



# JPIC CORNER



Volume 2, Issue 2

February 2009

An E-Publication of the United States Province of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart to promote Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

This E-publication is sent free of charge to persons who ask to receive it. [Sign up now!](#)

## Coordinator's Note on Racism

Br. Warren Perrotto, MSC  
JPIC Coordinator  
Missionaries of the Sacred Heart



I remember when I was in high school our history courses covered very little on the great contributions that African Americans gave to our society and to the world. Other than Booker T. Washington, I cannot recall other significant African American heroes that were taught to us. I was in high school during the era of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X (The latter was assassinated during my senior year.), but they were not discussed much.

Since February is Black History Month, it may be a good idea to view TV specials or read books and articles on the great works of our black brothers and sisters who have gone before us and those today who are making positive strides to improve our society and our world.

I am grateful that success has been gained to end prejudice, racism and discrimination with the works of Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Cesar Chavez, Dorothy Day, and their like. Sadly, however these evils have not been fully eradicated from our nation and global spheres. It would be naïve to say these things no longer exist. They continue to plague us.

Racism is a "personal sin and social disorder rooted in the belief that one race is superior to another. It involves not only prejudice but also the use of religious, social, political, economic or historical power to keep one race privileged. Racism is personal, institutional, cultural and internal."<sup>1</sup> Racism is rooted in sin. It is an intrinsic evil, a malady which permeates all aspects of society. It can be experienced in families, in social relationships, in the work force, in religion, in institutions, in governments, etc. It "divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father."<sup>2</sup>

Racism can never be acceptable or justifiable. It goes contrary to Jesus' welcoming of all persons. Daily Jesus calls us to conversion of heart. The Resurrection of Jesus

summons us to renewal of heart, respect for human life, and commands us to act lovingly, mercifully and justly. Conversion of heart is the "response to God's self-revelation as love. Infinite love calls us to a transformation of mind and heart, a turning away from sin and an embrace of God's way for us."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, "God shows no partiality." (Acts 10:34) In Jesus' victory was an end to those barriers which dehumanize the human person. In Jesus, there is "neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female." (Galatians 3:28) We are all created in the image and likeness of God, with equal dignity and worth.

As Christians, we are called to take up the challenge to put an end to racism. With renewed hearts through the purifying fire of the Holy Spirit, we will be able to create a better world characterized by love, justice and peace for all of God's creation. In this way the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr. will be fulfilled.

1. Archdiocese of Chicago, Moving Beyond Racism: Learning to See with the Eyes of Christ Brothers and Sisters in Christ. April 4, 2000  
2. U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism, 1979.

## Did you know?

- In 2007, the EEOC received 30,510 charges of race discrimination. ([EEOC](#))
- White men are twice as likely to get management jobs as equally qualified black men; 3 times as likely as black women ([www.workplacefairness.org](http://www.workplacefairness.org))
- Over half of the hate crimes based on ethnicity/national origin were Anti-Hispanic. ([FBI](#))
- Black college graduates working in advertising earn \$.80 for every dollar earned by their equally-qualified White counterparts. ([NAACP](#))
- In the history of the United States, there have only been 6 black senators. ([US Senate](#))



## Catholic Social Teaching Quote



“Every form of social or cultural discrimination of fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language or religion must be curbed and eradicated....”

The Church in the Modern World

### Related Catholic Writings:

- [Dwell in My Love—a Pastoral Letter on Racism](#)
- [Made in the Image and Likeness of God](#)
- [U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism, 1979](#)
- [25th Anniversary, US Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on Racism](#)



## Ways to Challenge Racism in Daily Life

Watch what you say. Refuse to use biased language or to tell jokes tinged with racial attitudes.

Challenge your assumptions (and those of others). Do you see a student on campus and make assumptions about his or her academic or athletic abilities? Do you catch yourself making assumptions about new coworkers, employees or neighbors based on their race, ethnicity or national origin?

Expand your comfort zone. Seek opportunities to get to know a person of a different race and to learn from them. Have lunch with a coworker you don’t know well or volunteer outside your neighborhood.

Beware of sweeping generalizations and anecdotes. Terms like “those people” are often used to make a generalization about an entire group based on hearsay, stereotypes or an anecdotal experience. When explaining the reasons for a disagreement, do you catch yourself trying to cite a person’s ethnicity, race, national origin, religion or gender as a cause of the conflict?

Learn about how racism is manifested today. Then you can more easily identify racist behavior (overt or “subtle”) in your community, school, organization, etc.

Once you identify racist behavior, talk to others about it and together, plan ways to challenge it and change it!

## Reflections on Discrimination

Discrimination is an interesting concept. When used adjectively in describing one’s decision about things such as: She has discriminating taste about wine, it becomes positive.

Discrimination becomes negative and dangerous when it is being used with humans. Then, it becomes a defensive or aggressive act against an individual or group who is different. The act is based on fear, lack of knowledge, or assumptions and beliefs about the different individual or group. These assumptions are so embedded that the person/group empowered to act against the other has to totally unlearn the beliefs before he or she can readjust and change the behavior. The key problem here is that there is a tendency not to recognize the act. See below for a few personal experiences showing how not only stereotypes but also a lack of awareness can have a subtler impact.

### Subtler Signs of Stereotypes & Lack of Awareness

Some of our readers share from their personal experiences:

“He is well educated, a leader in his field, very successful, but consciously he doesn’t show anger in public for fear of being categorized as the stereotypical ‘angry black man’.”

L., Professor, in an inter-racial relationship  
Referring to her husband

“My basic experience is that I don’t encounter much overt racism any more, what I feel is that there is more of a lack of awareness. On inauguration day my roommate said “ I don’t understand why this is such a big deal.” in response to Obama being sworn in as the first African American President. There are a lot of feelings surrounding race, race relations and racism in this country, and even if racist practices and attitudes were to completely disappear, the fact that they happened needs to be acknowledged. We can’t move forward with new ideas without acknowledging the past and deciding to be better in spite of it.”

A., Recruiter, Human Resources

“Humor so often feeds on destructive stereotypes (i.e the timid, quiet, obedient and therefore invisible Asian). Cheap laughs aren’t so cheap or funny when you realize you (or your ethnicity) are the brunt of the joke. ”

J., International Affairs Analyst  
Referring to a fast food commercial where no one hears the Asian kid when he is speaking

## Racism—Embedded in the Judicial System

Read below for a few instances of ways racism and discrimination are still embedded in our judicial system.

 In 2000, the US Supreme Court set aside the death sentence in a Texas case in which the offender's Hispanic origin had been presented by the state as an indicator of likely "future dangerousness" - an aggravating factor which recommended a sentence of death instead of life in prison. [source](#)

African Americans constituted 14% of drug users in 2006 but 35% of people arrested for drug offenses, 53% of drug convictions and 45% of drug offenders in prison. [source](#)



 A 2-year study of 13,556 officer-initiated traffic stops in a Midwestern city showed that minority drivers were stopped a higher rate than whites, searched for contraband at a higher rate than whites and yet officers were no more likely to find contraband on minority motorists. [source](#)

The US Supreme Court ruled on 3/29/07 that an action for pay discrimination must be brought within 180 days of the initial discriminatory pay decision. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, signed into law January 29, 2009, seeks to clarify that every discriminatory paycheck is a separate act of discrimination. [source](#)



## Demise of the Ku Klux Klan?

Although the Ku Klux Klan has declined drastically in recent decades, it still has 5,000 members and its activity has spiked noticeably since 2006. ([www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org))

## Racism and the War on Drugs: Discrimination in Sentencing

Few people would deny the fact that both crack and powder cocaine are dangerous drugs, but the disparity between sentences for offenses is shocking. The average sentence for crack cocaine offenses is 3 years longer than sentences for powder cocaine. In 2006, black defendants were 3 times more likely to be defendants in a crack case than in a powder cocaine case.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, 81.4% of crack defendants in 2002 were African American, while about 2/3 of crack users in the general population are white or Hispanic. In addition, African American drug defendants have a 20% greater chance of being sentenced to prison than white drug defendants and Hispanics have a 40% greater chance.<sup>2</sup>

On average, African Americans also receive longer sentences for drug offenses (105 months) than whites do (62 months).<sup>2</sup> Between 1994 and 2003, the average time served by African Americans for drug offenses increased by 62%, compared to an increase of 17% for white offenders. African Americans now serve almost as much time for drug offenses (58.7 months) as whites do for a violent offenses (61.7 months).<sup>1</sup> Source: [The Sentencing Project](#)

## Gender, Race and Pay

Women in the United States earn less than their male counterparts, but did you know that the disparity is significantly greater for African American and Latina women? Consider the following:

- Women working full-time, year-round, earn 78 cents for every \$1 men earn. [source](#)
- African American women 69 cents.
- Latina women earn 59 cents.



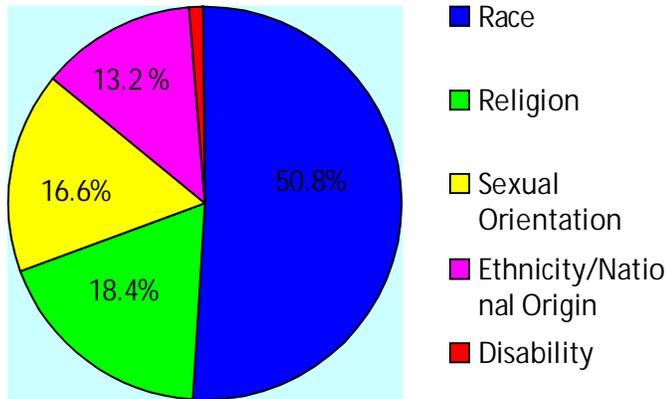
## Stereotypes Hurt—The Danger of Assuming

According to the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#), Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, face several stereotypes, seen both as hardworking and good at math and science, but also as quiet, passive, non-confrontational and antisocial. These stereotypes are the myths and assumptions which have created real barriers, frequently preventing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders from moving into the upper tiers of an organization. Consider this: If an employer assumes that an employee is passive, is he/she going to consider that employee equally for leadership positions? Even so-called "positive" stereotypes are hurtful. If an employer assumes that some employees are more "hard working" than others, how does he/she assign work fairly and evaluate performance objectively? Stereotypes hurt because they are based on assumptions. If you don't know a person, you cannot assume anything about them.

- Asian-Americans make up 5% of the national population and are the [2nd fastest growing minority](#).
- Yet, of the 435 members of the House of Representatives, [only 6](#) (1.3%) are Asian-American.
- [31%](#) of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders reported unfair discrimination in the workplace.



## Hate Crimes in the United States (2007)



Source: [FBI](#)

- 7,624 incidents of hate crime were reported in the U.S. in 2007, and there were 9,535 victims.
- 69% of race-based hate crimes in 2007 were against African Americans.
- Over 69% of religion-based hate crimes in 2007 were against Jewish people.
- Of hate crimes based on sexual orientation, male homosexuals were the most-targeted group (61%)
- Over half of the hate crimes based on ethnicity/national origin were Anti-Hispanic.

## Fight Stereotypes & Unjust Discrimination

Don't lump people together. It's easier to make judgments about a group when we don't know very much about its members. "Hispanic" refers to a very broad group of people, from Mexico to Central America to South America. "Asian" can refer to someone from Pakistan, India, Vietnam, China, etc.

Look for it. It's easy to miss racism if we aren't personally being discriminated against. Be aware of how your coworkers, fellow students, etc. are being treated.

Report it. If you are being discriminated against at work, you can [file a claim with the EEOC](#). If you notice discrimination in your community, even if you can't file a report yourself, you can still write a letter to the editor or make an entry in your blog to raise awareness.

Volunteer. Discrimination is often linked to poverty and unequal access to services. For instance, schools in U.S. cities often report lower test scores than state or national averages. Schools in U.S. cities are also more likely to be segregated by race, and schools segregated by race are more likely to be high-poverty school. Volunteer as a tutor or mentor or log some pro bono hours. Studies suggest that minority defendants have access to a private lawyer less frequently than white defendants.

## College Students & Intergroup Relations

A study that tracked 2,000 students at the University of California at Los Angeles found that "generally, and regardless of the attitudes with which students entered UCLA, those who lived with members of other ethnic groups showed statistically significant gains in comfort levels with people of different groups....The changes in attitudes were most striking for those living with either black or Latino roommates."



Study: [The Diversity Challenge: Social Identity and Intergroup Relations on the College Campus](#)

## Tell us what you think!

Have you experienced racism or stereotyping? Have your views about a group changed after you got to know someone who belonged to that group better? Do you have suggestions for working to end racism?



We'd love to hear from you! Drop us a line at [jpic@misacor-usa.org](mailto:jpic@misacor-usa.org).

## Celebrate Black History Month

A few suggestions for ways you can celebrate:

- Read a new book. At the library, check out the biography of an African American leader or a book by an African American author. In the bookstore, check out the African American interest section.
- Watch an inspirational movie. Try [The Great Debaters](#), about the true story of a championship debate club at Wiley College in Texas in 1935. Or, for younger viewers, check out [Something the Lord Made](#), the story of Vivien Thomas, an African American carpenter whose teamwork with the chief of surgery at John Hopkins Hospital in the 1940s, resulted in a breakthrough of "blue baby syndrome".  

\*Please note, movies mentioned above may not be appropriate for children of all ages.
- Check out your community's calendar for local events, celebrations and activities.



JPIC Corner, a monthly publication

Publisher: The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Provincial: V. Rev. Joseph S. Jablonski, MSC  
JPIC Coordinator: Bro. Warren Perrotto, MSC  
Editors: Lindsay Marcellus, Harini Riana

For more information about the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC), please visit our website: [www.misacor-usa.org](http://www.misacor-usa.org)

The MSC have made donating easy and convenient. Visit [www.misacor-usa.org/donate-now](http://www.misacor-usa.org/donate-now) for more details.

