

# Democracy Values & the 2020 Election

## A Reflection Guide for Faith Communities

**FAITH**  
IN PUBLIC LIFE



Interfaith Power & Light  
A Religious Response to Global Warming



## More Health Policies

## in a Time of a Pandemic

**Despite our nation's stated values of life and equality, the United States is the only industrialized country in the world that does not guarantee its residents universal access to health care. This is a failure of political and moral imagination – especially in a time of pandemic.**

In stark ways, the COVID-19 crisis reveals the tragic consequences of failing to prioritize public health and human life on the national level. State and local leaders have been forced to scramble to obtain critical medical supplies while the federal government failed to act with urgency. Some governors have shirked their responsibility to issue social-distancing orders and ended them despite the risk of more deaths.

“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane,” Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., said. Data shows people of color are more likely to become ill with the coronavirus and to die from it -- especially African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans. Incarcerated people, people of color and immigrants are trapped in life-threatening conditions because of political indifference. These realities are severe expressions of systemic injustice.

Faith communities have long been at the forefront of providing direct medical services, and have advocated for universal access to quality health care. We must continue to insist that all of God’s children deserve coverage and access to care that protects their health and heals them when they are sick.

Federal and state efforts to slash Medicaid and take health care away from millions of low-income Americans, people with disabilities, children and seniors are sins. Powerful special interests should not decide who lives and who dies. Pharmaceutical corporations put greed before human life by pricing lifesaving medicines like insulin out of reach for millions of Americans. As people of faith, we know this is unacceptable and immoral.

Lawmakers and candidates must demonstrate a commitment to policies that ensure everyone has access to quality, affordable healthcare, release specific plans to reduce pervasive racial inequities in the healthcare system, and end pharmaceutical corporations’ ability to price gouge the medicines we need.

## Questions for Reflection and Candidates

- 1 How can people of faith be most effective in using our stories, congregations and power to advocate for health care reform?
- 2 What do you struggle with the most when it comes to our healthcare system?
- 3 How has the COVID-19 crisis impacted your community? What policy solutions can keep us all safe and remedy racial and economic inequalities in your community?
- 4 As a candidate, what are your specific plans for making sure that quality, affordable health care is available for all?



## Restorative Racial Justice

**Justice and redemption are at the very heart of faith. Restorative justice begins with listening to and empowering communities that have been exploited, excluded and denied equal representation and freedom. The evil ideology of white supremacy shaped our nation from its founding and continues to impact policies and communities today, especially in the criminal justice system. The killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and so many other Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color, has provoked a growing, multi-racial moral movement for accountability and systemic reforms for racial justice.**

The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. Racial disparities are stark and pervasive. People returning from prison face steep barriers to voting, housing, employment and opportunity. For all too many, true freedom never comes. The United States is also one of the few industrialized nations in

the world to execute prisoners. The death penalty only contributes to a culture of violence and retribution. Tragically, it has also been proven to result in state-sanctioned killing of innocent people. Those executed have disproportionately been people of color, and in many cases they were denied adequate legal representation. In addition, the reality of systemic racism includes the killing of African Americans through police violence.

In order to reform the criminal justice system, elected officials and candidates should commit to sentencing policies that reduce sentence lengths for nonviolent crimes and promote sensible alternatives to incarceration. It's also essential to reintegrate people leaving prison into society by removing barriers to employment and voting. Our country needs to create new law enforcement systems and visions of community safety. Recent reforms have not done enough to stop the murder of our Black neighbors by the police. In order for our Black neighbors to thrive, we must examine our country's prioritization of punitive law enforcement and policies by cutting outsized law enforcement budgets and reinvesting in health and human services, schools, affordable housing and living-wage jobs. The issues of racial justice and criminal justice are intertwined with the many issues we will vote on this fall. The changes to policing must be accompanied with direct investment in community needs and redefining public safety.

As people of faith and conscience, we must hold federal, state and local officials accountable for the persistent racial bias and unconscionable killing of unarmed civilians perceived as a threat, almost always people of color.

## Questions for Reflection and Candidates

- 1 How can we dismantle the evil ideology of white supremacy in our culture and political systems?
- 2 What can be done to end racial profiling and police violence against people of color?
- 3 What steps can be taken to ensure formerly incarcerated people have voting rights and fair access to employment?
- 4 As a candidate, what will you do to ensure racial justice is prioritized in the criminal justice system?
- 5 How do we build safe communities for everyone, particularly people of color?