



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

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U.S. Coalition of Cities Against Racism and Discrimination 10-Point Plan of Action

In the 50 years since the murder of Medgar Evers in Jackson, the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham which killed four young girls, and the march on Washington led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., much progress has been made in addressing past grievances and in assuring the civil and human rights of all Americans. Federal civil and voting rights laws have been passed and to a great extent implemented. But much remains to be done.

For all of the progress we have made in civil rights in America, serious racial and ethnic disparities persist: Black and Hispanic Americans are more likely to be poor than their white counterparts. Black children are three times more likely to be poor than white children. Black children are one and one-half times more likely to be uninsured than white children and twice as likely to die before their first birthday. Blacks and Hispanics have a higher unemployment rate than the white population.

Crime disproportionately affects the black community, particularly black men and boys. African Americans account for 13 percent of the population, but nearly half of total homicide victims are black, and 85 percent of these are men. Black children and teens are 17 times more likely to die from a gun homicide than white children and teens. Racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented in the prison population. Among male prisoners in state and federal facilities, 39 percent are black and 23 percent are Hispanic. Among state prisoners serving time for drug offenses, 65 percent are either black or Hispanic. Compounding the impact of these incarceration statistics have on blacks and Hispanics are policies – in both the public and private sectors – which make it difficult, if not impossible, for people leaving prison to return to their communities, secure employment and housing, and become contributing members of society.

For decades America's mayors, through The United States Conference of Mayors, have taken a strong position in support of civil rights and in opposition to racism and discrimination of all kinds. The Conference's adopted policies have supported voting rights, affirmative action, fair housing, gay rights and same sex marriage, efforts to build tolerance and peacefully resolve conflict, and the integration of immigrants into our communities. They have opposed discrimination based on race, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age, and gender. They have opposed discrimination in employment and housing. They have opposed hate crimes and encouraged mayors to speak out against them whenever they occur. In more recent years they have turned their attention to human trafficking and gender violence.

The Conference has called for policies and programs to reduce unacceptable rates of poverty in cities and the disparities affecting too many city residents: creating jobs that pay, and training people to fill them; providing safe, affordable child care so that parents are able to take advantage of the jobs available; improving education to provide young people the opportunity to succeed and fill the jobs of the future; assuring the availability of affordable, quality health care and nutritious food; revitalizing neighborhoods and assuring an adequate supply of decent, affordable housing; and reducing crime and violence – gun violence, in particular.

Individually, mayors and their city governments have worked to eliminate a broad range of discrimination in housing, employment, education, health care, city services, contracting, procurement, and other vital areas. As community leaders, many mayors have spoken out against discrimination and injustice when it has occurred and undertaken efforts to build tolerance and understanding within their local communities. In recent years, cities have undertaken efforts to integrate immigrants into their communities and adopted a variety of policies to include fully and treat equitably their LGBT residents.

Again, much progress has been made, but much remains to be done.

Working with UNESCO and the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Conference of Mayors is establishing the U.S. Coalition of Cities Against Racism and Discrimination. To join this coalition, mayors will pledge to undertake the following 10 action steps:

Through The U.S. Conference of Mayors:

1. Continue collective efforts to speak out against racism and other forms of discrimination and propose solutions, and join with national civil rights organizations in this effort;
2. Advocate for inclusion and non-discrimination in all federal laws, policies, and programs;
3. Work toward sentencing and prison reform to reduce disparities between blacks and Hispanics and whites in sentences and incarceration rates;
4. Improve the ability of people released from prison, who are disproportionately black and Hispanic, to reenter their communities through increased federal support for Second Chance programs and changes in policies and procedures which make it difficult, if not impossible, to become productive members of society;
5. Continue calling for an expanded national effort to reduce poverty, which disproportionately affects minority communities, and create employment opportunities by increasing job creation, job training, child care availability, transportation availability, affordable housing, and other needed assistance.

In cities:

6. Ensure that city policies and procedures promote inclusion and do not discriminate and that employees are provided the training needed to implement them;
7. Use the bully pulpit to provide leadership on issues of concern, engage in the difficult conversations that may be needed, speak out against hate crimes and all discriminatory acts whenever they occur, and provide comfort and assistance to victims of discrimination;
8. Work with the school system to promote education about differences, the importance of tolerance, and behavior that respects differences among people;
9. Facilitate the integration of immigrants and other new residents into the community;
10. Encourage community activities which celebrate diversity and educate city residents about the different cultures that compose a city's population.

The U.S. Coalition is part of the International Coalition of Cities Against Racism and Discrimination, which was established by UNESCO in 2004 and is a global network of cities interested in sharing experiences in order to improve their policies to combat racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and exclusions. The U.S. Coalition joins other coalitions of cities which have formed in Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, Arab nations, and Asia and the Pacific.