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Are You a Pope Francis Voter?

NETWORK CONNECTION

FOURTH QUARTER 2022



The Question We Face

**DOES
DEMOCRACY
SURVIVE?**



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

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ON THE COVER

Insurrectionists attack the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, in an effort to stop the certification of President Joe Biden's election. A person in the foreground carried a sign that reads "Proud American" with a modified Ichthys fish and wears a sign that changes "WWJD" from "What Would Jesus Do?" to "We Want Justice Delivered." Photo by Tyler Merbler via Wikimedia Commons, Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license. (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en)

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A New Social Fabric

We Must Heed the Warning Signs and Save Our Democracy



Mary J. Novak

Turbulent times can take a toll on our imagination. As our politics grow ever more volatile and extreme, we interpret events through the lens of our total experience and assume that, sooner or later, events will settle back into our notion of “normal.” This is a faulty view. If the last several years have taught us anything, it’s that our imaginations are not prepared for what might come next. And as the midterm elections rapidly approach, this warning is especially urgent.

Last January, my faith and public life colleagues in Washington held their annual retreat, and we had the privilege of hearing a presentation by Dr. Rachel Kleinfeld, senior fellow for the Democracy, Conflict and Governance Program at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. She clarified that, while we in the U.S. often credit ourselves with being the world’s oldest democracy, we in fact started as a fairly limited democracy — we did not incorporate our Black community — and have only tried to be an inclusive democracy for 60 years, with the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Sadly, this also marked the point at which our political parties began sorting racially, a process that has continued to present day.

But what Dr. Kleinfeld shared next was more disturbing: When identity aligns with party, it increases political instability: “When more than one identity marker lines up, it actually increases chances of civil war by 12 times.” And in the U.S. our major parties are divided by geography (rural vs. urban), religion, and a host of other things.

The U.S. is among the most polarized countries in the world. People who are trained to see and understand democracies and civil wars across the globe, who study the data on civil wars, were not surprised by what happened on Jan. 6 of last year. They agree that the U.S. has high risk factors for civil war or significant harm to our democracy.

Dr. Kleinfeld explained: “Globally, four factors really elevate risk of election violence: competitive elections that decide balance of power, parties divided by identity, election rules that allow you to win by calling on identity because of how districts are drawn, and a security sector that leans to one side.”

We in the U.S. have all four. We also have alarming upward trends of actual violence against public officials, the politicization and extremism of law enforcement and military (1 in 10 rioters on Jan. 6 had service backgrounds), and the skyrocketing of new gun sales. We also have nearly two thirds of state and federal offices being sought by Republicans who do not fully accept the outcome of the 2020 presidential election.

The U.S. has high risk factors for civil war or significant harm to our democracy.

where we can create the conditions for building the understanding we need to turn away from this downward spiral. As we look back on the Jan. 6 Committee hearings and all the violence of recent months, I hope we can all agree that we need to pay attention and start reaching out to those who do not agree with us on every issue.

Dr. Kleinfeld left us with this: “Hope, family, connection: A country rent by dissension must see, feel, and touch how it might come together. Families pulled apart by politics, conspiracy, disagreements over COVID, must find a way back to one another. Social fabric must be darned and re-sewn in a stronger tapestry.”

To help actualize this, churches can lead the way by saying no to violence of any type. Dr. Kleinfeld also called for the subordination of politics below religion, rather than making power into a religion unto itself. These are especially powerful admonitions as we enter into what may be the most consequential U.S. election since the Civil War.

We should also employ our imaginations to envision how the future can be profoundly more just and given to human flourishing, one that is vastly better for all than the old status quo we somehow accepted. At NETWORK, we keep this vision before us in the work we do, and especially as we approach this election. As followers of Jesus and collaborators with the Spirit, we walk in hope. We envision a new, inclusive social fabric, one that is ever durable and resplendently vibrant. 

Mary J. Novak is executive director of NETWORK

Notable Quotables

What justice-seekers have been saying this quarter

"Is it fair to people who ... do not own multi-billion-dollar businesses, if they see one of these guys getting all the tax breaks? Is that fair? What do you think?"

President Joe Biden, Aug. 24, responding to questions on student loan debt cancellation

"This law offers a new vision for our country, one that ends decades of divestment by making a groundbreaking commitment to our country's children and families. It dismantles systemic racism, prioritizes equity, and seeks to build a just and inclusive community where everyone can flourish."

NETWORK Deputy Executive Director and Chief Equity Officer Joan F. Neal on the signing of Inflation Reduction Act, Aug. 16

"Congress has not been able to deliver it, and we're tired of not being prioritized. ... [S]upport is not enough. We need a vote now."

Activist Dina Bakst calling for passage of Pregnant Workers Fairness Act in a July 27 op-ed

"Peace is not often achieved by famous people, but by the daily determination of ordinary men and women."

Pope Francis, in an Aug. 25 tweet

"Hope is not the inevitability of the outcome, it is the possibility of the fight."

Civil rights activist Maya Wiley speaking at the 2022 National NOW conference in July

"We must take action to ensure that every woman and every mother in our nation has the maternal health care she needs to thrive."

Vice President Kamala Harris on U.S. maternal health statistics, Aug. 22

"This is also prophetic work that we're called to do, especially towards loved ones who disagree with us on important issues, despite sharing the same faith."

Colin Martinez Longmore, NETWORK Outreach and Education Specialist, on Pope Francis' call to respect people who believe misinformation

"My Catholic faith calls all people, and all families, to be treated with dignity, equality, and respect. All families regardless of race or sexual orientation deserve equal social benefits."

NETWORK Executive Director Mary J. Novak urging passage of the Respect for Marriage Act

"We need the inner determination and resolve to act in the face of fear. That inner determination and resolve to act despite knowing we can be hurt in the pursuit of good is the essence of courage."

Father Bryan Massingale of Fordham University in an Aug. 25 essay in U.S. Catholic magazine

"God, it is in this moment that we invoke your Spirit, that you would hear our fervent cries for justice, for equity, and for action."

Rev. Camille Henderson-Edwards opening prayer at NETWORK press conference for budget reconciliation, July 27



People cast their votes for federal democracy reform as part of NETWORK's "Team Democracy" events across the country in 2021. Voting rights, which have come under threat at the state level since the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act in 2013, are a key component of NETWORK's efforts to defend democracy.

The Faith-Filled Push to Save Democracy

A Stark Choice of Futures Faces Voters in 2022

BY MELISSA CEDILLO

Upholding a democracy is a daunting task this year. According to the elections data website FiveThirtyEight, 195 out of 529 GOP nominees on the ballot this year "fully denied" the outcome of the 2020 U.S. presidential election. Dozens of others "raised questions" or accepted the results "with reservations." Only 71 respondents say they accept the results fully.

As statistics like these surface the vulnerability and fragility of the system, faith groups in Washington and around the country are attuned to the moral urgency that this moment requires.

As the 2022 midterm elections grow closer, the NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice is just one entity among this patchwork of organizations, interfaith coalitions, and campaigns are coming together to respond to election deniers, Christian nationalism, and all the forces that currently threaten democracy in the U.S.

While coming from a diversity of traditions, these groups share the value that democracy is the best system of government to protect the rights of all people and create a space in which they can flourish in accord with their God-given dignity — a dignity that cannot be taken away.

A Particular Threat

Anthea Butler, chair of the department of religious studies at the University of Pennsylvania and a historian of African-American and U.S. religion, notes that one of the long lasting threats to democracy continues to be Christian nationalism. Butler has written and studied the intersection of race, religion, history, and politics extensively. In her book "White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America," she outlines the long history of Christian Nationalism and racism in the U.S.

(continued on page 6)



Anthea Butler

"The first thing to understand about a lot of Christian nationalists is that they don't want democracy," Butler says. "Because at [Christian nationalism's] core, it really wants to set up God's law, rather

than the Constitution, as an operating document for what this country is supposed to be."

Butler says this form of nationalism poses a threat not only to people who immigrated to the country to flee religious persecution, but also to Christians who do not follow the same political beliefs. Denying the separation of church and state, ignoring the fact that many people who are not Christian live in the U.S., or simply not taking the outcome of the 2020 election seriously are some of the ways Christian nationalism erodes the foundation of a country that celebrates religious freedom.

One group responding to the threat of Christian nationalism is the Center for Faith, Justice, and Reconciliation.



Sabrina Dent

"The ideology that is being promoted by a small group of people that identify as Christians that causes great harm and moral injuries to the community as a whole," explains Sabrina E. Dent, president of the center.

The center is a community of scholars, faith leaders, organizers, and citizens working to expand the idea of religious freedom in the U.S. The center also works to put on educational programming. The center has worked on immigration issues, LGBTQ+ issues,

"If we don't have democracy in this country, all human rights in this country are going to be denigrated. We need to fight for democracy."

BARBARA HAZELETT, NETWORK'S VIRGINIA ADVOCATES TEAM

reproductive health issues, voting rights, environmental issues, criminal justice issues, church and state issues, and voting rights. Whenever the center feels that there is a justice issue, especially when looking at racial and religious minorities, they are willing to speak up and support these groups.

"A lot of our work is done in collaboration with other groups as well because, like I say all the time, this is not work that we could do by ourselves," Dent explains.

The Range of Issues

Others, including NETWORK, also see the work of protecting democracy as extending to other freedoms, especially voting rights. Senator Raphael Warnock of Georgia, himself a Baptist

minister, has explained the political as a way to embrace the dignity of all of humanity in his case for expanding voting rights.

"There is no question that voting rights is a moral issue. I have often said that democracy in a real sense is the political enactment of a spiritual idea. This notion that each of us is a child of God, and therefore we ought to have a vote and a voice in the direction of our country and our destiny within it," Warnock told NPR at the beginning of the year.

"If we don't have democracy in this country, all human rights in this country are going to be denigrated. We need to fight for democracy," says Barbara Hazelett, a member of NETWORK's Virginia Advocates team.



Sr. Emily TeKolste, SP, NETWORK Grassroots Mobilization Coordinator, speaks to members of NETWORK Advocates teams and other participants in the Advocates Training celebrating NETWORK's 50th anniversary in April. Among issues covered at the training was the importance of Catholics being multi-issue voters.

Her group attends public town halls to make comments about justice issues like paid family leave or eliminating practices like solitary confinement. She has attended the local events to hand out leaflets on different topics and talk about state legislation with Virginians. She has also traveled to Washington to advocate for bills.

The comprehensive nature of this work, focusing across a range of issues, exposes a friction that is especially prevalent in Catholic circles, the issue of single-issue voting. Pope Francis, in his 2018 letter *Gaudete Et Exsultate*, spoke against this approach when he spoke of poverty and human life issues as being "equally sacred" to one another. (see sidebar). He revisited this rhetoric in a June 2020 general audience, in which he noted that "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."

Min. Christian S. Watkins, government relations advocate at NETWORK, is quick to tie the work of defending democracy to the hyper-racialized rhetoric happening in the U.S. The risk that poses to a healthy democracy is that it continues to feed racist policies that only benefit a few and which intentionally suppress others, especially Black and Brown people. In other words, the system has to live up to its own ideals to protect it in the future.

For the structure of democracy in the U.S. to be authentic, says Watkins, it must include the people that have historically been — and continue to be — left out of democracy: "We have to realize our common bonds, our mutual experiences, our interconnectedness." ☀

Melissa Cedillo is a graduate of Harvard Divinity School and was National Catholic Reporter's 2021–2022 Latino Catholics Project fellow. She has a background in immigration advocacy, domestic violence policy and criminal justice work.



Min. Christian S. Watkins, NETWORK government relations advocate, speaks at the Build Anew Plenary at the Advocates Training celebrating NETWORK's 50th anniversary in April. Photo: Shedrick Pelt

THE POPE SAYS: 'EQUALLY SACRED'

In his 2018 apostolic exhortation *Gaudete Et Exsultate* ("Rejoice and Be Glad"), Pope Francis directly denounced a politics that is suspicious of helping people in poverty and limits its advocacy to only one or two issues. He wrote:

"[H]armful ideological error is found in those who find suspect the social engagement of others, seeing it as superficial, worldly, secular, materialist, communist or populist. Or they relativize it, as if there are other more important matters, or the only thing that counts is one particular ethical issue or cause that they themselves defend. Our defense of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of development.

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, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection."

— Pope Francis, *Gaudete Et Exsultate*, #101

Korean Culture and Information Service Photo: Jeon Han

Our Vote is Our Voice

When we look at different forms of government around the world — autocracy, oligarchy, monarchy, etc. — we see there are few choices other than democracy that afford every person the freedom and dignity to flourish. That is because democracy is not only a system of government. It is also an ideal, a vision for how a society can organize itself to recognize and respect the dignity and freedom of every person while also enabling the common good to thrive.

The right to vote is foundational to a functioning democracy. As people of faith, we believe that voting is not only a civil right, it is a covenant we have with one another and a moral responsibility. When that right is abridged or denied, it is a moral failure that people of good will are obliged to confront. Voting and political participation in our democracy are two of the most important ways we can honor every person's human dignity, enable our vision of justice, and contribute positively to the common good as members of society.

At this crucial time in our country's history, our faith calls us to join together to defeat those who would withhold the full rights of democracy from some citizens based on race, ethnicity, or other arbitrary distinctions. We, the people, must fulfill our moral responsibility to get involved in the public square and not only cast our own votes but also help as many people as possible to cast their votes as well.

Most importantly, when we vote, we must elect people who will safeguard the right to vote for all citizens. Our vote is our voice, and right now we have to raise our collective voice to overcome anti-democracy forces once and for all. If we fail this time, we might wake up and find we no longer live in a pluralistic democratic society, but an autocracy enforced by the political and financial power of a select group of people who fundamentally do not believe in democracy at all.

We are called to care not just about our own personal preferences but also about how elections will affect those of us who are poor or economically disadvantaged, those who need access to quality healthcare and decent housing, those who are immigrants in our midst, those who need a fair wage and decent working conditions, those who are disabled and anyone in need of care, all those who are marginalized in any way. Justice and our faith demand it.



Joan F. Neal is NETWORK's deputy executive director and chief equity officer.

EQUALLY SACRED

How can we know that we are voting for candidates who promote the common good?

Pope Francis has given clear instructions for how Catholics and all people of good will are to position ourselves and prioritize social issues. In his writing and speaking, Pope Francis makes it clear: abortion is not the only issue that matters. As Catholics, we are called to be multi-issue voters, not single-issue voters in the 2022 midterm elections.

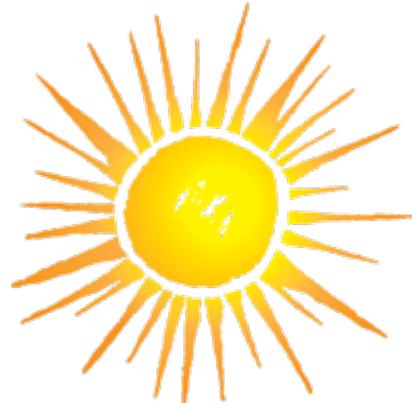
Below you will find a resource for evaluating candidates' positions on the concerns Pope Francis says are "equally sacred" to the defense of the unborn.

VOTING RIGHTS	
Speech in Athens — December 4, 2021	
<i>We cannot avoid noting with concern how we are witnessing a retreat from democracy... Universal participation is essential; not simply to attain shared goals but also because it corresponds to what we are: social beings, at once unique and interdependent.</i>	Candidates must support every American exercising their freedom to vote and accept the results of elections that reflect the will of the people.
Does the candidate promote the freedom to vote?	O Yes O No
Does the candidate uphold election integrity and deny false allegations about voter fraud?	O Yes O No

RACISM	
General Audience — June 3, 2020	
<i>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.</i>	Candidates must reject racism and xenophobia and support policies that address systemic racism
Does the candidate recognize racist policies and work to undo them?	O Yes O No

CLIMATE CHANGE	
<i>Laudato Si'</i> — June 2015	
<i>67. Each community can take from the bounty of the earth what it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations.</i>	Candidates must recognize and address threats to our Common Home
Does the candidate support policies that address climate change?	O Yes O No

CHECKLIST – 2022



POVERTY

Evangelii Gaudium — November 2013

53. Today we also have to say "thou shalt not" to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills.	Candidates must work to end poverty, recognize the dignity of work, and make our economy more just
Does the candidate support raising the minimum wage?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Does the candidate support extending the Child Tax Credit?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Does the candidate support making sure the wealthy pay what they owe?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Does the candidate protect workers' right to organize?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No

DISCRIMINATION

Gaudete et Exsultate — March 2018

101. Our defense of the innocent 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, and every form of rejection.	Candidates must be concerned with ending all forms of discrimination
Does the candidate oppose racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Does the candidate oppose discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Does the candidate believe housing is a human right?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Does the candidate oppose the death penalty?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No

IMMIGRATION

Gaudete et Exsultate — March 2018

102. We often hear it said that the situation of migrants is a lesser issue. Some Catholics consider it a secondary issue compared to the "grave" bioethical questions. That a politician looking for votes might say such a thing is understandable, but not a Christian, for whom the only proper attitude is to stand in the shoes of those brothers and sisters of ours who risk their lives to offer a future to their children.	Candidates must support welcoming people seeking asylum, refugees, and immigrants
Does the candidate welcome immigrants and support a legal and humane immigration system?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No

Who We Elect Matters!

In 2022, elections will be held to elect

- 435 Representatives
- 35 Senators
- 36 Governors
- 27 Secretaries of State

And countless more state and local elected officials.

Use this *Equally Sacred Checklist* to evaluate the candidates in the races you will be voting on and share it with your family and friends so they can be informed when they go to the polls.



Korean Culture and Information Service Photo: Jeon Han

We Do Not Live Single-Issue Lives

The struggle for justice calls on all people to recognize our interconnection

As an undergraduate student, my history classes introduced me to the activism of the 1960s: civil rights, voting rights, women's liberation. I distinctly remember listening in awe to a guest speaker who marched with Martin Luther King, Jr. and thinking, "Wow, to have been a part of something that changed the course of this country..."

I naively thought that the era of fighting for our rights had passed, that we were on the right side of the moral arc of the universe. Of course, this is far from the case. The last six years have shown us that *la lucha sigue*, the struggle continues. Except now it's more existential than it's been at any time in my life, or even in my parents' lifetimes.

It's 2022, and I can't believe that we're fighting for the future of democracy. I had thought that was put to rest with the defeat of fascism in World War II, the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. But no, we somehow face an onslaught of people in the U.S. who think that we should abandon the practice of upholding free and fair elections, and their vision of this country beyond elections are equally chilling.

The result is a long list of things I'm continually surprised to find myself advocating for today. We're still fighting for voting rights, for an end to systemic racism, for immigration reform, for the acknowledgement of — let alone meaningful action on — climate change, for indigenous rights, for access to adequate health care, housing, and nutrition. In 2022, it's easy to ask incredulously, how did we get here!?

In his Sept. 1 address in Philadelphia, President Biden said that "blind loyalty to a single leader" is a lethal threat to democracy. And renewed attempts to suppress the vote and overturn elections, and stripping away rights for all people, but especially women and non-white people, bears this out. But another blind loyalty to a single candidate or policy has also abetted this corrosive process. It's the decades-long phenomenon of people, especially many Catholics, who engage in single-issue voting as their primary political engagement rather than working toward the common good.

Father Bryan Massingale offered the best rebuttal of this: "The crises that face us — militarism, racism, ecology and poverty — are interlocking, overlapping and compounded. ... Single-issue groups and struggles will be neither effective nor compel people's attention. To paraphrase the great Audre Lorde [a 20th-century Black writer and civil rights activist], many people do not have the luxury of engaging single-issue struggles because they — we — do not live single-issue lives."



I would go a step further: Single-issue voting is conveniently racist. It's like wearing blinders; it blocks out one's view of the peripheries. To ignore systemic racism is to ignore active attempts at voter suppression and the lack of equal representation in our politics.

Granting power to single-issue voters means that we silence the building up of inclusive communities. The rights of people of color, women, immigrants, indigenous peoples, LGBTQ+ community, and any other minority community are whittled away in the name of single-issue voting.

As Pope Francis reminded us in his 2018 letter in *Gaudete et Exsultate*, "Rejoice and Be Glad" that the lives of all people who are marginalized in our communities are "equally sacred." That includes all kinds of people who are already born: people in poverty, people who are ill, the elderly, and victims of human trafficking. This is the call for all people: If we continue to only focus on a single issue, we will be responsible for the fall of our democracy, for the death of our planet.

The bitter fruits of the insurrection, blatant racism in our institutions and policies, election deniers, and attempts to suppress the vote should scream out to us. They beg of our attention. We must call on all people of faith and goodwill to be multi-issue voters and work to uphold and advance Gospel values.

Eilis McCulloh, HM, pictured above at a reparations vigil in Cleveland in June, is a Sister of the Humility of Mary and a NETWORK Education and Organizing Specialist. She is also one of the hosts of "Just Politics," the new podcast produced by NETWORK and U.S. Catholic magazine.

The Moral Imperative of Reparations

Movement on H.R. 40 is an Act of Justice for Black Americans

Last year, the U.S. government honored Juneteenth as a federal holiday. This recognition came 155 years after the first celebration marked the anniversary of formerly enslaved people and families learning of their liberation in Texas. While the majority of Congress voted in favor of commemorating this day, more is required to fully incorporate the formally enslaved into the American project following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1866. Our national will to act and repair must not end there.

It is time to create a system that protects Black people by putting an end to economic and employment inequality, a failing healthcare system, housing segregation, and state-sanctioned police violence. The passage of H.R. 40, a bill first proposed by Rep. John Conyers in 1989, could put the nation on solid footing toward such a process. The bill would create a commission to research and quantify the persistent economic disparities that Black people continue to suffer due to slavery and the discriminatory federal laws and regulatory practices that followed in its wake, and develop reparations proposals for African Americans.

The passage of H.R. 40 would be the first accounting of the role of the federal government and U.S. institutions in the atrocity of slavery, the legalized discrimination that followed, and action needed for atonement. Despite widespread and growing support to reckon with the legacy of systemic racism, H.R. 40 has not been brought to the House floor for a vote.

This reality calls to mind how much who we elect matters. It's also why NETWORK Lobby calls on President Biden, as a Catholic Christian and U.S. president committed to justice, to sign an executive order to enact H.R. 40 now. It is a moral imperative.

There are precedents for federal-level repair. The federal government has examined and honored claims for reparation from other communities in the past — in 1946 to federally-recognized Native American tribes, and in 1981 for Japanese Americans interned during World War II.

Federal financial support to residents following a natural disaster is an example of reparations. This action happens every year. FEMA is the government's reparations arbitrator. Repair was made because of a harm suffered.

As people of all races and backgrounds grapple with the question of what our country's history means for us, people of faith have shown up repeatedly to drive this point home. Last year, over 200 faith organizations and leaders, including the African American Ministers in Action, the American Muslim



Empowerment Network, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and the Union for Reform Judaism, signed a letter to House leadership asking for legislation to study redress. In May 2022, dozens of secular and faith-based organizations and racial justice advocates sent a letter to the White House urging President Biden to sign an executive order that would create a federal commission by June 19.

Supporting such proposals should be second-nature to Catholics, whose faith believes in reparatory justice in pursuit of reconciliation. We saw this lived out boldly with Pope Francis' visit to Canada in late July, in which he met with Indigenous people and apologized repeatedly for the Catholic Church's role in the residential school system.

In his "I Have a Dream" speech, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. noted that America had given Black people a bad check "which has come back marked 'insufficient funds.' But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt." Wide support from faith-based and secular organizations today demonstrates the conviction of people in the U.S. that our country must address its original sin of slavery.

People of faith are called to carry on the legacy of working for civil rights and to use their collective power to call on leaders in Congress and the Biden administration to make good on their pledge to tackle systemic racism. Bypassing the opportunity to understand, analyze, and financially quantify this devastation would be more than a missed opportunity; it would be a moral failure.

Jarrett Smith, pictured above left at a June 16 reparations event near the White House alongside Nkechi Taifa, is a NETWORK Government Relations Advocate.

The Ongoing Threat of Christian Nationalism

On July 12, the January 6 Committee held a hearing that included testimony from Stephen Ayres, who has plead guilty to charges related to his role in the attack on the U.S. Capitol, and Jason Van Tatenhove, former national spokesman for the Oath Keepers, a far-right militia group whose leaders have been charged in playing a role in the insurrection.

At that hearing, Congressman Jamie Raskin of Maryland remarked:

"In his Inaugural Address, Trump introduced one commanding image: 'American carnage.' Although that turn of phrase explained little about our country before he took office, it turned out to be an excellent prophecy of what his rage would come to visit on our people. Mr. Ayres just described how the trust he placed in President Trump as a camp follower derailed his life and nearly wrecked his reputation and his family."

Rep. Raskin added, "Unlike Mr. Ayres and Mr. Van Tatenhove, people who have recovered and evolved from their descent into the hell of fanaticism, Donald Trump has only expanded his Big Lie to cover January 6 itself. He asserts the insurrection was the real election, and the election was the real insurrection."

The ongoing concerns over these threats led the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (BJC) and Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to sponsor a report, "Christian Nationalism and the Jan. 6, 2021 Insurrection" (full report: bjconline.org/jan6report/).

"This report's focus on the events leading up to and on Jan. 6 does not suggest that this is the sole example or manifestation of Christian nationalism in the United States today," wrote Amanda Tyler, executive director of BJC. "Concentrating solely on the most violent or obvious examples of Christian nationalism could distract us from addressing the more mundane and yet insidious forms of the ideology that often go unnoticed."

White Supremacy and American Christianity *How It Harms Our Churches, Politics, and Communities*

Saturday, Oct. 29, 2022 from 12:30–2 p.m. Eastern

Fr. Bryan Massingale, the James and Nancy Buckman Chair in Applied Christian Ethics at Fordham University, and Dr. Robert P. Jones, founder and CEO of the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), return to speak to the NETWORK community ahead of the 2022 Midterm Elections. Join us online to continue learning about the intersection of white supremacy and American Christianity, with a focus on our politics.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR AND WATCH YOUR INBOX FOR REGISTRATION INFORMATION.



President Joe Biden presented the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS. "Compassionate and brave, humble, and kind, Sr. Simone remains a beacon of light," President Biden said of Campbell, who led the fight to pass the Affordable Care Act, and launched the National Network of Religious and Civil Leaders Against枪支暴力 (National Network Against Gun Violence). She is an embodiment of a covenant of trust, hope, and progress for our nation.



Sr. Emily TeKolste, SP joins "the Golden Calf of Greed" at a small protest outside the Chamber of Commerce, July 27, against the outsized influence of large corporations that ultimately resulted in the Inflation Reduction Act.



| our spirit-filled network |



NETWORK's former executive and strong, Sister Simone NETWORK from 2004–2021, runs on the Bus tours. "She is the," Biden added.



Sr. Carol Coston, OP, right, stands and receives an ovation at the Leadership Conference of Women Religious Assembly in St. Louis, Aug. 12. Coston, NETWORK's founding director, was joined by all of NETWORK's living leaders, left to right: Mary J. Novak, current executive director; Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS; Sr. Kathy Thornton, RSM; and Sr. Nancy Sylvester, IHM. LCWR honored NETWORK with a gift to the NETWORK Endowment of \$100,000.



at outside the offices of the U.S. corporations over the negotia-



Dr. Ron Daniels, Amara Enyia, Bishop Paul Tighe, Nikole Hanna-Jones, and Kamm Howard meet at the Vatican's Dicastery for Culture and Education on July 18 to share ideas regarding reparations for Black people in the U.S.



NETWORK

Endowment Fund

FAITHFULLY SEEKING JUSTICE, INSPIRING CHANGE, TRANSFORMING POLITICS

With grateful hearts, we thank all those who have joined us in celebrating our 50th Anniversary so far this year, including those contributing to our goal to raise \$5 million to build our Endowment Fund. In the time since we shared an update in the last issue of *Connection*, we have now reached \$4.360 million in gifts and pledges, 87% of our goal. This fund will provide the essential foundation for a future where our teams of activists are able to educate, connect, and mobilize for transformational change across the country. We can do this with talented people, a passion for justice, and your support.

We invite all members of the NETWORK community to join in this joyful investment in the future of our political ministry with a gift or pledge by the end of this year.

We are grateful to recognize the following organizations and individuals who have contributed to building the NETWORK Endowment Fund from June of this year through Aug. 22. If your name was omitted or was recorded incorrectly, we hope you will understand and inform us so we may make a correction. We will continue to acknowledge gifts and pledges made throughout 2022 in *Connection*.

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Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Saint Benedict's Monastery, St. Joseph, MN
Servants of the Holy Heart of Mary
Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
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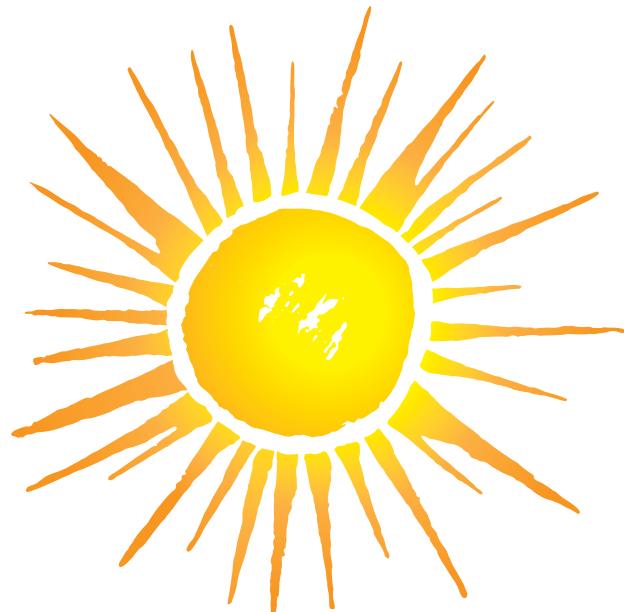
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The NETWORK Endowment Fund is a board-designated quasi-endowment administered by NETWORK Advocates, a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization, and this donation is tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. If you have any questions or would like to discuss your involvement with the NETWORK 50TH Anniversary Endowment Fund Campaign, please contact Kristin Schol, Major Gifts Officer (kschol@networklobby.org) or Maggie Brevig, Development Director (mbrevig@networklobby.org), at (202) 347-9797, extensions 202 and 217 respectively.



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