



Dismantling & Building Anew

Introduction

In a world of growing economic disparity and increasing individualism, we call for federal policies that dismantle systemic racism, eliminate the wealth and income gap, improve the well-being of our communities, and allow all people to thrive — especially those most often left out: women, people of color, people on the economic margins, and those at the intersections of these identities.

For the past several years, NETWORK has hosted Nuns on the Bus site visits and rallies, rural roundtables, and Dialogues Across Geographic Divides. These events have brought home health workers, fast food workers, business owners, immigrant families, people experiencing homelessness, community organizers, and people of all backgrounds, religions, income levels together to listen to one another's stories and find new ways of being in community with one another. Emerging from these encounters with families and communities across the United States, NETWORK's Build Anew Agenda is a pathway to realizing our vision of a just and inclusive society.

This guide will explore how NETWORK's political advocacy is grounded in four Cornerstones to Build our Country Anew: Dismantling Systemic Racism, Cultivating Inclusive Community, Rooting Our Economy in Solidarity, and Transforming Our Politics.

Join us to explore what it will take to build new structures that advance justice for all, and grow as Spirit-filled advocates.

How to Use This Resource

This resource is designed to be used by individuals or groups. Following this introduction there will be seven chapters, each one dedicated to exploring NETWORK's *Build Anew* policy areas with readings, quotes, reflection questions, and a prayer. We recommend spending the season of Lent, or another 6-7 week period, working through all of the material. You may choose to divide the content into multiple days for reading and reflection, or set aside time once a week to go through a full chapter.

We encourage you to share your experience, learnings, and feedback with us over social media using the hashtag #BuildAnew, or via email. To join us in our advocacy while using this reflection guide or after, visit NETWORK's website at www.networklobby.org.

We Must Rebuild, Not Just Reform

Emerging from four years of hatred, division, racism, and regression guiding federal policies, NETWORK pondered what approach to take in our new policy agenda for the next four years ahead. Through encounters with individuals and communities impacted by federal policy, it has been made clear that our systems are not working for everyone. Too often, this is on purpose. Certain policies and systems seek to widen the income gap, encourage racism, and exclude people based on their identity. Substantial change cannot be made unless we tear down the structures that are oppressing some while benefitting others. We need to dismantle and rebuild, rather than simply reform, in order to eradicate the white male supremacy in our current system. Reform efforts have provided relief in traumatic times, but we must achieve sustainable liberation.

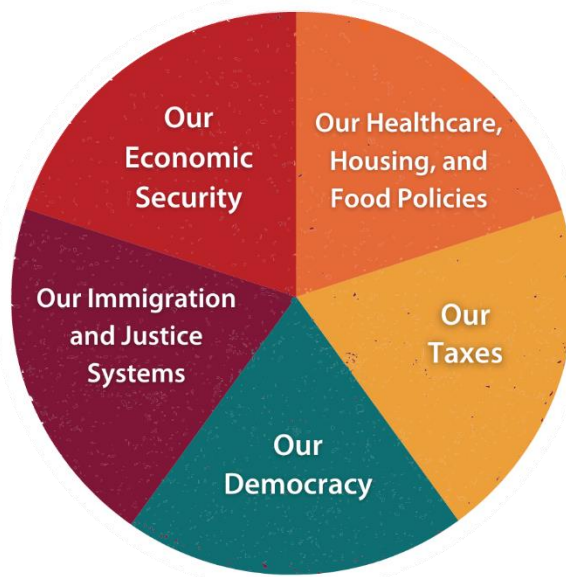
As Sister Simone Campbell says, “We need a new imagination to create a way forward in these unprecedented times. What is old is not working and something new needs to emerge.” The racism, sexism, classism, and white supremacy in the American political system has been present since its founding, and there is no way to achieve justice without building a new foundation for a political system, economy, and society that intentionally includes everyone.

Cornerstones are the first stones set in a foundation, and everything else in a structure is built in reference to them. With this in mind, NETWORK has chosen these four cornerstones to Build Anew:

Dismantling Systemic Racism, Cultivating Inclusive Community, Rooting Our Economy in Solidarity, and Transforming Our Politics. Upon these foundational values, we can build our country anew through our policies.

Policy Areas to Build Anew

We build our country anew by prioritizing racial equity, caring for the Earth, and improving the well-being of all people and communities through legislative advocacy for:



Working Against Injustice as People of Faith

We have reached an inflection point in American life when it comes to racism and white supremacy. The truth and harsh realities of systemic racism have been laid bare before our eyes in every aspect of our society, including health care, education, the economy, and policing. The global coronavirus pandemic, economic crisis, and racial reckoning following the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and many others have amplified the unjust disparities in our nation. As people of faith, it is long past the time when we must stand against these injustices that distort the image, likeness, and character of God, who created us with purpose and on purpose.

This is particularly personal for me as an African-American woman, mother, ordained clergy, and justice advocate. Racism is a heavy burden for us to bear and it is relentless in its deification of hatred and violence against anyone who is not white. In America, my children are not safe. My family members are not safe. My friends and fellow church members are not safe. I am not safe. And, it is not because we have done anything wrong or because we are criminal minded. We are not safe because of the color of our skin, which is the weapon so many see regardless of our station in life, our love of God, our commitment to our communities, or our devotion to righteousness.

We are late in this endeavor to end systemic racism and white supremacy once and for all. Truly, we should have already eradicated this evil in our midst, this evil which is soaked into the foundation of our country. But, it's not too late for us to do it now. We must root out systemic racism at its core and chart a new course moving forward. Lent is the perfect time for us to focus on this, to pray about this, to ask God to intervene and move on hearts and minds that we might see the change and be the change we long for in our nation.

Written by Rev. Dr. Leslie Copeland-Tune. Rev. Dr. Copeland-Tune is a leading ecumenical voice and COO of the National Council of Churches USA.

We Pray

Almighty gracious and merciful God, like the emergence of triumphant beams of life assuring light cutting through our darkest hours, humbly we rejoice in the presence of your Holy Spirit.

We exalt you dear Lord with overwhelming thanksgiving for all that is good in our lives. Even as we celebrate your matchless benevolence towards us in this sacred season of Lent, our souls cry out with hope as we anticipate the empowerment of our mind, body, and soul against the evils of oppression, the misguided justification of unequal laws, and systemic racism.

Forgive us God, for we in arrogance have become drunkards in our consumption of the majesty of those we call leaders. We have made deals with demons motivated by our own lust for power with no regard for your truth and no thought of the innocent nor the marginalized. We have recklessly reprogrammed our minds to forget that evil has no conscience and thus your children of this world and greater of this nation, suffer.

Have Mercy upon us. Through Your love for us, faithful to your promise according the Living Word, we are given “a way out.” Dear Sovereign Savior, convict us to take action for economic equity for the disenfranchised, for unity of community, and for the transformation of our politics.

All this we pray in the name of Jesus the Christ.

Amen.

Written by Reverend Bo Barber II. Rev. Barber is the pastor of Prospect African Methodist Episcopal Church, Fortson North Columbus Georgia, and founder and CEO of Faith to Table.

Take Action

Set aside some time to review NETWORK’s [Build Anew policy agenda](#). Reflect on how the cornerstones will impact federal policy and political systems. This will help you prepare for closer study of our issue areas in the following weeks. Questions that may help guide your reflection include:

- What does Sister Simone mean when she says, “We need a new imagination to create a way forward in these unprecedented times. What is old is not working and something new needs to emerge.”
- How have you seen racism and white supremacy manifest in federal policy?
- What role might you play in dismantling unjust power structures in our country?