

# WE SPEAK OUT ON RACE AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

## DISCUSSION GUIDE ON RACE AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES

*“May the Lord of Peace grant our nation the peace, the healing and the reconciliation that we seek. (cf. 2 Th. 3.16)” (SACBC Pastoral letter on racism).*

## INTRODUCTION

In the 2016 pastoral letter on racism, our bishops challenged us to do a conversation on racism and racial divisions. They wrote: *“We need to have a candid conversation on racism and its manifestations in order to adequately and seriously address racism and racial divisions in our country” (SACBC Pastoral letter on racism).* We have prepared a guide that your parish can use to conduct a conversation on various issues on race and economic inequality.

At the heart of the conversation is the sharing of stories. The booklet therefore contains questions that can stimulate a sharing of stories. Story telling is an important tool for transforming individuals and the society. We hope that the sharing of your stories with others will open your heart to understand those different from you. It will also help you with a healing process for yourself and those close to you.

The booklet covers six themes. As a parish or parish group, you can choose to do one or two themes. We encourage all the parishes and parish groups to do theme 5: Racism within the Church. We also encourage Catholic schools and ACTS branches to do theme 6: Racism in schools and universities.

We would like to collect some of the stories and publish them into a book. The sharing of the stories is a message to those in power that all who are wounded by the sin of racism and inequality should not be forgotten. God has not forgotten them and their stories. We intend to use the book with such stories as an advocacy tool to challenge the government to do more about racism and economic inequality. We would therefore like to encourage parishes and groups in the parish to find a way of sending us some of the stories from the group discussions. You can send them using the following contact details: Fax: 012 326 6218. Email address: [tchepape@sacbc.org.za](mailto:tchepape@sacbc.org.za)

In your personal capacity, you can also write a story about your experiences and send it to the same contact details.

### **Inter-personal racism and systemic racism**

Racism is a belief that one group (one racial group, one ethnic group, a nation) are superior to others. This belief is internalized both by members of the group that considers itself as superior.

It is also internalized by the groups that are considered to be inferior. Racism is a sin against the love of our neighbour that offends God. We are all children of the same loving God who brought us into being. We are therefore equal in dignity before God and before one another.

The belief that one racial group is superior to others manifests itself in various forms. It can manifest itself in form of prejudice, stereotypes, racist comments and racist behaviour. This is called inter-personal racism. We also need to pay attention to covert racism or subtle racism. Overt racism is easily condemned, but the sin of racism is often with us in more subtle forms.

We often associate racism only with prejudice, stereotypes, and racist comments. However, the belief that one group is superior to others can also find expression in the systems that we use to relate to one another in a society: education system, health system, land ownership system, capital ownership system, justice system, social security system, employment system etc. As a particular group is considered superior, privileges and opportunities in these systems are made more available to a people of the superior race. In turn, this generates economic inequality. Apartheid was built around the logic of economic inequalities.

In the 2016 Pastoral letter on racism, the bishops therefore challenged us to tackle systemic racism and its associated inequalities. *“In this third decade after gaining our democratic freedom and rights, ..we need to acknowledge the link between race, power and privilege. We need to redress urgently the economic inequalities present in our society as a result of past racial discriminatory laws and practices.*

The discussion guide has therefore put an emphasis on economic inequalities.

### **A nation that is deeply divided on issues of land, affirmative action, and capital ownership,**

Our nation has failed to reverse the three apartheid legacies of economic inequality: gender/racial equalities in workplace, inequalities in land ownership, and inequalities in access to quality education and quality health services.

At the same time, our nation is racially polarised around government programs that are designed to address the three inequalities: affirmative action (workplace inequalities), land reform programs (land inequalities and land tenure), fees must fall/national health insurance (education and health inequalities).

We need grassroots stories and conversation that can generate new vision and insights around issues of land equality, workplace equality, and health/education equality.

The discussion guide seeks to offer opportunity to hundreds of ordinary South Africa to share their experiences and views of affirmative action, land reform program, and education/health reforms. These experiences and views shall be collated into a book and other materials that will be used to engage those in power to develop a new vision around issues of inequalities.

We thank you in advance for taking time to participate in this important process.

# **PART I: EXPERIENCE OF RACE, PRIVILEGE AND INEQUALITY**

## **THEME 1: INEQUALITY IN LAND OWNERSHIP**

We invite you to share your stories with others using all or some of the questions below:

- If your family was a victim of forced removals, how have the forced removals affected you and your family? Would you like to share stories about it?
- Would you like to share your story about your experiences (both positive and negative) as a worker in the mines during the apartheid?
- What is your experience of farm killings? What needs to be done to address the problem?
- Would you like to share your story about your experiences (both positive and negative) as a farm worker during the apartheid? After 1994, have the living and working conditions of farm workers changed?
- What is your experience of job losses and retrenchment in the farms? How has this affected you and your family? Would you like to share stories about this experience?
- What is your experience of corruption in relation to access to land?
- What do you expect the government to do so that there is equality for all with respect to land ownership? What style of leadership should we demand from our politicians so that this vision is realized? What values should we demand from our political leaders in relation to the issue of land?

## **THEME 2: INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION AND HEALTH SERVICES**

We invite you to share your stories with others using all or some of the questions below:

- What was your experience about difficulties in accessing health services during the apartheid? Has the situation changed?
- What was your experience about many young people dropping from school (primary school and high school) during apartheid? Has the situation changed?
- What was your experience about difficulties in getting access to university studies during the apartheid? Has the situation changed?
- What was your experience of parents finding it difficult to afford fees (at high school/at universities) during apartheid? Has the situation changed?
- What is your experience of corruption in relation to access to health services and education?
- What do you expect the government to do so that there is equality of access to quality education and quality health services? What style of leadership should we demand from our politicians so that this vision is realized? What values should we demand from our political leaders in relation to the issue of education and health services?

### THEME 3: INEQUALITY IN ACCESSING JOB OPPORTUNITIES

We invite you to share your stories with others using all or some of the questions below:

- During apartheid, what was the experience of yourself and your family about difficulties in getting a job? Has the situation changed?
- During apartheid, what was the experience of yourself and your family with respect to being retrenched from a job? Has the situation changed?
- Government has a program of affirmative action. How has this program affected you and your family? What has been your personal experience of this program?
- What is your experience of corruption in relation to access to job opportunities?
- What do you expect the government to do so that there is equality of access to job opportunities? What style of leadership should we demand from our politicians so that this vision is realized? What values should we demand from our political leaders in relation to the issue of job opportunities?

## **PART II: EXPERIENCE OF RACISM IN WORKPLACE, SCHOOL AND CHURCH**

### THEME 4: EXPERIENCE OF RACISM IN WORKPLACE AND AT SCHOOL

We invite you to share your stories with others using all or some of the questions below:

In your workplace, what is your personal experience with respect to the following:

- Racial prejudice
- Negative stereotyping of a people belonging to a particular racial group, ethnic group or nationality.
- Racist remarks, racist jokes, racist comments (both overt and covert)
- Treatment of a people belonging to a particular race/ethnic group/nationality as outsiders;

Would you like to share a story to illustrate this experience?

What needs to be done so that the country addresses racism in the workplace?

### THEME 5: EXPERIENCE OF RACISM WITHIN THE CHURCH

We invite you to share your stories with others using all or some of the questions below:

In your parish and diocese, what is your personal experience with respect to the following:

- Prejudice and fear of people belonging to a particular race/ethnic group/nationality;
- Treatment of a people belonging to a particular race/ethnic group/nationality as outsiders;
- Privileges and opportunities being made available only to a people of one race/ethnic group/nationality.

- Constant gossiping and negative stereotyping directed against a people of a particular race/ethnicity/nationality.

Would you like to share a story to illustrate this experience?

What should be done to strengthen the positive experiences? What should be done to rectify the negative experiences?

What do we need to do in our diocese/parish so that we build a faith community where “*there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female.*” (*Galatians 3: 28*)”

## THEME 6: EXPERIENCE OF RACISM IN SCHOOLS/UNIVERSITIES

We invite you to share your stories with others using all or some of the questions below:

In your school or university, what is your personal experience with respect to the following:

- Racial prejudice and fear of a people belonging to a particular racial group, ethnic group or nationality.
- Negative stereotyping of a people belonging to a particular racial group, ethnic group or nationality.
- Racist remarks, racist jokes, racist comments (both overt and covert)
- Treatment of a people belonging to a particular race/ethnic group/nationality as outsiders;
- Bullying of a people different from us.

Would you like to share a story to illustrate this experience?

What needs to be done so that the country addresses racism in schools/universities?

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*“We realise that this is not an easy conversation, one that many of us may prefer to avoid. Our invitation to such a dialogue may in itself evoke a range of emotions, including self-justification and self-righteous feelings; or, guilt and denial; on the other hand, feelings of anger and sadness. Dialogue, rational and respectful, is necessary so that we open ourselves to receive God’s healing” (SACBC Pastoral letter on racism)*