



One Heart. One Hope. One Mission.

Sisters of Notre Dame of the United States

Corporate Stance Against Racism Action Plan July 2022



**God of justice,
In your wisdom you create all people in your image,
without exception.**

**Through your goodness, open our eyes to see
the dignity, beauty, and worth of every human being.
Open our minds to understand that all your children are
brothers and sisters in the same human family.**

**Open our hearts to repent of racist attitudes,
behaviors, and speech which demean others.**

**Open our ears to hear the cries
of those wounded by racial discrimination,
and their passionate appeals for change.**

**Strengthen our resolve to make amends for past injustices
and to right the wrongs of history.**

**And fill us with courage that we might seek to
heal wounds, build bridges, forgive and be forgiven,
and establish peace and equality
for all in our communities.**

**In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen**



The Sankofa bird symbol is from the Akan tribe in Ghana, Africa. This image is based on a mythical bird with its feet firmly planted forward and its head turned backward. The Akan people believed to plan for a strong future we must learn from the past, and never forget.

If you look carefully, you will see that the bird has a seed in its beak. This symbolizes the ongoing need of each generation to plant seeds of knowledge for coming generations.

Corporate Stance Against Racism of the Sisters of Notre Dame of the United States

We, the Sisters of Notre Dame of the United States, recognize the inequalities caused by racism and discrimination and the overt and subtle suppression and oppression of People of Color, particularly Black people, in the United States.

We believe that racism is a life issue. We believe that all human life is sacred, and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for civilization. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our Catholic Social Teaching.

We stand against the systemic practices of racial inequality in housing, accessing quality education, obtaining adequate health care, and the uneven distribution of sentencing in the justice system. We deplore racially-based deaths and the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual damage that continue to occur in our country.

We believe that, were we not to take a stand and speak out, we would be accepting racism. We will practice being antiracist and work to build a more equitable society.



Corporate Stance Against Racism

Background

In May 2020, George Floyd was killed by a police officer in a fatal arrest. This act of violence became the vehicle for our nation to look at racism in our country in a more profound way. Many people were calling for real reflection and then action to address racial inequities in our society.

The rapid response that the JPIC office released, stated in part, “We commit ourselves to deep reflection on our complicity. We re-commit ourselves to promoting justice, education on the dignity of every person and the common good and advocate for fair and just systems so that all people may live without fear and violence.”

After consultation with the JPIC Advisory Council, the JPIC office held 19 virtual conversations around the broad topic of Rooting Out Racism. Throughout the province over 350 sisters and associates participated in the conversations, where articles and videos were used to educate and open pathways for conversation around this difficult topic.

By October 2020, it was discerned that it was time to talk about a Corporate Stance Against Racism with the sisters. A corporate Stance is meant to be a public witness that SND USA sees this issue with real gravity and will commit our efforts toward this ministry. A corporate stance is taken rarely and reflects the reaction of the community to an egregious event or situation. It takes two-thirds of all eligible voting members to agree before it is approved.

In February 2021, the Corporate Stance was overwhelmingly approved by the sisters. At the Provincial Chapter preparation session in December 2021, the sisters decided that focusing on implementing the Corporate Stance was a priority for the province during the next six years.

This meant an action plan to implement the stance needed to be created. Through a survey the JPIC office asked the sisters to offer suggestions and actions that SND USA could take to infuse this stance throughout our lives and ministry.

After receiving hundreds of suggestions and comments, the JPIC staff categorized the suggestions.

The implementation of the Corporate Stance will take place on three levels:

Individual Goals—Transformational understanding of human dignity.

What are the ways each of us can personally commit to one anti-racist action during the year?

Local Community Goals—As local communities and other small groups, how can we increase involvement with People of Color?

National Goals—On the provincial level, how can we make intentional and transformative choices that embrace anti-racist principles?

The Advisory Council and Racism Committee and JPIC staff spent considerable time in conversation and prioritizing exercises to present an action plan to the Provincial Leadership Team to implement the Corporate Stance, which was approved in May 2022.

The first phase of the plan will be our work for the next three years, and this plan will evolve and shift as it is implemented throughout the province.

Along with the sisters, associates, employees, partners and collaborators will be part of making these actions real to infuse this stance into the life of the community.

What Is Racism?

Racism arises when—either consciously or unconsciously—a person holds that his or her own race or ethnicity is superior, and therefore judges persons of other races or ethnicities as inferior and unworthy of equal regard. When this conviction or attitude leads individuals or groups to exclude, ridicule, mistreat, or unjustly discriminate against persons on the basis of their race or ethnicity, it is sinful. Racist acts are sinful because they violate justice. They reveal a failure to acknowledge the human dignity of the persons offended, to recognize them as the neighbors Christ calls us to love (Mt 22:39). From *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love*, a Pastoral Letter Against Racism, USCCB, 2018.

What is White privilege?

“As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage. I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks.”

From *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* by Peggy McIntosh.

What does it mean to practice being anti-racist?

“Anti-racism is not simply a commitment to saying, ‘I will not say or do racist things.’ It is a combination of continually fighting racism within myself, practicing the actions of racial equity in my life, and fighting against the evil of racism in all of its forms within society—including seeking to bring about racial justice where racial injustice is present.” From [Being an Anti-racist Catholic](#).

What does being an ally mean?

To be an ally is to:

- Take on the struggle as your own
- Stand up, even when you feel scared
- Transfer the benefits of your privilege to those who lack it
- Acknowledge that even though you feel pain, the conversation is not about you
- Be willing to own your mistakes and de-center yourself
- Understand that your education is up to you and no one else

What is the difference between equality and equity?

Equality is giving everyone the exact same resources across the board, regardless of an individual’s or group’s actual needs or opportunities and resources already provided to them.

Equity recognizes each person has different circumstances and needs, and therefore different groups of people need different resources and opportunities allocated to them in order to thrive.



Actions Individual Level

Consider making a commitment to engage in at least one of these practices or actions over the next year, taking this opportunity to heart and doing what you can.

Spiritual

- Pray intensely and specifically for this process of implementing the stance and for whatever else you think is important.
- Worship with People of Color.

Relational

- Develop a relationship with a Person of Color.
- Live, work, volunteer with People of Color where possible.

Infused into the Life of the Community

- Incorporate different images that are not exclusively white in the artwork or images in your room, office and other places where you live, work and minister.
- Consciously introduce the Corporate Stance into daily conversations when appropriate.



Educational

- Participate in the Ignatian Solidarity Network Examen for White Allies. Click [here](#) for the Examen.
- Read recommended books. [See this list for suggested titles.](#)

Service/Advocacy

The sisters throughout the province work and minister in prison ministry, death penalty abolition, climate action, and immigration ministry, among others. Contact the JPIC Office at jp-pic@sndusa.org to learn how you can become involved.

The JPIC Office is especially mindful of legislation that works toward creating a more just society. Keep abreast of the latest legislative alerts through our Voter Voice system. To subscribe to action alerts, contact jp-pic@sndusa.org.

Personal Reflection

Actions

Local Community Level

Consider making a commitment to engage in at least one of these practices or actions over the next year, especially with those with whom you live and see regularly, and/or with your community coordinator group.

Spiritual

- Faith sharing on a book that deals with racism and spirituality. [Click here for suggested titles.](#)
- Include anti-racism petitions in community prayer whenever possible. [Click here for suggested petitions.](#)

Relational

- Explore ways and means to assist People of Color who are also immigrating.
- Do a common project/activity together that ministers alongside People of Color. Contact the JPIC Office at jpica@sndusa.org for suggestions.

Infused into the Life of the Community

- Incorporate different images that are not exclusively white in the artwork or images in the community areas.
- Invite People of Color as speakers, retreat directors, etc. in on-going faith formation.

Educational

- Educational opportunities are part of the actions in other categories of this plan.

Service/Advocacy

- These actions can be done most effectively at the individual or provincial/national levels.

Personal Reflection

Actions Provincial/National Level

Consider making a commitment to engage in at least one of these practices or actions over the next year. Look for events sponsored by the JPIC office and if you are interested in helping to plan the events, contact us at jpica@sndusa.org

Spiritual

- Attend a prayer service of atonement and reparation for all those who have been marginalized and mistreated by the Sisters.
- Awareness in creating communications, prayer services, educational pieces, etc. that include more diverse images.
- Include anti-racist petitions regularly in province-wide prayer.

Relational

- Live, work, volunteer with People of Color where possible.

Infused into the Life of the Community

- Invite People of Color as speakers, retreat directors, etc.
- Do an assessment to determine where SND USA is committed in each region to serving and ministering with People of Color. Look at Sisters, Associates, Schools, Boards, Parishes, etc.

Educational

- Province Day gathering with nationally recognized speaker who is a Person of Color. Have breakout sessions in each area that facilitate discussion on the speaker's presentation. This leads to areas organizing other speaker days, perhaps with local speakers.

Service/Advocacy

- When planning service/advocacy efforts keep particular focus on marginalized People of Color.



Personal Reflection

Other Actions

- **Support Black/minority owned businesses**
 - On an individual level and at the local community level, discuss how you and your house might engage in supporting local businesses owned by People of Color.
 - At the national level, look at purchases made by the province.
- **Invite People of Color to the table when planning education, advocacy and service opportunities**



JPIC Advisory Council/Racism Committee

Sister Rose Falorio
Sister Rita Geoppinger
Sister Louise Hlavac
Sister Sally Huston
Sister Ruth Lubbers
Sister Mary Dean Pfahler
Sister Lynette Shelton
Sister Constance Suchala

JPIC Co-chairs

Sister Joyce Bates
Sister Kathleen Ryan

JPIC Co-directors

Ann Clark
Katie Drager