

# UNCONSCIOUS BIAS AND THE HOME VISIT

## HOPE IN THE FACE OF RACISM SERIES

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A COLLABORATION OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN TASK FORCE  
AND THE VOICE OF THE POOR COMMITTEE



# Opening Prayer

**Wake me up Lord**, so that the evil of racism finds no home within me.  
Keep watch over my heart Lord, and remove from me any barriers to your grace, that may oppress and offend my brothers and sisters.

**Fill my spirit Lord**, so that I may give services of justice and peace.  
**Clear my mind Lord** and use it for your glory.

And finally, remind us Lord that you said, "**blessed are the peacemakers**, for they shall be called children of God."

Amen.

*From For The Love of One Another (1989), a special message from the Bishops' Committee on Black Catholics of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the Pastoral Letter, Brothers and Sisters to Us, the U.S. Catholic bishops' Pastoral Letter on Racism (1979).*



# Home Visits

- Bringing the love and peace of Christ to those you visit. The food we bring is only a door-opener.
- We seek to get to begin our friendship through conversation. Let them know you care. Make them your friends in Christ.
- Open your heart to find out what their real needs are.



# Home Visits – Covid19 Need more urgent.....

- Taking all the necessary precautions
- Following CDC guidelines
- Telephone conferences also an option
- Open your heart to find out what their real needs are.



# Entering the homes of those we serve with open hearts.....

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*"The visiting of the poor in their dismal homes is the distinctive character of the conferences of St. Vincent de Paul."*

Joseph Emmanuel Bailly, Society co-founder, 1841





# Listening with open hearts.....

- Be present
- Using forms of encouragement
- Building upon their strength while also helping them seeing past their present situation
- While talking with them remember that you are leaving the peace of Christ with them and receiving as well.

# Unconscious biases - definition

**Unconscious biases** are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness.

Everyone holds **unconscious** beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these **biases** stem from one's tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing.

# Our biases in play

- We do not always speak our minds
- Our minds process approximately 11 millions bits of information per minute – we are only fully aware of about 40



## Misconceptions:

- Most unconscious bias is around gender and race
- Bias is all about disliking certain groups
- I can't do anything about my unconscious bias
- It's never worth responding when you're the target of bias
- Being an ally means my biases are more in check

# Why it matters

As Vincentians we are invited into homes, but we are there ultimately as decision makers.

We wield power – whether we personally perceive the magnitude or not but the person we are visiting is fully aware of said power.

If we can change the path that someone is on shouldn't we at a minimum be more conscious of all the aspects that feed into that decision-making process?

# What can we do

The short cuts our brains take will always be a function of our daily lives.

Our presence of mind is however in our control.

Whether we pray before beginning the home visit  
or pray before getting out of our cars

we need bring awareness of the spirituality of what we are engaging in.

# What can we do

**Individual strategies** to address unconscious bias include

- Promoting **self-awareness**: recognizing one's biases using the [Implicit Association Test](#) (or other instruments to assess bias) is the first step.
- **Understanding the nature of bias** is also essential.
- Opportunities to have **discussions, with others (especially those from socially dissimilar groups)** can also be helpful. Sharing your biases can help others feel more secure about exploring their own biases. It's important to have these conversations in a safe space-individuals must be open to alternative perspectives and viewpoints.
- **Facilitated discussions and training sessions promoting *bias literacy*** utilizing the concepts and techniques listed about have been proven effective in minimizing bias

# Resources

- Implicit Social Attitudes Test -- [implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/)
- EEOC: Obstacles Facing African Americans in Federal Workplace -- [eoc.gov/newsroom/new-eoc-report-examines-obstacles-facing-african-americans-federal-workplace](https://eoc.gov/newsroom/new-eoc-report-examines-obstacles-facing-african-americans-federal-workplace)
- SVdP Hope In Action Programs (*include Bridges Out of Poverty, Getting Ahead, Communication Across Barriers*) -- [svdpusa.org/systemicchange](https://svdpusa.org/systemicchange)
- African American Task Force -- [svdpusa.org/multicultural/AATF](https://svdpusa.org/multicultural/AATF)

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# Closing prayer

Thank you, Lord, for all the blessings you have given us today. We ask you to continue to bless the ones we visit, please inspire them to trust in you and come to you for their needs. We pray that our work may be continued by your Vincentian servants and completed by your grace, in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, Amen.