



Florida Minority Community Reinvestment Coalition (FMCRC)
San Diego Minority Community Reinvestment Coalition (SDMCRC)

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December 5, 2014

Archdiocese of Boston
Cardinal Sean Patrick O'Malley
66 Brooks Drive
Braintree, MA 02184-3839

RE: US Catholic Church Silence on murdering of African Americans in Ferguson & Other cities across the US-
US Catholic Church Silence on Racial Economic Discrimination Resulting in Rising Poverty for Minorities
Hunger Strike Scheduled for September 1, 2015: Pope Francis Roundtable on Poverty & Racism in U.S.

Honorable Cardinal O'Malley:

Without doubt Bishops and Cardinals of the U.S. Catholic Church have witnessed the horrendous events in Ferguson, NY and across the country that clearly demonstrates that racism in American is growing at rates unseen in the past 50 years. Yet there is nothing but silence from the leadership of the US Catholic Church. Why? Because they are African Americans who represent a small portion of your church? Why is the US Catholic Church silent on issues of rising poverty and rising economic racism in the United States? On September 1, 2015 I will launch a hunger strike in Philadelphia and not conclude this demonstration until the US Catholic Church leadership and Pope Francis agree to meet with minority leaders across the United States to discuss the issues of racial poverty and racial economic racism in the United States.

The recent events that have resulted in the deaths of African Americans are symptoms of a much greater issue in our country. At the core of this is pure racial economics. Economic Racism is rising in the United States. People of color continue to represent a vast majority of poverty in all urban cities and have little or no chance for upward financial mobility. From health, education to small business, minorities represent a majority of all negative economic data. All this data leads to household wealth. With growing household wealth comes influence. Both politically and socially that ultimately drives policies. Yet people of color are seeing poverty on the rise as their household income declines as the following data demonstrates:

- 1) Federal Reserve Study:
2010-2013 Median Net Worth (Whites: +2%/\$142,000) (Latino/African American: -17%/\$18,000)
- 2) African Americans represent 67% of the population in Ferguson yet account for over 91% of all poverty
- 3) African American children have less than a 4.2% probability of upward financial mobility
- 4) African American children in Jacksonville FL have less than a 4.6% probability of upward financial mobility
- 5) Minorities account represent 43% of Florida's population yet account for over 74% of all poverty
- 6) 78% of all African American children in San Diego Unified School District classified as socio-economically disadvantaged
- 7) African American in San Diego accounted for less than 1% of all home loans in 2013 according to federal data
- 8) In 25 largest US cities: Minorities account for over 76% of all poverty

There is much more data that I am sure you have seen that without doubt shows the rising racial economic discrimination that is growing in the United States. The economic distress of minority communities is the most pressing issue facing our communities across the United States. The lack of businesses and jobs fuels not only a crushing cycle of increasing poverty but also crippling social problems, such as drug abuse and crime in our minority communities. The establishment of a sustainable economic base together with employment opportunities, wealth creation, role models, and improved local infrastructure is critical to the future well-being of these communities.

To address this pressing negative socio-economic trend, it is essential for there to be a rise of vocal outrage from our countries leadership, especially from the Catholic Church that is supposed to represent the poor and those without a voice. Yet your church continues to be a silent lamb on these pressing issues. This is the very reason why I left the Catholic Church over 25 years ago. I could no longer stand the hypocrisy of the US Catholic Church. It is only recently that I have come back but let me make this clear. I am not a Catholic. I am a “Francis” follower. For he has shown the strength to be a vocal leader on the issues of poverty and racism. Yet your US Catholic Church continues to be a meek, weak and silent lamb on these very issues. This is clearly demonstrated by your silence in the recent events in Ferguson and New York. Jesus Christ is the foundation of your church yet the U.S. Catholic Church leaders are not Christ like. This is demonstrated in my state of Florida where Bishop Wenski lives like a King in his waterside mansion or the mansion of St. Louis Bishop of St Louis (Ferguson):



Would you or Pope Francis say such living is “Christ Like”? I was insulted recently during the South American immigration issue where Catholic Priests were requesting families to house some of the immigrant children. These children could have been house at these and other mansions that house the Bishops of the U.S. Catholic Church. Would you say living in such a lavish style is Christ Like? How can leaders of the U.S. Catholic Church feel or understand the pain of those living in poverty when they live in such a lavish lifestyle?

Pope Francis is having a tremendous impact across the world because of his leadership that embraces the poor, sick, weak and meek. It is appropriate that he attend the World Conference on Families. For here in the United States, the racial economic racism is undermining the dignity and sanctity of families of color across the United States. Our children have little or no hope to live a better life when our country invests more in wars that in our families. African American children have little or no hope to live a better life when they are preyed upon by the police. Minorities in our country have little or no hope to live a better life when its leaders (including U.S. Bishops) lack the sensibility towards the suffering of our people.

The symbol of the U.S. Church and Pope Francis meeting with minority families and leaders could be a “tipping point” and result in proper attention and investment to reverse the rising racial racism and racial economic racism. I for one will fight for their future and their children’s future. The only act I can offer these communities is one of strength and commitment. So on September 1st, I will begin a hunger strike in Philadelphia and not conclude this hunger strike until the U.S. Catholic Bishops and Pope Francis agrees to meet with minority leaders and families to specifically address these fast rising racial issues in the United States. The symbol of such a meeting can bring both hope and change. I witnessed this with Pope John Paul and such meetings in Poland.

It is our hope that such a hunger strike is not necessary and that the Bishops of the U.S. Catholic Church will follow the leadership of Pope Francis and become vocal leaders of change across our country. We have heard about your leadership and are hopeful that you can lead such a charge to bringing racial economic equality in the United States of America. Please feel free to contact myself at (813) 598-6361 with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

"There are those who say thus is the way of the world....I say NO thus we make it"

"It is easy to sing when one sits upon a perch of privilege as compared to those who are drowning in a sea of neglect"

Al Pina

Chair/CEO

FMCR

Co-Chair: The 100

President: San Diego Minority Community Reinvestment Coalition

Board member: San Diego Minority Construction Coalition

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