



**We are  
Called**

TO HEAL. TO UNITE. TO JUSTICE.

## Team Reflection

### **No. 21: Putting Our House in Order**

CHA's campaign, *Confronting Racism by Achieving Health Equity* calls for a commitment to put our own house in order. The image of a house is a useful metaphor as some of the great spiritual teachers describe the inner life as different rooms in a home. In the current day home renovations and DIY projects proliferate across social media. Just as our homes benefit from changes, our inner lives need similar attention. As we look within ourselves, we may find furniture to be hauled away or walls needing to come down in order to open us up.

Dismantling structures of racism and injustices entails dislodging ideas, patterns and prejudices within ourselves that prevent accepting others as beloved and blessed by God.

In home renovation television shows, homeowners seek the advice of others. Fresh perspectives help them imagine new realities. In a similar way, hearing stories from people harmed by racism and structures of oppression is a critical step in building new and more equitable structures for health care and human flourishing.

Listening to stories - hundreds and thousands of stories - was precisely the process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa following the dismantling of apartheid. Anyone could come forward and tell their story of the oppression, trauma and brutal violence experienced by victims of injustices. Perpetrators, especially government officials and leaders who enabled systemic violence and injustices could come forward to confess their crimes and complicity truthfully and completely to the commission comprised of 17 members who were empowered to grant amnesty to perpetrators. These testimonies were recorded and became part of the commission's report which remains available today. At the end of the commission's work, financial reparations were paid to 21,000 victims. [21.1]

In the U.S., some organizations have enacted similar processes for their participation in slavery. Georgetown University, a Catholic and Jesuit institution of higher learning, established a charitable foundation focused on racial healing and educational advancement for the descendants of the 272 enslaved individuals sold by the religious order in 1838. [12.2] Expanding upon this experience, the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits)

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in the U.S. announced in March 2021 the Descendants Truth and Reconciliation foundation. The religious order has pledged to raise \$100 million for the descendants, while also seeking to advance racial healing and justice. [12.3]

In Chicago, a group of religious men and women sponsor a ministry of reconciliation for youth and families impacted by violence and/or conflict, especially with the criminal justice system. They offer a safe place of radical hospitality to promote restorative justice approaches to conflict and programming to build a sense of community in neighborhoods that have experienced significant trauma. [12.4]

In health care, Cone Health in Greensboro, North Carolina, made a public apology in 2016 for its participation in health care discrimination and segregation. [12.5] Like other institutions in similar situations, Cone Health has doubled down on its commitment to health equity, especially to communities of color. These are the types of prophetic, institutional actions and commitments that are not the only solutions but the seeds, the beginnings of racial reconciliation and the healing that our society longs for.

## Consider

- What walls would I like to see come down within myself that could lead to greater reconciliation with women and men of different races/ethnicities than my own?
- What walls or structures need to be reconfigured in the U.S. health care system or my own workplace to create greater reconciliation?
- What would a truth and reconciliation commission focused on health care and wellbeing in the U.S. or in the region of our health system look like today?

## Let us pray together,

*God of Heaven and Earth,  
you created the one human family  
and endowed each person with great dignity.  
Aid us, we pray, in overcoming the sin of racism.  
Grant us your grace in eliminating this blight  
from our hearts, our communities,  
our social and civil institutions.*

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*Fill our hearts with love for you and our neighbor  
so that we may work with you  
in healing our land from racial injustice.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.*

Taken from the *Prayer Service for Racial Healing*, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

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[21.1] <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/>

[21.2] <https://www.georgetown.edu/slavery/>

[21.3] <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2021/03/15/jesuits-descendants-slaves-100-million-georgetown-reconciliation-racial>

[21.4] <https://www.pbmr.org/>

[21.5] <https://www.conehealth.com/news/news-search/2016-news-releases/cone-health-honors-dr-alvin-blount-/>