

U.S. Elections 2014:



Where do the candidates stand on issues of mercy and justice in our world?



How to Use this Resource

1. Print out these pages (on recycled paper) for use in taking notes.
2. Review the Critical Concerns.
3. During the debates and interviews, focus on the questions posed under each Critical Concern in this resource. If the questions aren't answered directly, how do you think they would be answered by the candidates?
4. Take notes, specifying the different answers among the candidates.
5. Use the answers to the questions as well as the quotes and facts for your personal reflection before voting.
6. Research the issues further by using the Internet link provided with each fact statement.
7. In your conversations with family, friends and co-workers, use the questions, quotes, facts and your further research.
8. Write letters to the editor for your local paper based on issues raised in this resource and/or consider calling in during radio talk shows. The Friends Committee on National Legislation offers some suggestions for writing letters.



Critical Concerns

The Sisters of Mercy were founded out of a deep concern for the needs of persons who are poor. Today, we focus our ministry on those needs identified through our “critical concerns.” We address these concerns through prayer, our own communal life as a religious congregation; education; advocacy with legislators and other leaders; and corporate engagement.



Election Day 2014 is drawing near in the U.S.!

As sisters, associates, companions, co-workers, students, volunteers and friends of the Sisters of Mercy, we have an opportunity and a responsibility to vote for those candidates who share our concern for people who suffer from poverty, sickness and lack of education; candidates who share the Sisters of Mercy's Critical Concerns of Earth, immigration, nonviolence, racism and women. While this is not a presidential election year, the voice of Mercy is needed to inject compassion into conversations on policy and on national priorities during Senate, congressional, state and local races that will shape our nation for years to come.

In 2011, the Sisters of Mercy stated:

"We are scandalized by the increase in the impoverishment of peoples, the pervasive denial of basic human rights, the degradation of Earth and increased violence and racism in all their forms. We mourn the continued oppression of women in Church and society, unjust immigration laws and the lack of solidarity among peoples and nations." (Sisters of Mercy, 2011 Institute Chapter)

We are called to vote for those who are equally scandalized by these ills and who have a vision for addressing them. And we are called to help shape that vision.

In preparation for the elections, the Institute Justice Team of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas provides this resource to assist with your reflections prior to voting on Election Day and to provide information and inspiration for your conversations with others.

The questions posed in the following pages will help those U.S. residents listen to candidates with an ear attuned to the Sisters of Mercy's over-arching mission. In these months leading up to the elections, use this workbook to record your thoughts as you hear the candidates speak.

May we participate fully in this election season with open minds and open hearts.

Institute Justice Team
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

Poverty

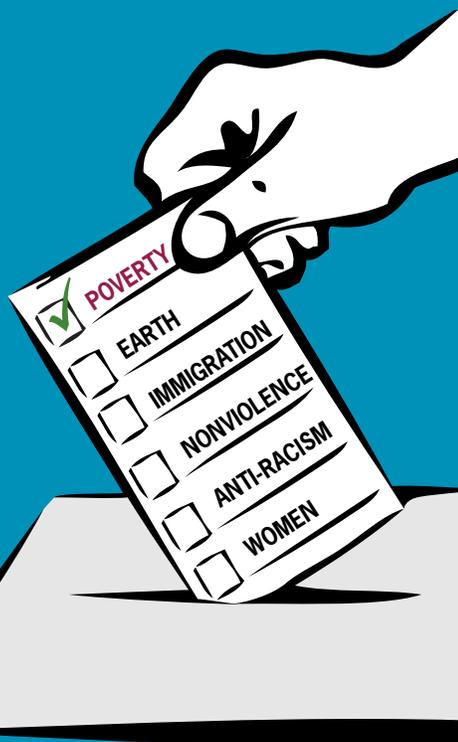


Questions on poverty for those seeking office:

1. How does each candidate address high unemployment rates and the need for poverty reduction programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), WIC, Earned Income Tax Credit, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), among others?

2. How does each candidate respond to questions about the wealth gap in this country? Do they have plans to address the gap?

3. What does each candidate say about raising the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour? What other ideas does she or he have for addressing the growing income gap among Americans?



“A way has to be found to enable everyone to benefit from the fruits of the earth, and not simply to close the gap between the affluent and those who must be satisfied with the crumbs falling from the table, but above all to satisfy the demands of justice, fairness and respect for every human being.”

— Pope Francis, Address to the Food and Agricultural Organization, 2013

Poverty

4. According to Health and Human Services, 8 million people have enrolled in healthcare exchanges through the Affordable Care Act, also referred to as “Obamacare.” What is each candidate’s position on the Affordable Care Act (ACA)? If she or he opposes the ACA, what alternatives are being proposed to reach the goal of ensuring that most Americans have access to healthcare?

5. What is each candidate’s position on U.S. foreign assistance for development aid?

“The Lord will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me.’”

— Matthew 25



FACTS:

- ➔ Poverty is defined as an annual income below \$22,314 for a family of four; 1,860 a month. In 2012, there were 46.5 million poor people in America, the largest number in the past 50 years, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. One in three of America’s poor are children: 16.1 million. ([U.S. Census Bureau](#))
- ➔ The wealthiest 1% of the U.S. population owns more than the remaining 90% combined. In 2012, the CEOs of major U.S. corporations averaged 354 times the average compensation of American workers. ([Institute for Policy Studies](#))
- ➔ In 1981, 1.94 billion people were living in extreme poverty. According to the [World Bank](#) data from 2010 (the most recent available), an estimated 1.2 billion people around the world lived on less than \$1.25 a day. More than one-third of the people living in extreme poverty are children under age of 13. At the current rate of progress, about one billion people will still live in extreme poverty in 2015.
- ➔ Total U.S. foreign assistance has hovered around one percent of the federal budget since the 1970s. Less than one-half percent is allocated for foreign economic and humanitarian assistance. ([U.S. Agency for International Development](#))

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- ➔ Catholic Campaign for Human Development: www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/povertyusa/
- ➔ Coalition on Human Needs: www.chn.org
- ➔ Faithful Budget: www.faithfulbudget.org

Earth



Questions on Earth for those seeking office:

1. What does each candidate say about climate change? Is she or he noting the urgency of taking action?

2. What do the candidates say about energy alternatives? Do they have a plan for increasing clean energy jobs?

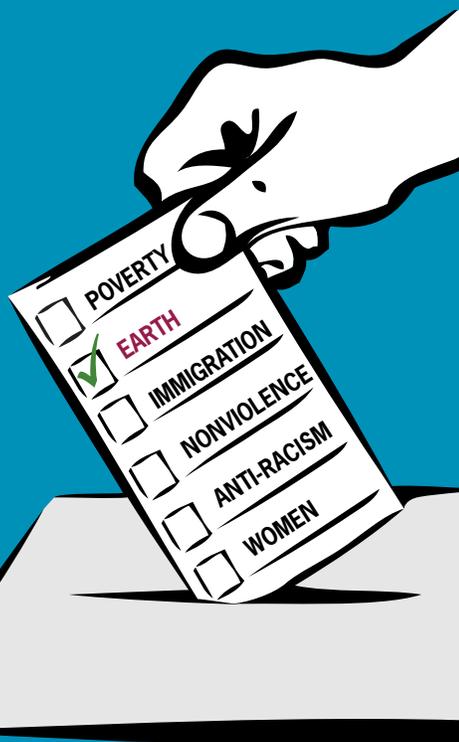
3. How will the candidates work with the world community to address climate change, the impact of mining, the loss of important ecosystems and biodiversity, and the human right to safe food, safe water and sanitation?

[Sisters of Mercy are called]
“to reverence Earth and work
more effectively toward the
sustainability of life and toward
universal recognition of the
fundamental right to water...”

—Sisters of Mercy
Critical Concerns

“Preservation of the environment, promotion of sustainable development and particular attention to climate change are matters of grave concern for the entire human family.”

— Pope Benedict XVI, Letter to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, 2007



4. How will the candidates minimize risks to the environment and human health associated with coal production, oil drilling and processes such as fracking?

5. What do the candidates say about the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed guidelines for existing power plants? What are their positions on other environmental regulations? Do they talk about plans for standards for human health?

*“You shall not pollute the land in which you live...
you shall not defile the land in which you live, in
which I also dwell.”*

— Numbers 35:33-34



FACTS:

- ➔ Power plants are the largest stationary source of greenhouse gases in the United States. Energy production accounts for 86% of total greenhouse gas emissions, and the electric sector represents 39% of all energy-related carbon dioxide emissions. ([American Lung Association](#))
- ➔ Climate change is already affecting the American people in far-reaching ways. Certain types of extreme weather events with links to climate change have become more frequent and/or intense, including prolonged periods of heat, heavy downpours, and, in some regions, floods and droughts. In addition, warming is causing sea level to rise and glaciers and Arctic sea ice to melt, and oceans are becoming more acidic as they absorb carbon dioxide. These and other aspects of climate change are disrupting people's lives and damaging some sectors of our economy. ([2014 National Climate Assessment](#))
- ➔ The development of natural gas by the process known as fracking enjoys exemptions from important environmental laws, such as the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Clean Water Act, according to the [Environmental Defense Fund](#).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- ➔ Catholic Climate Covenant: www.catholicclimatecovenant.org
- ➔ 350.org: www.350.org
- ➔ Food and Water Watch: www.foodandwaterwatch.org

Immigration



Questions on immigration for those seeking office:

1. What do the candidates say about the DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act) also known as the KIDS Act in the House of Representatives?

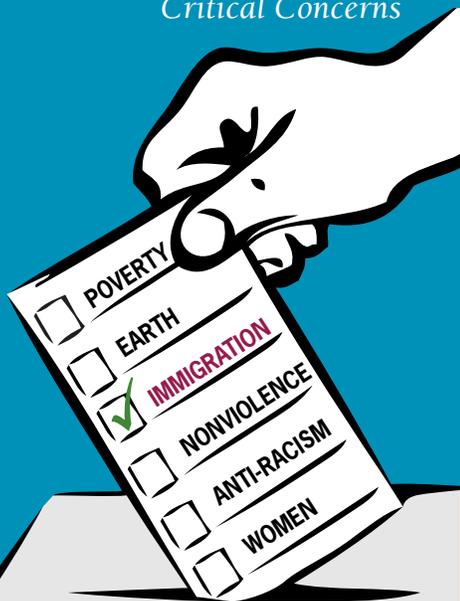
2. What do the candidates think about comprehensive immigration reform? What has been their position on the Senate's (S. 744) and House's (H.R. 15) proposed comprehensive immigration reform legislation? Do they favor an earned pathway to citizenship and family unity in any version of immigration reform?

3. Where do the candidates stand on President Obama's record mass deportations? Do they support enforcement policies that have led to 2 million deportations, such as: the federal mandate to fill 34,000 immigration detention beds daily or the Secure Community Program and the 287(g) program that deputize state and local law enforcement to act as federal immigration agents?

4. What do the candidates say about the root causes of immigration? Do they support foreign policies that militarily or economically destabilize the countries of origins for many migrant populations? Do they favor free trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Act or the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which tend to create conditions of poverty from which immigrants flee? Do they support militarizing Latin America through the School of the Americas, also known as WHINSEC?

The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas strive to witness to Mercy by reverencing the dignity of each person, creating a spirit of hospitality, and pursuing integrity of word and deed in our lives. As an Institute, we recognize an urgent duty and challenge to stand in solidarity with immigrants seeking fullness of life.

— Sisters of Mercy
Critical Concerns



Immigration

5. How do the candidates challenge anti-immigrant rhetoric?

6. What are the candidates' positions concerning the states passing their own immigration laws?

“When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do [him or her] wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love [him or her] as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

— Leviticus 19:33-34

“Our immigration system is a stain on the soul of our nation. As a moral matter, it must be changed. We must pray that our elected officials recognize this and have the courage to reform it.”

— Archbishop Thomas Wenski, May 2014



FACTS:

- Households headed by undocumented immigrants paid \$11.2 billion in state and local taxes in 2010, according to the [Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy](#).
- Experts estimate that 2.1 million undocumented children and young adults in the United States might be eligible for legal status under the DREAM Act. ([Immigration Policy Center](#))
- As of March of 2014, President Obama had deported 2 million undocumented immigrants, permanently separating hundreds of thousands of families for minor or non-criminal offenses. ([The Economist](#))

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Justice for Immigrants: www.justiceforimmigrants.org
- Interfaith Immigration Coalition: www.interfaithimmigration.org

Nonviolence



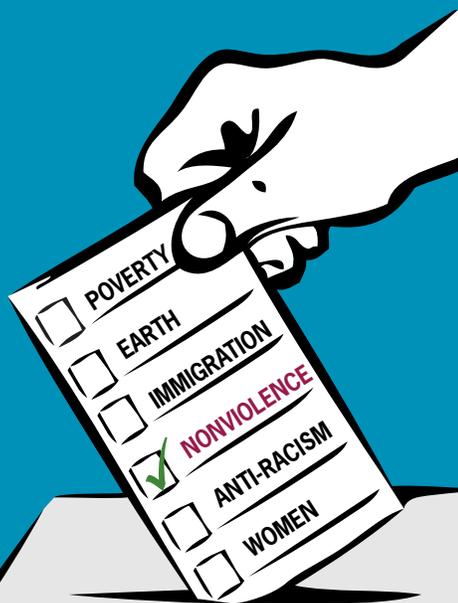
Questions on nonviolence for those seeking office:

1. What are the candidates' approaches to conflicts in other parts of the world? Do they talk about lessons learned from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?

2. What are the candidates' positions on the use of nuclear weapons? The use of military drones? U.S.-sanctioned torture?

3. What is each candidate's stand on reducing the military budget, particularly wasteful Pentagon spending?

*[Sisters of Mercy are called]
“to deepen and assimilate more
consciously the practice of
non-violence as an integral
aspect of the charism of mercy”
—Sisters of Mercy
Critical Concerns*



“Well over half of the federal discretionary budget is dedicated to military spending, which cripples our country’s ability to invest in other areas that build substantial human security in our communities.”

— Faithful Budget Campaign, 2012

“Let us then pursue the things that make for peace and build up the common life.”

— Romans 14:19

Nonviolence

4. How do the candidates talk about gun violence prevention?

“No, never again war, which destroys the lives of innocent people, teaches how to kill, throws into upheaval even the lives of those who do the killing and leaves behind a trail of resentment and hatred, thus making it all the more difficult to find a solution to the very problems which provoked the war...”

— Pope John Paul II: *Centesimus Annus* (52), 1991

FACTS:

- The annual U.S. military budget is nearly \$1 trillion, or approximately \$2.2 million per minute. It has doubled in the past dozen years. ([Friends Committee on National Legislation](#))
- The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are estimated to eventually cost more than \$3 trillion. Congressional investigations have shown that 1 of every 4 dollars was wasted or misspent. ([Linda Bilmes of Harvard and Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Laureate in economics](#))
- In the U.S., an average of 100,000 people—including 18,000 children and teens—are shot each year in murders, assaults, suicides, accidents or by police intervention. Daily, this averages to 282 people shot; 42 are children and teens, 8 of which die each day. ([Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence](#))



FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Friends Committee on National Legislation: <http://fcnl.org/issues/checkbook>
- New Priorities Network: Fund Jobs and Services, End Wars, Cut the Pentagon Budget: <http://newprioritiesnetwork.org>

Anti-Racism



Questions on racism for those seeking office:

1. How will the candidates address institutional racism that creates inequalities in our nation as evident in wage differences, education opportunities, healthcare and housing?

2. How will each candidate's policies address racial profiling?

3. What is each candidate's stance on affirmative action?

[Sisters of Mercy are called]
“to deepen our response to the
unrecognized and un-reconciled
racism past and present within
our community”

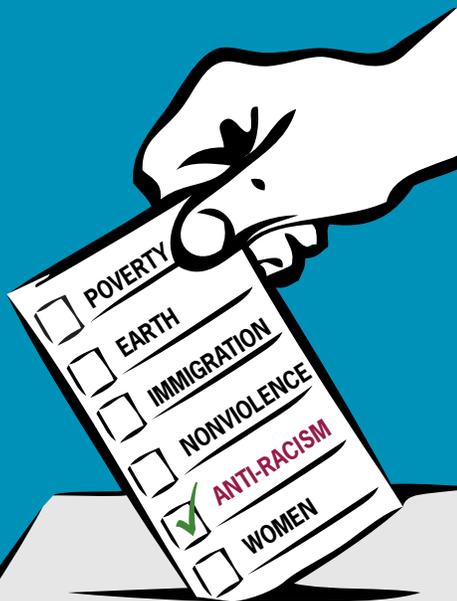
— Sisters of Mercy
Critical Concerns

*“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither
slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you
are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

— Galatians 3:28

*“To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in
a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships.”*

— W.E.B. Du Bois



Anti-Racism

4. What are the candidates' stands on voter identification laws and other restrictions that appear to have the greatest effect on suppressing voting in communities of color?

“Racism is a sin; a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family.... Racism is the sin that says some human beings are inherently superior and others essentially inferior because of races. It is the sin that makes racial characteristics the determining factor for the exercise of human rights. It mocks the words of Jesus: “Treat others the way you would have them treat you.” Indeed, racism is more than a disregard for the words of Jesus; it is a denial of the truth of the dignity of each human being revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation.”

— U.S. Catholic Bishops, Brothers and Sisters to Us All, 1979



FACTS:

- In 2012, the overall poverty rate in the United States was 15%. But 27.2% of African-Americans live in poverty; 25.6% of Latinos live in poverty and 11.7% of Asian-Americans live in poverty. ([U.S. Census](#))
- Half of all American children will receive SNAP benefits at some point before age 20; 90 percent of African-American children will enroll in SNAP before age 20. ([Bread for the World](#))
- The [Southern Poverty Law Center](#) counted 939 active hate groups in the United States in 2013. All hate groups have beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Crossroads Ministry: <http://crossroadsantiracism.org>
- Applied Research Center: www.arc.org

Women



Questions on women for those seeking office:

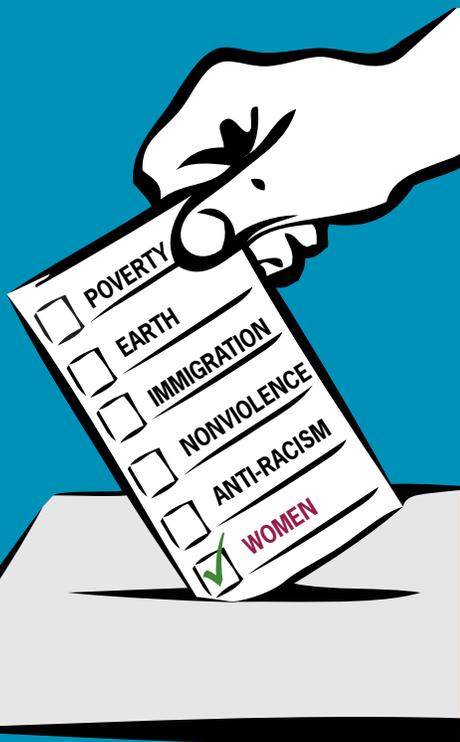
1. How will each candidate address human trafficking? Do they support specific legislation that addresses the demand and recognizes under-age sex workers as victims rather than criminals?

2. Do the candidates support U.S. ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)?

3. How do the candidates describe their approach to addressing domestic violence and protective services?

“We carry out our mission of mercy guided by prayerful consideration of the needs of our time, Catherine McAuley’s preferential love for the poor and her special concern for women.”

— Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas



4. What do the candidates say about equal wages and equal benefits for women, including paid maternity leave?

5. What alternatives to abortion do the candidates discuss, such as assistance and support to expectant mothers, in particular those who are low-income?

“Whatever be the station (women) are destined to fill, their example and advice will always possess influence.”

— Catherine McAuley

FACTS:

- ➔ One in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. An estimated 1.3 million women are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year. ([National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#))
- ➔ In 1970, women earned 59 percent of what men earned. And while the gender pay gap has narrowed, women working full time in the United States in 2012 still earned just 77 percent, on average, of what men earned. ([American Association of University Women](#))
- ➔ The U.S. is one of six countries that has not ratified the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The other countries are Iran, Palau, Somalia, Sudan and Tonga. ([United Nations](#))



FOR MORE INFORMATION

- ➔ Mercy International Association on human trafficking: www.mercyworld.org/mercy_global_action/project-contentpage.cfm?pid=CE6358EE-EAB7-773C-EC387D98580E1095&pgid=CE63590E-CCA4-C5E5-A131C57A911AE7DB
- ➔ National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: [www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet\(National\).pdf](http://www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet(National).pdf)

