**Making What They Care About Become a Reality**

Sr. Linda Hayes

Healthy, stable communities, safe neighborhoods, a place at the decision-making table for all those affected by the decisions, jobs that provide a sustainable wage for all, an educational system that gives every child an equitable chance to succeed and grow…

What are these worth to you personally? I imagine you would say, "A lot." To the members of the Faith Coalition for the Common Good (FCCG) they mean enough for each member to give of his/her time to help make what they care about become a reality.

Like every city across the nation, structural racism in our city is the root problem of many of the injustices we see. Community disinvestment, educational achievement gaps due to inequitable funding for public schools, mass incarceration, low-wage jobs and lack of community redevelopment in an area that needs it the most pivot on the issue of race. It is the elephant in the middle of the room.

Recently, six FCCG leaders attended a 4-day summit in Detroit, MI, sponsored by the Gamaliel faith-based community organizing network, of which FCCG is an affiliate. It was a profound privilege for me to be one of those representing FCCG. It was truly an example of faith in action. The Gamaliel network has been successful in winning local actions and national campaigns, but these victories, important as they have been, have not brought about the systemic change we desire. This is because the “elephant in the room,” structural racism, has not been explicitly and openly challenged.

The Detroit summit of over 200 faith-based organizing leaders from across the country was the beginning of a long journey on the road to eradicating structural racism and reducing concentrated poverty. Race and poverty in the U.S. will be the critical lenses through which we re-image and reshape our structures, partnerships and work. We came away with concrete tools, strategies and resources that will be used to communicate our transformational narrative, organize around a long-term agenda to dismantle structural racism, and begin to use these strategies and tools in our issue work.

The days were long, packed with prayer, mind-bending presentations, small group meetings, integration sessions and more. I came away from the summit in awe at the dedication and commitment of so many individuals to a common cause and the depth of the conversations that were held around the issue of structural racism.

For further information on the work of FCCG and/or to support us in our work, please go to [www.faithcoalition-il.org](http://www.faithcoalition-il.org) or GoFundMe.com /FCCGStandsforJustice.