



## Sacred Conversation on Race The journey **continues**

**O God, we pray for your presence and wisdom, as we begin to look carefully at the realities of RACE and Poverty. Amen.**

Race is an historical factor in economic inequity.

With the end of official discrimination, many assume that the economic playing field had been leveled.

But we are less aware that racial inequities persist in economic practices today.

People of Color continue to have less opportunities and experience more disadvantages than do Whites.

In 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. observed that depressed living standards in communities of color are not “simply the consequence of neglect.”

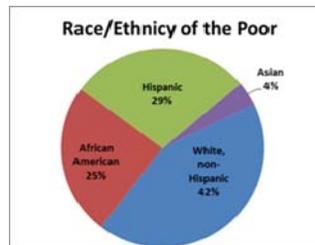
They cannot be explained by a mythology, he added, of “innate incapacities.”

Dr. King concluded that depressed living standards are in fact “a structural part of the economic system of the United States.”

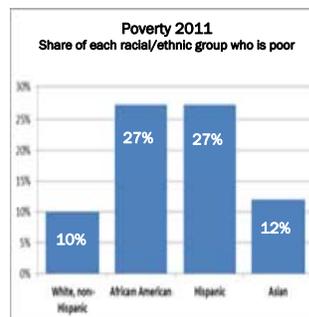
Today, this statement remains true, despite decades of movement toward a fairer society with regard to race.

### By Race/Ethnicity

Contrary to the popular image of who might depend on the safety net; Whites are the largest single racial group (42%) among the poor. Hispanics are 29% and African Americans are 25% among the poor.



However, non-Whites are over twice as likely as Whites to be poor. In 2011, 10% of Whites were poor, as were 12% of Asians, and 27% of African Americans and Hispanics.



Overall joblessness has compounded the generational loss of wealth among African Americans and Hispanics due to historic inequality.

### Job Opportunities

More than one out of seven African Americans are jobless - 100% greater than White unemployment. One out of ten Hispanics are jobless - 40% greater than White unemployment.

This large racial difference in jobless rate was present even before the 2008 recession, and even when work experience and education level have been taken into account.

And, the safety net is very weak. For example, in 2011, less than one in five poor families received “welfare” and less than one in ten poor individuals. Food stamps only provide an average of \$1.50 per person per meal.

**Whites are the largest single racial group among the poor**

**People of Color are over twice as likely to be poor**

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### Prayerful reflection

*Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, "Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land"*

- Deuteronomy 15:11



There are and always will be people in need. Their needs may arise from natural disasters or from economic structures that block some people from

the fullness of life that God intends for ALL.

We are called by God to engage in prayerful discernment to (1) learn how to best respond to these needs (2) help to eradicate biased attitudes and structures.

Congregations are often quick to provide cans of food, hot meals, and even temporary shelter to those in need. This is very important work in our communities.

And, we also need to work for changes in unjust structures and policies that block our neighbors,

especially people of color, from full participation in economic opportunities.

May God guide our thoughts and efforts to change ourselves and our world.

*Loving God, you have given us all we have. Help us to share your resources with all your people. Guide our efforts to build a society where all people receive the support and opportunities that enable them to become the people you created them to be. Amen.*

### Questions for discussion

1. Reflect on the experience of people of color compared with Whites. What sparks for you? Discuss challenges.
2. Share any anti-poverty initiatives that you have observed or participated in that transform attitudes and policies for peoples and communities.
3. We often suggest that people in low-wage jobs go back to school for more education. But if everyone had a college degree, we would still need people to work in home health care, food service, and other low-wage jobs. Discuss the ways people of faith can concretely appreciate and affirm the value and dignity of all our labors.
4. What programs and advocacy are you doing now - and what would you like to address together next? For example, new programs or bible study, mentoring or community job re-training or homeless outreach or workers advocacy, etc.

