

Catholic Social Teaching as a Foundation for Addressing Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare



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Workshop Objectives



- To gain basic understanding of the principles of Catholic social teaching and their congruency with social work values
- To understand the current facts related to racial disproportionality.
- To see how to apply a CST lens to issues of racial disproportionality
- To consider strategies for addressing racial disproportionality.

What is Catholic Social Teaching?

- Rooted in Hebrew prophet's call to “do justice, love goodness, and walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).
- “Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24)



What is Catholic Social Teaching?

- “He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to set the oppressed free.” Luke 4:18

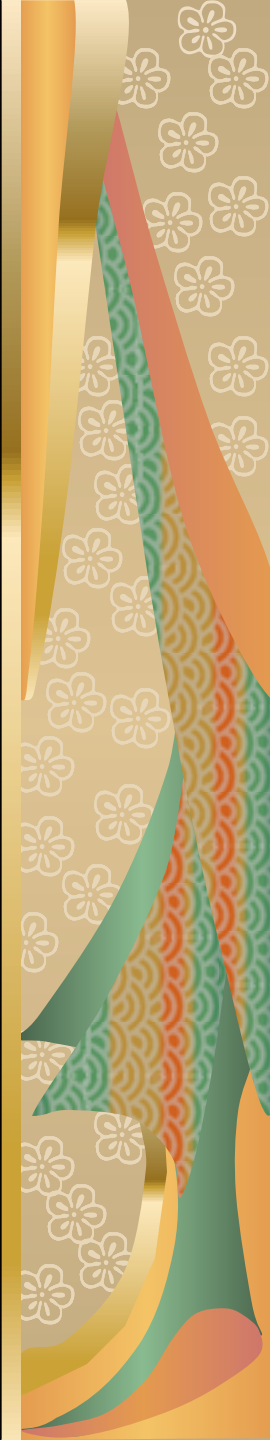


What is Catholic Social Teaching?

- Draws from numerous papal encyclicals and other Church documents to address the challenges of poverty, human rights, wealth disparities, and other injustices experienced across the world.
- Address the ‘social questions’ of the times.

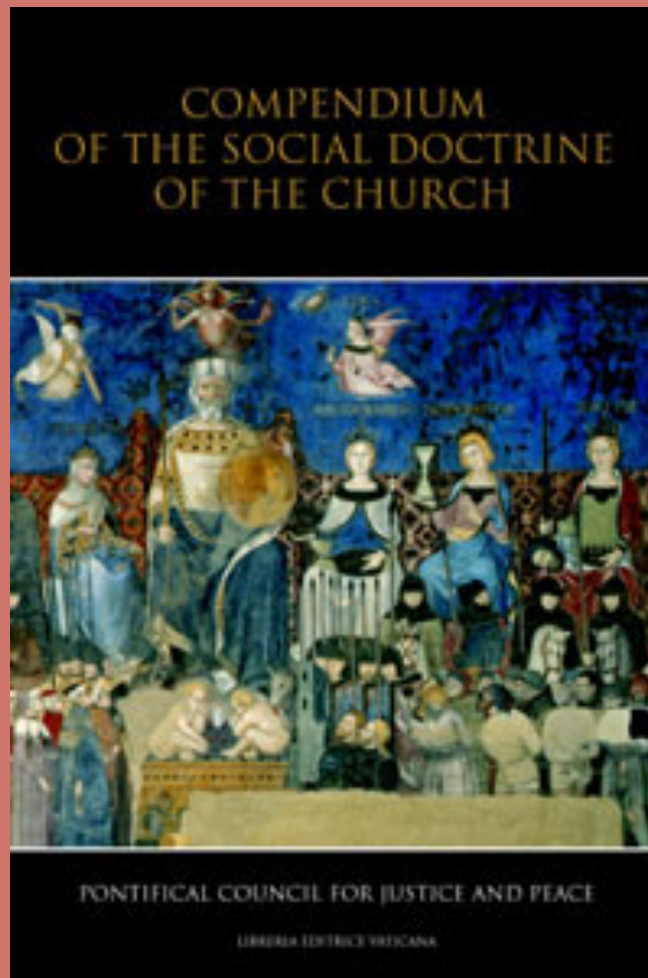
Partial list

■ Rerum Novarum, The Condition of Labor (Pope Leo XIII, 1891)
■ Pacem in Terris, Peace on Earth (Pope John XXIII, 1963)
■ Gaudium et Spes, The Church in the Modern World (Second Vatican Council, 1965)
■ Popolorum Progressio, The Development of Peoples (Pope Paul VI, 1967)
■ Justitia in Mundo, Justice in the World (Synod of Bishops, 1971)
■ Laborem Exercens, On Human Work (Pope John Paul II, 1981)
■ Sollicitudo rei Socioalis, On Social Concern (Pope John Paul II, 1987) ⁵



What is Catholic Social Teaching?

- Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 2004
- Pope Benedict XVI's encyclicals
 - Caritas in Veritate, Charity in Truth (2009)
 - Spe Salvi, On Christian Hope (2007)
 - Deus Caritas Es, God is Love (2005)
- Offers principals for reflection, criteria for judgment, guidance for action.



Core Principals of Catholic Social Teaching

- **Dignity and worth of the human person**
- **Common Good**
 - **Care for God's Creation**
 - **Call to Family, Call to Community, Participation**
 - **Dignity of Work/Rights of workers**
- **Solidarity**
- **Subsidiarity**
- **Preferential Option for the Poor**



CST Principals: : Dignity and Worth of the Human Person

I was hungry and you gave me food,

I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,

I was a stranger and you welcomed me,

I was naked and you gave me clothing,

I was sick and you took care of me,

I was in prison and you visited me. (Matt 25:31-40)



CST Principals: Common Good

- “The sum of all social conditions which allow people, either as a group or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.” (Compendium, 164)

Conditions for the Common Good

- Commitment to peace
- Security of a just order
- Protection of the environment
- Basic human rights
 - food, housing, work, basic health care
 - education and access to culture
 - transportation
 - freedom of communication and expression
 - protection of religious freedom (Compendium)



CST Principals: Solidarity

Solidarity is:

- “A firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good.”
- Not a “feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of others .”

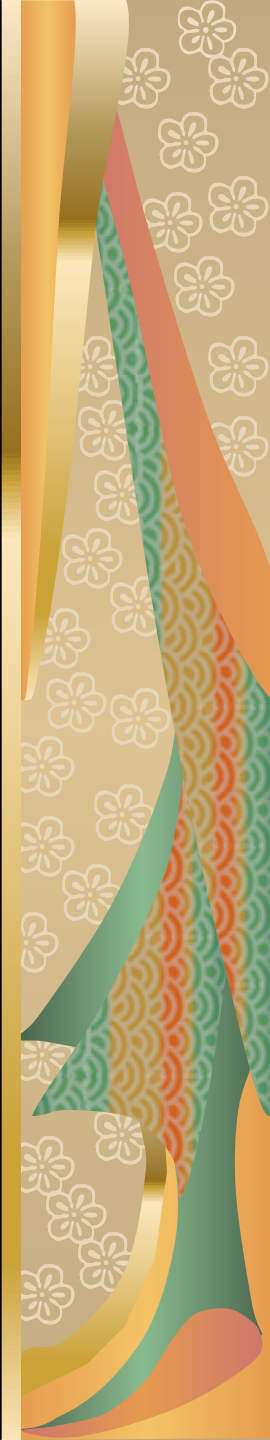


(Compendium, 193)

CST Principals: Solidarity

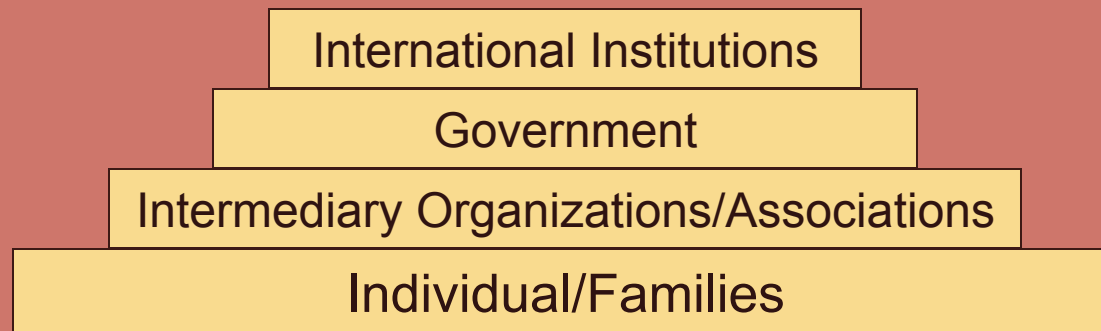
“If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us walk together...”

--- Lila Watson, Australian Aboriginal woman, in response to mission workers

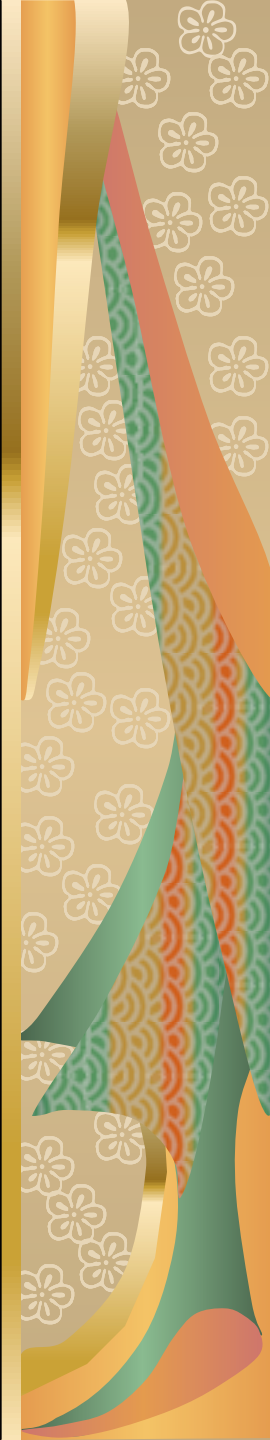


CST Principal: Subsidiarity

“A community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.”



It is important for the state to “step in to supply certain functions” such as when there is “a serious social imbalance or injustice where only the intervention of the public authority can create conditions of equality, justice, or peace.”



CST Principles: Preferential Option for the Poor

Basic Moral Test of Society:

How are the most vulnerable members faring?



Complementarity between SW Values and Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching : Social & Economic Justice (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.)

Catholic Social Teaching

- Dignity of Human Person
- Common Good (Family, Community, Participation, Care for God's Creation, Dignity of Work, Rights and Responsibilities)
- Solidarity
- Subsidiarity
- Option for the Poor

NASW

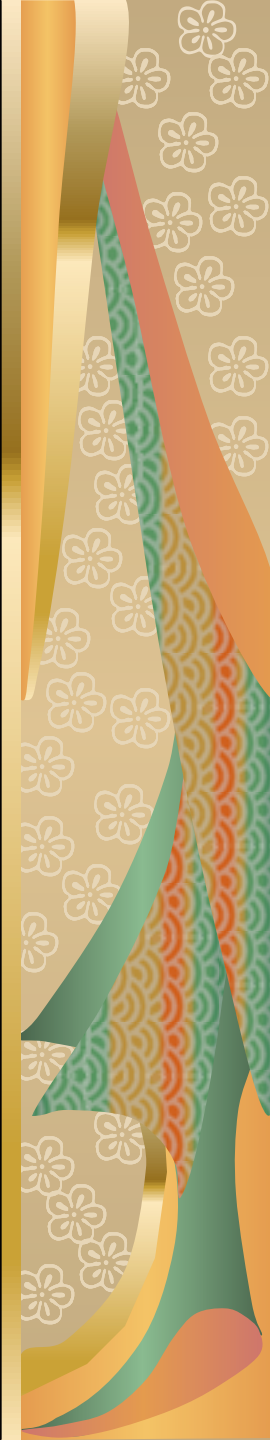
- Dignity and Worth of Person
- Importance of Human Relationships
- Service
- Social Justice
- Giving particular attention to needs of vulnerable



Catholic Social Teaching—not just a “Catholic” thing

■ "Natural law is a concept of objective truth, not religious preference...natural law theory is not uniquely Catholic, it's human. Some of the greatest exponents of the natural law, like Aristotle and Cicero, had never heard of the Catholic Church."

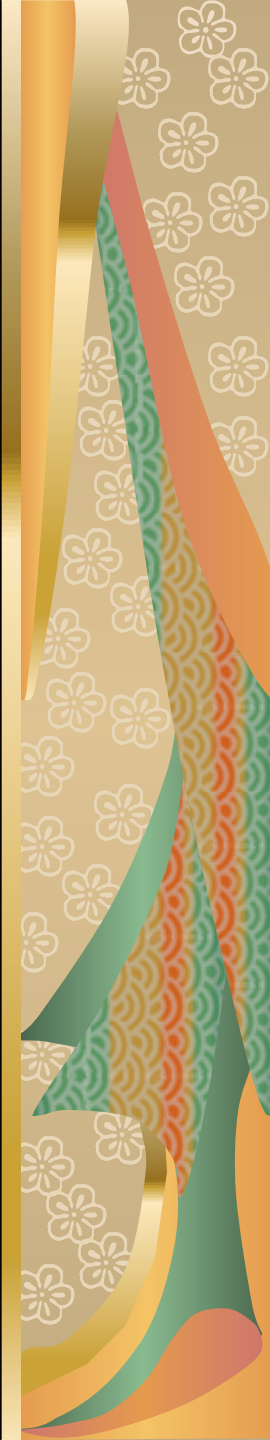
- ***“These things we teach are not true because they happen to be taught by the church. We teach them because they happen to be true...”*** "It's not a Catholic thing. It's a natural thing. It's a ***human*** thing."
- **Cardinal Timothy Dolan**



Catholic Social Teaching's Dual Base

- Philosophical base: human beings have inherent dignity
- Source of dignity in nature
- Source of dignity is in source of nature: God

Spiritual base:
Christ's teachings
Catholic teachings



Racial Disproportionality

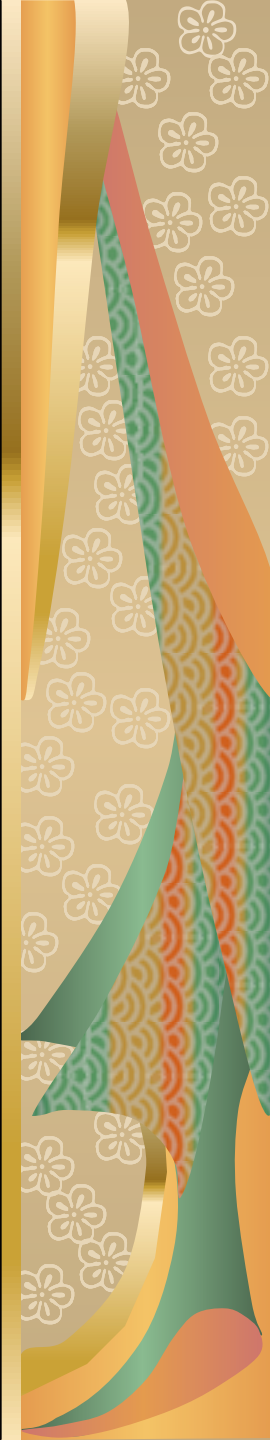
- **The overrepresentation of a specific group relative to its representation in the entire population.**
- **In 2008, Black children made up 13.8% of the child population, but 29% of those in foster care. (ACS and AFCARS)**
- **Overrepresentation on other poor outcomes, and underrepresentation in more desirable ones.**

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Disproportionality and Human Dignity: The Individual

- Children of color who enter the child welfare system may be or may not be saved from abuse and/or neglect, but are most certainly denied dignity of their birth families and freedom within their own families to grow.
- Children who enter foster care experience poorer life outcomes than other children
 - ❖ higher poverty and homelessness
 - ❖ lower educational achievement
 - ❖ other negative outcomes (Pecora et al., 2006).



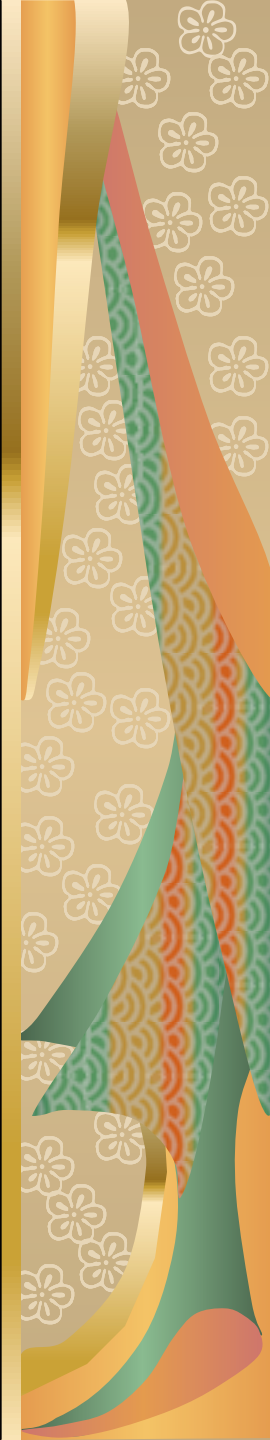
Call to Family: Subsidiarity, Human Dignity, Common Good

- Families are primary unit of community: “sanctuary of community”, “cradle of life and love”
- Entry into child welfare, particularly removal of child from home
 - ❖ shatters family systems (Roberts, 2002)
 - ❖ Punishes struggling child and family
- Focus on family strategies and prevention
 - ❖ Hold families together
 - ❖ Provide resources families require
 - ❖ Family partnerships
 - ❖ Faith-based supports



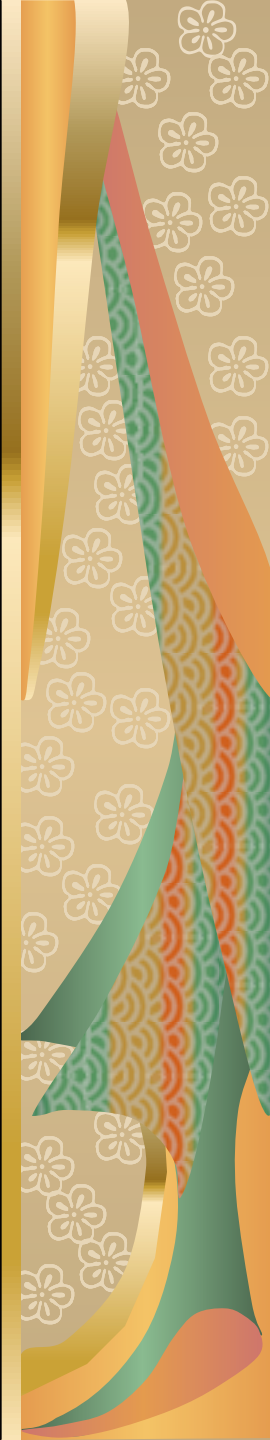
Disproportionality, Groups and Organizations --Subsidiarity

“It is impossible to promote the dignity of the person without showing concern for the family, groups, associations, local territorial realities; in short, for that aggregate of economic, social, cultural, sports-oriented, recreational, professional and political expressions to which people spontaneously give life and which make it possible for them to achieve effective social growth. This is the realm of *civil society*, understood as the sum of the relationships between individuals and intermediate social groupings.” (Pontifical Council, 2004, § 185)



Disproportionality, Groups and Organizations --Subsidiarity

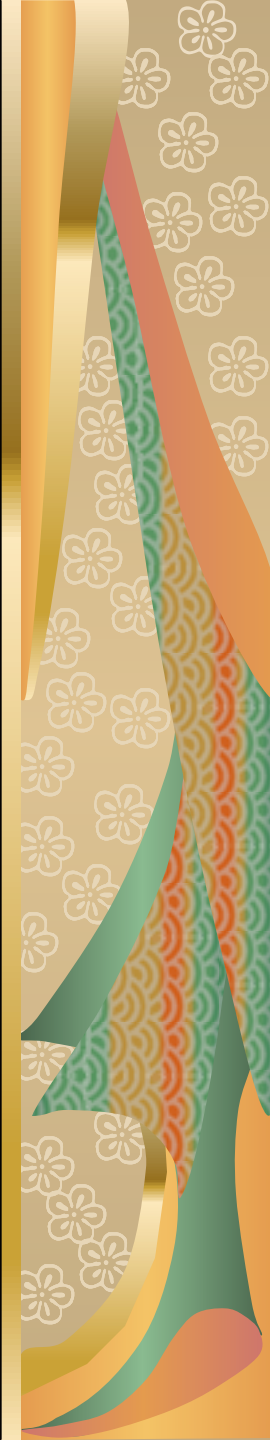
- Important to engage groups in addressing disproportionality
 - ❖ Casey Family Programs' Breakthrough Initiative
 - ❖ Undoing Racism groups
- Important to engage organizations
 - ❖ Child Protective Services
 - ❖ School, Health Systems
 - ❖ Business
 - ❖ Criminal Justice
- Subsidiarity requires choosing level of systems for intervention to allow the basic system (the family) to function well.



Disproportionality, Community --Subsidiarity

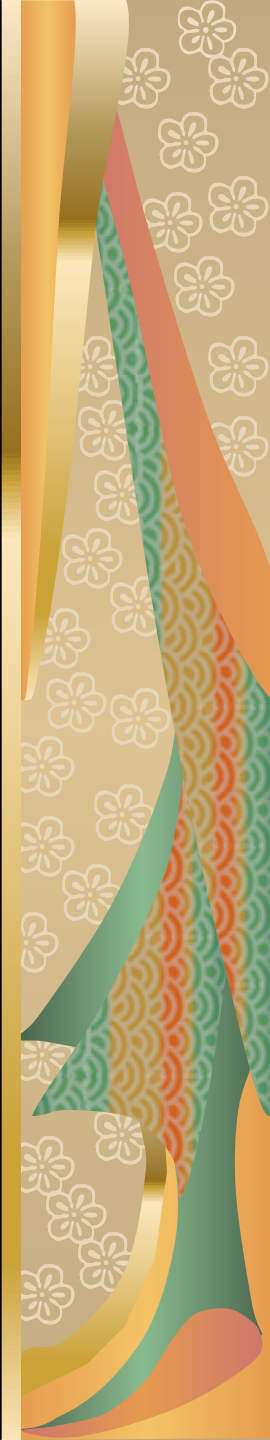
- Racial disproportionality is a distortion of community.
- Negative consequences and poor outcomes shared unequally
- Community and family level indicators of entry into child welfare system:

- ❖ Poverty
- ❖ Education
- ❖ Family structure
- ❖ Employment



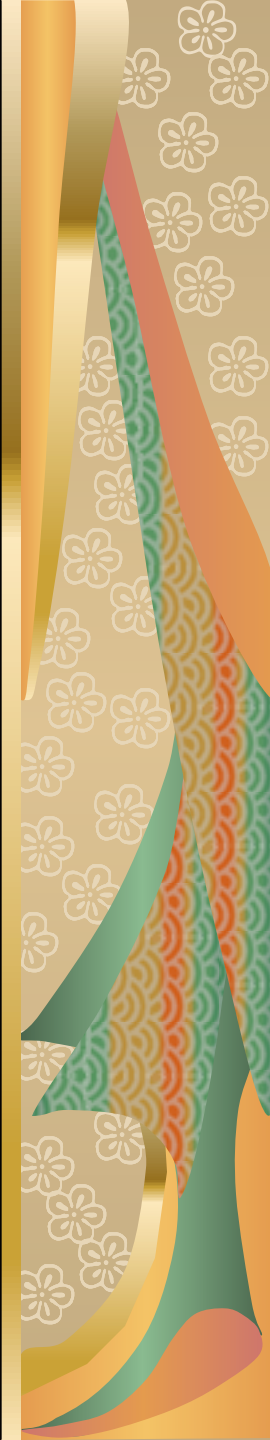
Disproportionality, Community --Subsidiarity

- Efforts to engage community to address disproportionality
 - Texas
 - Colorado
 - Indiana
 - One Church One Child (Fr. Clements)
- Understanding of power and responsibility of community
- Understanding of reduced role of government when local community can help families (subsidiarity)



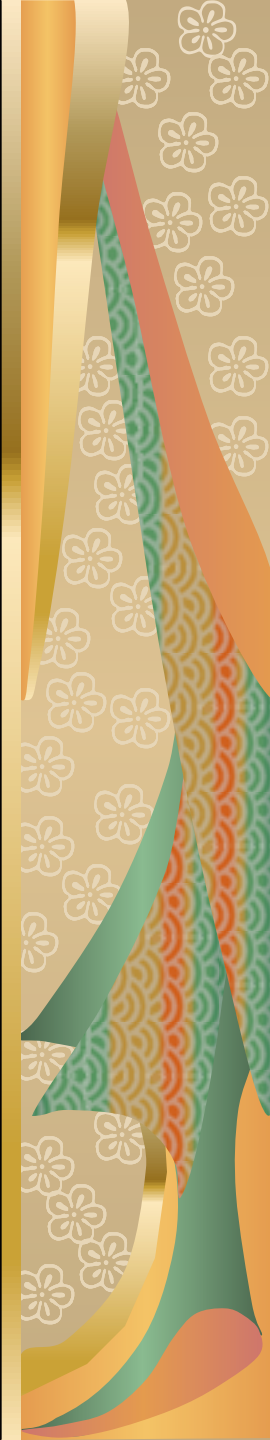
What We Can/MUST Do to Address Disproportionality

1. Investigate our own biases, and the biases of the systems in which we live, learn and work.
2. Investigate the many causes of racial disproportionality, and the many disproportionate actions that occur outside of the child welfare system.



What We Can/MUST Do to Address Disproportionality

3. We can examine how faith communities can help address racial disproportionality.
4. We can make a conscious decision to address racial disproportionality in our own life and practice.



CST Principals: Human Dignity, Common Good, Subsidiarity and Solidarity

“The common good therefore involves all members of society, no one is exempt from cooperating, according to each one’s possibilities, in attaining it and developing it...”



CST Principals: Human Dignity, Common Good, Subsidiarity and Solidarity

“The common good corresponds to the highest of human instincts, but it is a good that is very difficult to attain because it requires the constant ability and effort to seek the good of others as though it were one’s own good.”

Compendium (Pontifical Council, 2004 §167)



CST Principals and Disproportionality:

The Social Work Challenge

As social workers, those on the front line of social helping and justice, we can do better—individually, through our associations and groups, in our communities, and in our organizations.

We can act like Christ.



Are You Interested in Addressing

Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare?

**JOIN US,
Saturday
Oct. 29, 2011
12:15 – 1:15 pm**

Staff and administrators from the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) are conducting a meeting on Saturday, October 29, 2011, 12:15 – 1:15 pm in meeting room A705 (Atlanta Marriott Marquis) to discuss the formation of a steering committee to address racial disproportionality in child welfare.



If you are interested in this topic, we would love for you to come by to share your ideas. Please join us! For more information contact Ruth McRoy at mcroy@bc.edu.

