



ANIMA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION RESPONSE TO RACIAL INJUSTICE

The past two months have brought tragic reminders to all of us of just how far people of color stand outside the American ideal of equal rights, justice, and liberty for all. The televised police killings of so many African Americans shocked us out of our complacency and our deep denial about the state of civil and human rights among us. The humanity that was denied to each person during their violent deaths vividly showed us the truth of who really has power and privilege in this country.

If we are honest with ourselves we will admit we have been in this place before. This is not the first time we have been stunned by racism's brutality in its many forms. Each time we've witnessed systemic racism's inequalities we've protested, even rioted, and demanded justice for those whose rights have been denied and the value of their lives trounced on. Change, when it has happened, has usually been in small, incremental steps that often have not been lasting.

It's important that this time we get it right. The systemic racism that blatantly sanctioned the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, and other African Americans too numerous to name here, tells us that we still don't get it. If we did, we'd know that protests, while important, just aren't enough. The witness of all these lives lost to injustice confirms for us why this time we can't settle for short term solutions or quickly turn the page on these good people's suffering. They challenge us, instead, to stay, to dig in for the long haul, and to do the hard work of dismantling the mindsets, institutions and policies that enable racism to thrive. They call us, in the words of the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, the Founder of the Poor People's Campaign, to "restructure our society into the Beloved Community" where justice and equality really are for all.

It is to this long haul of the work for racial justice and equality that we, the Anima International Foundation, commit ourselves to working in solidarity with others. We make this commitment in our conviction that every person is created equally in the image of our God, who gifts all of us with the same unconditional worth and dignity. This conviction, and our roots in the mission of the Sisters of Social Service, a Catholic religious community committed to social justice, compel us to do whatever we can to eradicate racism's systemic barriers that block the equity that people of color need to realize their full potential. We do so in our belief that ours is an interdependent, interconnected world in which, in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., "Injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere."

Among the antiracism actions we will take include:

- We will engage in listening lessons with the diverse communities in which we live and work. We will not assume that we know how racism impacts people. Instead, we will actively listen with our minds and our hearts wide open to learn and to understand—not to rationalize or simplify racism's impacts. We will listen to what it means to be a person of color who is promised equality and yet daily must confront the ugly realities of racism's oppression. This learning will shape what collaborative anti-racism actions we will take with those suffering from racism's impacts.
- We will commit to continually examine, honestly own and work to change our implicit biases about people of color. These biases, which are heavily influenced by culture, are our often unconscious beliefs and assumptions that shape our perceptions, attitudes, stereotypes and behav-

iors with people of color. Implicit bias is also, because of the way that it invisibly decides for us who is and isn't "worthy," a primary influence on the degree to which full equity and inclusion are supported for people of color in all of our institutional and political policies and practices. To transform structural and institutional racism, then, we must also work to change what is racist within ourselves.

- We will reach out to the ecumenical faith community to raise their voices in this struggle for racial justice. Theirs has been a quiet voice, often perceived to be missing in our moral dissent, which can only be validated by a faith that does justice.
- We commit ourselves to change whatever racist systems, whether they be schools, clinics, work places, financial or religious institutions, that in large or small ways erode the worth and horizons of people of color.
- We will support community-based alternatives to traditional policing which are designed and held accountable in collaboration with communities of color. .
- We will actively work to get out the vote. We will hold our political institutions accountable whenever they prioritize politics over the rights of people. and fail to work for real solutions to the injustices experienced in communities of color.
- As we work against all that discriminates and marginalizes, we will also work for the values, institutions and public policies that lift up and prioritize the innate value and giftedness of every person and the equal right to justice for all. We will do this to institutionalize our belief that "Black Lives Do Matter,"

In all these ways, it is our hope that we will create the new life that all those who have suffered from racism's injustices cry out for and that our faith tells us is promised to them.

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