfully cry out for racial justice. The global COVID-19 pandemic remains, it has not dissipated, despite growing public fatigue with mitigation measures. Amidst all of this, we struggle to maintain voting rights in primaries and in preparation for November. NETWORK and its partners have tirelessly worked on issues of racial and economic justice for decades. The issues are not new, unknown, or unstudied; and yet, something about 2020 feels different. The collective albeit deeply unequal experience of COVID-19's vulnerability, suffering, and death has inescapably interrupted our *business as usual* attitude.

Today there is a growing chorus of people demanding a more just and equitable community. A chorus that rejects returning to a *business as usual* that benefits only the privileged while excluding millions. At marches in Rockaway, Queens, youth leaders pair a focus on racial justice alongside voter registration and census participation. Alongside chants of "Black lives matter!" you also hear, "Don't just hope, get out and VOTE!"

Participation in the political, social, and economic life of the community is both our right and our responsibility. While not everyone is called to be an activist, all are called to actively work for the common good. Voting, in Catholic social teaching, is a moral obligation. Yet, as Christians, we are called to vote not motivated by own self-interest but by a commitment to the human dignity of all, an all-inclusive common good, and with a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable. Faithful discipleship, then, becomes a matter of solidarity and kinship in which all are equally sacred. In faithful citizenship, we are called to vote under the sign of the cross.

Beginning with the Crucified

In his first homily as pope, Francis prayed that we, as the people of God, may receive the grace to "to walk, to build, to profess Jesus Christ crucified." In focusing our journey on Christ crucified, Francis draws individuals out of themselves and towards the margins of society. The task is two-fold: to focus our



Washington, D.C. Catholics and neighbors show support for Black Lives Matter along the President's route to the St. John Paul II Shrine in June 2020.

attention on those excluded from our societies while also recognizing the structures by which they are rendered invisible or expendable. Beginning with the crucified Christ illustrates the ways both individual dignity and structures of sin are inextricably linked. When Francis labels inequality as the root of all social ills in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), it is in recognition that it is "making it practically impossible to live a human life ruled by moral principles."

Building on both Catholic social teaching and the prophetic insights of liberation theology, Pope Francis's decries, "Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a "throw away" culture which is now spreading... those excluded are no longer society's underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it." (EG 53).

Voting under the sign of the cross, then, asks us to begin our discernment from the perspective of the excluded, of those who suffer from institutionalized violence, those whom the

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martyred Salvadoran Jesuit Ignacio Ellacuria called *the crucified peoples*. For Ellacuria, the cross focuses our attention on the “collective reality, grounding and making possible individual sins.”¹ Talking about the reality of individual sin is not enough. Seeing the reality of our society’s crucified peoples requires those with privilege to face the uncomfortable and unavoidable complicity in social sin, of which in the United States, racism and white supremacy are paramount.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the call for racial justice in our country today. Professing Christ crucified, in all its historical complexity, has long been central in African American Christian ethics, most notably the work of Protestant theologian James Cone, who famously described the crucifixion as a first-century lynching.² Reflecting on the current protests, Nigerian-American Sister Anne Arabome laments that God cannot breathe; “As the protests continue, I see people on the streets — breathing in and breathing out. In their voices I hear the God of life screaming and asking for space to breathe again.”³

Living Incarnational Solidarity

“A faith that does not draw us into solidarity is a faith which is dead, it is deceitful...faith without solidarity is a faith without Christ.”⁴ These provocative words, spoken by Francis on a pastoral visit in Paraguay, challenge us to see that solidarity and work for justice are at the very heart of the Christian faith. For Christians, Jesus is our model of solidarity and it is in practicing solidarity that we encounter Christ in our neighbor.



Refugees: La Sagrada Familia by Kelly Latimore (2016).

In the Gospels, both the Beatitudes and Matthew 25’s parable of the last judgement provide clear descriptive illustrations of the connection between solidarity with Jesus and solidarity with those on the margins, culminating in an uncompromising statement that whatsoever one does or does not do for the least, one does or does not do to the Son of Man himself. A radical identification of Jesus not with his followers but with those who are hungry, thirsty, imprisoned, etc. Visual artists like Kelly Latimore powerfully concretize this for us depicting the Holy Family as migrants crossing a militarized border.⁵

“Solidarity is a wrenching task,” notes theologian M. Shawn Copeland, “to stand up for justice in the midst of injustice; to take up simplicity in the midst of affluence and comfort; to embrace integrity in the midst of collusion and co-optation; to contest the gravitational pull of domination.”⁶ Incarnational solidarity is deeply rooted in seeing one’s neighbor as the image and likeness of God, as the face of Christ in our midst. For Francis, “Solidarity must be lived as the decision to restore to the poor what belongs to them” (EG 189), a difficult task because “complacency is seductive” (*Gaudete et Exsultate* 137). In practice, this solidarity strengthens efforts to practice good politics, in which “everyone can contribute his or her stone to help build the common home.”⁷



Megan Dominy and Jeremiah Pennebaker advocate for the Dream Act in Washington, D.C. in March 2018.



Students at the Hope Community Center in Apopka, Florida call for Tax Justice in October 2018.

A Community of Kinship and Justice

Both the image of the crucified peoples and the focus of incarnational solidarity ask us to reflect deeply on how we view the work around us and possibly change the position from which we participate in the political community. For Christians, the task of politics is to build a community of kinship, and justice. It is the recognition that we belong to each other and that we are all diminished by the exclusion and oppression of some. In his many books and TedTalks, Fr. Greg Boyle, SJ of Homeboy Industries challenges us to imagine a circle of kinship and then imagine it is big enough where no one is on the other side.⁸ For Boyle, Jesus does not provide us with easy answers but relentlessly asks, “Where are you standing?” The shift is at once a severe challenge but also freeing.

The fundamental starting point is where do you position yourself? With the marginalized and against marginalization? With the oppressed against their oppression? These seem like easy questions and yet for those like myself, a white woman in the United States, answering them honestly requires facing the ways in which my life has been aided by the white supremacy I recognize as sinful and evil. It requires humility in acknowledging one’s own complicity in systems of injustice, followed by a firm and persevering commitment to be anti-racist.

The Challenge of Radical Kinship and Politics

At this point, you may be thinking voting under the sign of the cross is impossible in U.S. politics. While it is true that Catholics

who hold with the Church a consistent ethic of human dignity do not neatly fit into the U.S. political system, I wish to make two caveats before delving into the practical reflections on the type of political engagement envisioned above.

First, voting is always a bounded choice. There are no perfect candidates or political platforms. One advantage of Catholic social tradition’s approach to social ethics is that it recognizes the reality of both individual and structural sin. Our political engagement is aimed at bringing about greater justice and peace but recognizes that the fullness of either relies on God. By letting go of purity and perfection, we are freed to act for justice. This recognition, alongside a realistic appreciation of pluralism, also helps us act with humility, recognizing with Pope Francis that “growth in holiness is a journey in community, side by side with others” (GE 141).

Navigating voting and political participation amidst these complexities is a challenge. It requires practicing: *see (learning about candidates’ records), judge (discern), act (vote/advocate)*. Whenever Catholics explore the meaning of “the preferential option for the poor” the list includes: the unborn, migrants, those living in poverty, the elderly, victims of human trafficking, etc. For many in the United States today, the challenge is most acutely felt in navigating their position on abortion alongside their solidarity with marginalized and minoritized peoples.

Personally, I find Pope Francis’s approach helpful for discernment. Cautioning against ideologies within the church which either avoid talking about God or avoid social justice,

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Denver residents show up for the Nuns on the Bus: Tax Justice Truth Tour in October 2018.

he states, “our defense of the unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm, and passionate...equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned, and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking. . . we cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice” (GE 101). There is a unity and integrity to this image of “equally sacred” that is rooted in prioritizing those whose dignity is thrown away.

Equally sacred is not a capitulation or deflection. It does not deny the specific reality of injustice, the way “all lives matter” dismisses the need to specify Black lives matter. Instead it is a desire to be faithful to the Gospel, to standing with the crucified. “A fundamental tragedy of this broken and sinful world,” notes theologian Cathy Kaveny, “is that the most vulnerable persons – the unborn, the disabled, the needy are often completely dependent upon persons almost as vulnerable as themselves.”⁹ The first step, according to Kaveny, is to listen and hear their voices. In U.S. politics, concern about abortion is often reduced to the question of criminal law. However, if we follow Jesus to the margins, it is difficult to treat any single issue as the only one of concern. Similarly, if we follow Kaveny alongside Boyle’s vision of kinship, it asks us to consider our policies on abortion from both the perspective of the unborn and the pregnant woman in crisis. In doing so, the nexus of concern expands far beyond mere criminalization of abortion.

Throughout his ministry, Pope Francis has implored us to pray with the Gospel, reject the throwaway culture, and be in kinship with the marginalized. When we do that, our understanding of building a pro-life community of solidarity must be a circle in which no one is left out. We position ourselves with Black Lives Matter,¹⁰ with migrants of all ages, and with those experiencing poverty and struggling to meet their basic needs.

As we head into election season, voting is one important way that we participate in the political life of our communities. It is an act of solemn discernment and conscience. In 2020, in the midst of a global pandemic, desperate cries for racial justice, and increasing economic need, it feels as if the stakes are quite high, and they are. Still, as people of faith, we begin by making sure we are standing in the right place as we discern, our focus on promoting the common good and building a community of solidarity in which none are excluded.

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("Envisioning," continued from page 3)

nity of all life. In this moment in the United States, I believe that dismantling racism must be a foundational part of any pro-life agenda. Pope Francis says in Paragraph 101: "We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with abandon and live only for the latest consumer goods, even as other look on from afar." Even more so, we must live out the Pope's message addressed to the people of the United States following the murder of George Floyd, "We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life."

This leads us to our work in this 2020 election. Black lives matter, and we must examine and transform all policies and systems that deny this sacred truth. We must promote the life of all of our people by changing policing to protect Black lives. We must promote life by ensuring that everyone in our nation has access to quality health care. We must promote life by guaranteeing that all can live in dignity with a roof over their heads and enough food on their plates. We must promote life by ending the economic inequality upheld by our tax laws. We must promote life by ensuring that our immigrant siblings are welcomed and honored for their inherent dignity.

As we continue sheltering in place, we cannot stay silent or confused. We are called in this time to live the Gospel call to love one another. This means pushing back against racism, facing our own complicity, speaking out to make change. The urgency of a pandemic, police violence, racism of our leaders and our systems all demand it. Let us commit ourselves to working for change. I believe that we are at a crossroads as it says in Deuteronomy 30:19:

Today, I call heaven and earth to witness, I am offering you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then so that you and your descendants may live in the love of Yahweh.

Let us commit ourselves to working for change! ☀️

Holding Issues as Equally Sacred

The Challenge of Contemporary Political Engagement

In March of 2018 and again in June 2020, Pope Francis gave Catholics, and all people of good will, clear instructions for how we are called to position ourselves and prioritize social issues. In the apostolic exhortation on holiness, *Gaudete et Exsultate* and again in his general audience following the murder of George Floyd, Pope Francis speaks of all of the ways we must defend, promote, and protect the sacredness of human life. A list of the issues named by Pope Francis on these occasions follows.

As we approach the 2020 election, NETWORK will evaluate candidates' positions on these critical issues of human life and human dignity, valuing them, as Pope Francis says, as "equally sacred."



Pope Francis Priorities

- ✓ We need a clear, firm and passionate defense of the unborn, however, equally sacred are the lives of those already born.
- ✓ Equally sacred are those made destitute, abandoned, underprivileged.
- ✓ Equally sacred are the vulnerable infirm and the elderly exposed to covert euthanasia.
- ✓ Equally sacred are victims of human trafficking and new forms of slavery.
- ✓ Equally sacred are those exposed to every form of rejection.
- ✓ We must address injustice in a world where some revel and others live in abject poverty.
- ✓ We must consider the situation of migrants a primary issue.
- ✓ We must oppose racism and exclusion in any form.

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Our Nation's Political and Moral Response to a Global Pandemic

Seeking Justice in the Face of a Public Health and Economic Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused illness, death, widespread unemployment, and an entirely new daily reality in the United States and across the world. NETWORK quickly shifted lobbying priorities, advocating for workers and families to be prioritized in every coronavirus response package passed by Congress. We knew that those with the least would be the ones hurt the most by this crisis, as is often the case.

The COVID-19 pandemic is both a public health crisis and an economic one, and people of color have been disproportionately affected on both counts. We need structural solutions. Congress must recognize the challenges facing those at the economic margins during this difficult time and choose people over profit in their policy decisions.

COVID-19 has given new urgency and significance to our moral mandate to provide health care for all, to protect the rights and health of workers, and to ensure sufficient affordable housing. We recognize the undeniable truth that during this pandemic, and at all times, the wellbeing of our nation depends on the wellbeing of each and every person.

So far, Congress has passed more than five bills in response to the coronavirus, with key legislation described below. Further action must still be taken, however, to provide sufficient financial resources for families and individuals to be able to afford their rent and other necessities.



<p>Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act (H.R. 6074)</p> <p><i>Signed into law March 6, 2020</i></p>	<p><i>This initial \$8.3 billion package was passed rapidly in both houses to provide emergency funding to federal agencies responding to the coronavirus outbreak, with funding for health systems to prepare for the pandemic and for the National Institute of Health (NIH) to work on a vaccine, as well as the Small Business Administration to administer disaster-related loans.</i></p> <p>It included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● \$1 billion for medical supplies and equipment ● \$2.2 billion in public health funding for prevention and preparedness ● \$3 billion for vaccine research and development (including funding specifically for <i>affordable</i> vaccines) ● \$7 billion to provide small businesses with low-interest loans
<p>Families First Coronavirus Response Act (H.R. 6201)</p> <p><i>Signed into law March 18, 2020</i></p>	<p><i>The second legislative package aimed to address the economic and health impacts of COVID-19 by expanding nutrition assistance and paid sick leave, adding additional unemployment benefits, providing free coronavirus testing, and increasing federal Medicaid funding.</i></p> <p>It included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Paid leave and unemployment insurance (though paid leave requirements did not apply to all employers) ● Expanded funding for WIC and other nutrition ● 6.8% increase in Medicaid funding and free COVID-19 testing
<p>CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, H.R. 748)</p> <p><i>Signed into law March 27, 2020</i></p>	<p><i>The CARES Act was the largest relief bill in U.S. history, appropriating \$2.2 trillion for direct payments to individuals, loans to small businesses, unemployment insurance, and more to counter the worst of the potential large-scale negative economic impacts of COVID-19.</i></p> <p>It included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased unemployment benefits by \$600 through July 31, 2020, covered additional workers, and provided an additional 13 weeks ● Direct payments to individuals and families, with a phase out for the nation's highest earners. Tax filers without a Social Security number were excluded, leaving out thousands of individuals and families. ● \$1.3 billion to Community Health Centers ● \$7 billion for affordable housing and homeless assistance programs ● \$16 billion in loans and other benefits for businesses (with restrictions on spending) ● \$400 million for Election Security Grants



Advocacy for Justice Continues... Virtually

Meg Olson

In response to the call to action on the April 2020 webinar, "NETWORK's COVID-19 Response: Updates and Our Work Ahead," Grassroots Advocates Teams and other NETWORK members and supporters from across the country held 24 meetings with their Senators' offices in April and May to discuss what needs to be included in the fourth COVID-19 relief bill. As these were the first meetings held during the time of social distancing, NETWORK members and Senate schedulers worked together to coordinate these meetings to take place over the phone or via video conferencing.

The specific topics of each of the meetings were chosen either based on the Senator's position within leadership or key committee, or the NETWORK members' advocacy interest and expertise. Meeting topics included each of NETWORK's seven Mend the Gap public policy priorities, as well as unemployment insurance, nutrition assistance, and caring for those who are incarcerated or in detention centers. Our Government Relations team helped prep advocates for their meetings and participated in calls held with Hill staff.

Overall, NETWORK's advocates found the virtual in-district and Hill meetings to be as effective as meeting in person. Sister

Phyllis Tierny, SSJ of Rochester, New York joined with members of the LCWR Region 2 Justice Promoters Collaborative to discuss ensuring safe and fair elections and protecting all immigrants with Hill staff in Senator Gillibrand's and Senator Schumer's offices. One reason why she helped organize these meetings is because, "In these difficult and uncertain times, the issue of who can vote has become a priority as we look forward to the election in November. Voting is both a privilege and a responsibility for all citizens and to be deprived of the opportunity because one is housebound or in danger of contracting the virus limits who can vote." Sister Phyllis adds, "It was a privilege to interact with the legislative assistants of our New York Senators, knowing that they are sympathetic to these issues and will raise their voices in the Senate. One of the takeaways for me is the need for a different approach to work with legislators across the aisle. It is easy to think of politicians as 'cardboard' and talk at them. We need to find a way to engage their humanity and begin a different conversation!"

NETWORK is grateful for all of our members' and supporters' advocacy efforts around COVID-19, particularly for Black, Native American, and immigrant communities, as well as for those who are incarcerated or detained. ☀️

<p>Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act (H.R. 266)</p> <p><i>Signed into law April 24, 2020</i></p>	<p><i>The package provided \$484 billion to replenish the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) after its funding quickly ran out following the passage of the CARES Act, and appropriated additional funding for public health measures.</i></p> <p>It included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● \$321 billion in additional funding for the Paycheck Protection Program ● \$50 billion for the Disaster Loans Program, \$10 billion for Emergency Economic Injury Disaster Loan Grants ● \$25 billion to the Department of Health and Human Services for COVID-19 testing ● \$75 billion for HHS Hospital and Provider Grants
<p>HEROES Act (Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act, H.R. 6800)</p> <p><i>Passed by the House May 15, 2020</i></p>	<p><i>This \$3 trillion dollar package would provide additional direct cash payments, funds for state and local governments, hazard pay for essential workers, an extension of the federal unemployment benefit, and additional money for testing.</i></p> <p>It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 15% increase in SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits ● \$175 billion in rent, mortgage and utility assistance, and an extension of the ban on evictions ● A second round of direct cash payments, including tax filers who use an ITIN instead Social Security number ● Nearly \$1 trillion for state and local governments ● \$200 billion for hazard pay for essential workers ● \$75 billion for COVID-19 testing and containmnet ● An extension of the federal unemployment insurance benefit (currently set to expire July 31) through January 2021 ● Extension of current student loan suspensions on payments and interest, as well as cancelation of up to \$10,000 of student loan debt for some borrowers ● \$3.6 billion for state and local governments prepare for upcoming elections and expanded mail-in voting



Bringing about Transformation in our Country

Sister Emily TeKolste, SP

Everyone knows how difficult it can be to have a conversation about politics or current events with someone you disagree with. But avoiding these conversations is contributing to our nation's increasing polarization, not to mention the harmful effects of this division on family and community ties.

In May, I presented NETWORK's *Transformative Conversations to Bridge Divides* training to NETWORK advocates from Philadelphia and Pittsburg. About 20 participants came together online to learn and practice ways to foster productive conversations and create the conditions needed for transformation to occur. Some of the key takeaways and commitments from participants included, "doing more preparation before difficult conversations," "approach potentially confrontational conversations with a little less arrogance," and "think more carefully about the other person when I need to have a difficult discussion."

After the training, Gerri in Philadelphia found "There are constructive, concrete, successful ways we can have meaningful conversations with those we love who have opinions other than ours." As we approach the November election, NETWORK will pro-

vide additional opportunities for all members of our Spirit-filled network to participate in this *Transformative Conversations* training, as well as other trainings and activities. Together we can transform our policies and our nation!

5 Steps to a Healthy, Transformative Conversation

- 1. Be Curious**
Seek to learn about the other person's perspective
- 2. Listen**
Listen fully and attentively, with an open mind
- 3. Review**
Repeat back what you heard to make sure you understand correctly
- 4. Validate**
Acknowledge what they said, even if you feel differently
- 5. Express**
Share your truth, your assessment of the issue, your reasoning

Learn more: www.networkadvocates.org/transform

When You Say

When you say,
"I'm not racist,"
you deny the complexity
of a system built on the racist ideas
born of white supremacy.

When you say,
"I don't see color,"
you do not understand that
making judgements based
on color is the problem,
not seeing color.

When you say,
"I was taught to treat everyone the same,"
you deny the limitations of your being kind
when the system denies my dignity.

When you say,
"But, I'm a Christian,"
you deny the whitening of Jesus' body
and the distortion of his Gospel
for economic gain through
the genocide of indigenous people,
the enslavement of Africans,
and other atrocities against
people of color.

When you say,
"My child is Black,"
you conflate your love for one person
with a love for all.

When you say,
"My family never enslaved people"
you deny how the injustices of slavery
were transformed to perpetuate
your illusion of white supremacy.

Relationships are Key

- ★ The most important requirement to change a worldview is an *authentic, respectful relationship*



Participants learn how to build the foundation for transformative conversations.



By Leslye Colvin

When you say,

“My ancestors were wronged for being Irish or Italian,”
you deny that people of Irish and Italian ancestry
now identify as white.

When you say,

“My ancestors arrived after slavery,”
you deny that their white skin
privileges you today.

When you say,

“The Constitution says all men are created equal,”
you deny ongoing legal battles to make it realized.

When you say,

“All lives matter,”
you deny our lived experience.

When you say,

“I want to learn,”
you take a step forward.

When you say,

“I want to be an ally,”
the hard work begins.

Leslye Colvin is the Communications Coordinator for Gathering for Mission, a project of Catholic Committee of the South inspired by Pope Francis that provides practicums in dialogue in dioceses across the country. She is also a member of the editorial team for the Center for Action and Contemplation’s Daily Meditations, and a member of the NETWORK Boards. This poem was originally published on Leslye’s blog, Leslye’s Labyrinth, www.leslyeslabyrinth.blogspot.com.



An Invitation to Raise Names for New NETWORK Board Members

NETWORK is seeking three Board members to join the NETWORK Lobby and NETWORK Advocates Boards in 2021 and we are inviting all NETWORK members to participate wholeheartedly in a “name-raising” process to help identify potential candidates.

As we engage in the work of Racial Justice, we seek to have people of color in leadership positions, including on the Boards. While we remain committed to all forms of diversity — race and ethnic heritage; economic background; ministry or occupation; geography; age; LGBTQ+ identity; and affiliation (or not) with a community of women religious — in 2021, **we are actively seeking people of color to join the Boards.**

NETWORK believes that a well-developed Board will include members with a variety of skills. Who comes to mind when you think of someone with one or more of these gifts:

- A creative and strategic thinker committed to the mission of NETWORK
- Someone with nonprofit Board or Leadership experience
- Expertise in Development/Philanthropy (fundraising strategy, connections, ability to raise money), Finance (business/financial management, budgeting, accounting) and/or Governance
- Lived experience of working with communities of color, social movements, low-income communities, and/or congregations of women religious

Founded by Catholic sisters and rooted in Catholic Social Justice, NETWORK is open to all who share our passion for gospel justice; therefore, **you are not limited to raising only the names of Catholic people.**

Board members must be or become a member of NETWORK Lobby and have a serious commitment to the principles of Catholic Social Justice. They must also be able and willing to attend and participate actively in semi-annual Board meetings and monthly committee conference calls.

The Call to NETWORK Members: We ask you to consider prayerfully persons you know whose gifts could enhance the NETWORK Boards. It is up to you to help form the membership of our Boards and create the future of NETWORK.

Who do you know with a passion for justice?

Do you know of justice-seekers who fit the demographics we seek?

Who comes to mind when you think of someone with the qualities listed?

Who would have the time to commit to NETWORK’s mission?

If you know someone, including yourself, who would excel in this role, complete a name-raising form at www.networklobby.org/nameraising no later than August 31, 2020. Thank you for your time and discernment!



Get Ready for Election 2020 with your “Mend the Gaps Voter” Placard!

Whether you put in the window of your house, bring it to a socially distanced event, or participate in one of NETWORK’s social media events, NETWORK’s placards will help you communicate that you are a multi-issue voter who cares about the common good and mending the gaps in our nation!

You can order up to five placards on our website at www.networkadvocates.org/2020election/placard. Once you have your placard, take a picture and share it on social media with a few sentences about why you’re a #MendtheGapsVoter. Be sure to tag @NETWORKLobby — and feel free to tag a candidate — so that we can see them and repost them on our social media account. If you would like us to share them on our website or election-related materials, please email them to us at info@networklobby.org.



Two placard designs are available. Pick your favorite, or get both!



NETWORK member Allison Grojean holds up her placard in preparation for the election.

“I’m voting to #MendtheGaps in November because we must do more than just feel sorry for the people we see on the news who have been even more cruelly marginalized and suffering during this pandemic. We must change our country’s priorities on Election Day to create a more just society for all.”

Jerry Zurek, Malvern, PA

“The gap between wealthy and poor persons in our country is extreme. It is difficult, maybe even impossible, for us to see, understand, and really love each other across this chasm. As we work to #MendtheGaps, we bring people together, allow the goodness and beauty of all people to be recognized, and the pain of broken social and political systems brought to the light. #MendtheGapsVoter.”

Sr. Alice Gerdeman, CDP, Melbourne, KY

“I am a #MendtheGapsVoter because Jesus teaches us to treat everyone with dignity, respect, and love.”

Allison Grojean, St. Claire Shores, MI

NETWORK—a Catholic leader in the global movement for justice and peace—educates, organizes, and lobbies for economic and social transformation.

NETWORK LOBBY FOR CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Catalina Adorno (Treasurer)
Robbie Pentecost, OSF (Secretary)
Regina Ann Brummel, CSJ
Leslye Colvin
Catherine Ferguson, SNJM
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Mary Beth Hamm, SSJ
Alice Kitchen
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Laura Peralta-Schulte, Tralonne Shorter

GRASSROOTS MOBILIZATION TEAM

Alex Burnett, Catherine Gillette,
Charlotte Hakikson, Meg Olson

FELLOWS

Nancy Groth, Joan Neal, Patricia Sodo



Help us grow our community by passing this issue of *Connection* to a loved one!

Being part of NETWORK’s national and diverse community and working to promote justice and peace is especially important this year. During these trying times, connecting with our personal communities can be a challenge, but **together** we can build a healthier, stronger nation.

Now more than ever, you can help us build a robust coalition of people in your community who want to mend the gaps and bridge the divides in our society.

Pass this *Connection* on to a friend who may not be aware of NETWORK and share our mutual passion with your own network!

Share with them how their voices can be heard by: writing letters to the editor, contacting their members of Congress, participating in educational workshops, joining local advocates teams, and promoting legislative advocacy in their own community! And of course, if they join NETWORK, they will receive their own annual subscription to our quarterly *Connection* magazine.

Let your loved ones and friends know that there are a few ways to become a member:

- Make an annual investment of \$50 online at www.networklobby.org/donate or by using the envelope inside this issue.
- Join NETWORK’s GEM (Give Every Month) Program by becoming a recurring donor.
- Give a gift membership to others in your community to expand the reach and impact of our mission!
- Become a member of the NETWORK Bread and Roses Society through planned giving.

A reduced membership rate of \$20 is available for retirees, students, and those with limited incomes.

For any questions please contact India-Grace Kellogg at 202-601-7866 or ikellogg@networklobby.org



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BLACK LIVES MATTER

NETWORK joins with all who speak and act against the sin of racism. Now is the time to cultivate the spirit, the courage, and the fire of commitment to make the change we seek. To uproot white supremacy wherever we find it and create a new society where racial justice and equity flourish.

