



FADICA  
Catholic Philanthropy Network

# *And the Walls Came Tumbling Down*

A Report on U.S. Black Catholic  
Dreams toward a Just Church







Up to the walls of Jericho,  
He marched with spear in hand.  
“Go blow that ram’s horn,” Joshua cried,  
“Cause the battle is in my hand.”

Then the lamb-ram-sheep horns begin to blow;  
Trumpets begin to sound.  
Joshua commanded the chillun to shout, And  
the walls come a-tumblin’ down.



–*Joshua Fit the Battle Jericho*, Black Spiritual

# *Dear Reader,*

FADICA is a Catholic philanthropic network whose members engage in varied activities to support a vital Church and the common good. FADICA members include family foundations, religiously-sponsored foundations, and individual funders.

FADICA's Board and members set out on a journey more than six years ago to commit anew to addressing racism in the Catholic Church and Catholic philanthropy, as well as to enhancing intercultural competency. In 2020, we held a set of listening sessions that led to the establishment of an Anti-Racism Ad Hoc Committee of the Board.

In 2022, we were thrilled to encounter The REImaginelution and Dr. David Robinson-Morris. Commissioned by FADICA, Dr. Robinson-Morris conducted and analyzed Black Catholic listening and dreaming sessions of approximately 3,000 hours of dialogue with more than 380 Black Catholic leaders to gather their thoughts, ideas, and dreams toward ending racism and building a just Church.

This report distills seven themes from those sessions and concludes with five immediate recommendations for Catholic philanthropy and the Church and five recommendations for longer-term consideration. The content was edited for length and relevancy by report partners on the FADICA staff.

**Dr. Robinson-Morris' findings illuminate the needs of the Black Catholic Church and dreams for a Church that is not yet but must be in the future.**

Led by Anti-Racism Ad Hoc Committee of the Board, FADICA moved forward on the recommendation to establish a Black Catholic leadership discernment team. This team is shaping a plan for a discernment process that will engage other leaders in Black Catholic-focused organizations. This team includes: Dr. Eva Marie Lumas, S.S.S.; D.Min.; Rev. Manuel B. Williams, C.R., CFRE, M.Div., Th.M.; and Dr. Robinson-Morris.

FADICA will engage its membership of Catholic philanthropists and Black Catholic Church leaders and organizations to address the report's recommendations. FADICA considers these efforts a sacred undertaking - a response to the indisputable call from God and Spirit to address the violence of systemic racism.

We are grateful to Dr. Robinson-Morris for his expertise, for participants' candid input and witness, and for the inspiring ministry of Black Catholic leaders everywhere.

We thank FADICA members for their continued commitment to be "a catalyst for a vital Catholic Church, Catholic ministries, and the common good."

Thank you for the participation, input, and leadership of all those who made this report possible.

In deep gratitude,



Alexia K. Kelley  
President, FADICA



Alicia Bondanella Simon  
Vice President, FADICA



# *Executive Summary*

This report compiles the opinions and prayers of 380 Black Catholics and approximately 3,000 hours of dialogue and dreaming about what it means to be Black and Catholic, the needs of the Black Catholic community, and imaginings for a Church that is not yet but must be in the future, if it is to retain its young Black Catholic membership. The content was edited for length and relevancy by report partners on the FADICA staff.

In total, The REImaginelution and Dr. David Robinson-Morris held 18 virtual collective listening and dreaming sessions, 34 virtual 1:1 listening and dreaming sessions, and four in-person listening and dreaming sessions over a four-month period.

## **Primary Questions**

Each of the listening and dreaming sessions sought to learn and understand the Black Catholic experience by asking three primary questions:

- Given our current societal challenges and social issues impacting Black people and people of the global majority, how do you marry your Blackness with your Catholic faith? To put it another way, what does it mean to you to be Black and Catholic?
- Philanthropy is meant to strategically address and improve the wellbeing of humankind by preventing and solving social issues at the root. Given your experience, what are some of the issues that need to be improved within the Black Catholic community that philanthropy can assist in addressing?
- Activating your imagination of a Church that can be different, what is your dream for an equitable, anti-racist Church?

## Themes

Seven major and dynamic themes emerged from the report findings and deep textual analysis of the data.

### ***SEVEN THEMES***

- 1) Catholic Education in Black Communities**
- 2) Future Focused: Youth and Young Adults in the Black Catholic Community**
- 3) Culturally Relevant Clergy and Religious Formation**
- 4) Nothing About Us Without Us: Supporting and Encouraging the Support of Offices of Black Catholic Ministry in Dioceses and Archdioceses across the Country**
- 5) Developing Lay Black Catholic Leaders for the Church of the Future**
- 6) Returning to Gospel-informed Radical Love**
- 7) Teaching Us How to Fish: Creating Sustainable Economic Vehicles for Black Catholic Flourishing**



## **Catholic Education in Black Communities**

Participants called for a reinvestment in Catholic education and a reestablishment of Black Catholic schools that employ culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogies and are staffed by a racially/ethnically diverse Catholic education teacher workforce.

## **Future Focused: Youth and Young Adults in the Black Catholic Community**

Participant conversations centered their hopes and dreams for our Church on the future—Black Catholic youth and young adults. Black young adults discussed their need for the Church to be a voice for the issues impacting their flourishing, safety, and right to life.

## **Culturally Relevant Clergy and Religious Formation**

Participants expressed the need to address seminarian formation and priestly acculturation for service in and to Black Catholic parishes. This can be done through education on culture and cultural expressions, and the engendering of cultural humility.

## **Nothing About Us Without Us: Supporting and Encouraging the Support of Offices of Black Catholic Ministry in Dioceses and Archdioceses across the Country**

There is a Black and organizing axiom, which states: Do nothing about us, without us. A reinvestment and reinstatement of offices of Black Catholic ministry was lifted as a necessity. This is to ensure voice and advocacy at the diocesan decision-making table for Black Catholics in chanceries where Black employees in positions of leadership are scarce.

## **Developing Lay Black Catholic Leaders for the Church of the Future**

The population of American priests is aging quickly, and young people are not entering seminaries at a rate comparable to the loss of priests; this poses an issue within the American Church. The same phenomenon is occurring among religious sisters. Participants

insist the Church begin to consider developing lay leaders to stand in the gap for the dearth of priests projected into the future.

### **Returning to Gospel-informed Radical Love**

Participants summarily remarked that their experience is one of racism within the Church. The institutional Church, participants argued, operates much like a corporation in the world. They felt that clergy are picking and choosing which sheep they are deciding to feed. The growing question becomes: Where is Jesus in this work? They call for a return to Gospel values informed by radical love.

### **Teaching Us How to Fish: Creating Sustainable Economic Vehicles for Black Catholic Flourishing**

Participants expressed their gratitude for philanthropic engagement and a commitment by the Catholic philanthropic community to engage in the study of understanding their needs and dreams toward a more just Church. Simultaneously, they pronounced the need for the Black Catholic community to create its own philanthropic vehicles. That is, they recognized the collective economic wealth of the Black Catholic community and questioned why they had never thought to pool their own funds, never thought to create their own foundations or giving circles to address the needs of the communities where they live and worship. They call for the assistance of philanthropic organizations to assist Black Catholics in pursuing economic stability through education and investment.



## Recommendations: Catholic Philanthropy Leaders

The following recommendations drawn from the Black Catholic listening and dreaming sessions are for Catholic philanthropy leaders to consider as steps to creating a more anti-racist and Black Catholic flourishing Church and society.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR: CATHOLIC PHILANTHROPY LEADERS**

**1) Create a theologically sound, scholarship-informed definition for the pursuit of anti-racism for Catholic philanthropy and the U.S. Catholic Church as a whole.**

This definition should include language regarding Black Catholic flourishing and/or equally center Black Catholics.

**2) Engage in own process of anti-racist “becoming.”**

Anti-racist work is both deeply personal and systemic—they inter-are—both must occur simultaneously. This work requires a personal and public commitment, and the willingness to sacrifice required to love radically.

**3) Develop a committee of Black Catholic clergy and lay leaders to discern and validate alongside FADICA and its members.** These persons should understand the Church from various levels of engagement, employment, and service. They should also be actively involved in their respective Black Catholic communities.

**4) Consider the creation of a Black Catholic Philanthropy Advisory Board and/or develop a funding mechanism like a Black Catholic community donor-advised fund alongside Black Catholic flourishing and faith organizations.** Consider developing and hosting a philanthropy education series aimed at assisting Black Catholic communities in working with their local Catholic foundations to increase or enhance strategic,

collective philanthropic efforts within their respective Black communities.

**5) Put out a call for proposals to develop and pilot a model of Catholic Social Teaching-centered anti-racism program that can be replicated, scaled, and measured for effectiveness.** Given the lack of organizations implementing anti-racism work from a Catholic lens, Catholic philanthropy is able to fill a necessary gap by putting out a call for proposals for an organization or a collective of organizations.

### **Recommendations: Church *and* Catholic Philanthropy Leaders**

These recommendations speak to the opportunities that exist in the areas of education and formation that require longer-term commitments and investments.

#### ***RECOMMENDATIONS FOR: CHURCH & CATHOLIC PHILANTHROPY LEADERS***

**6) Commission a study of the historical and contemporary impact of Church and school closures in Black neighborhoods across the country toward the creation of a strategy for national resurgence.**

**7) Partner with the Institute for Black Catholic Studies and the Archdiocese of New Orleans Department of Education and Faith Formation to pilot, study, and enhance their model of Catholic School Teacher Formation to be deployed to dioceses across the country.**

**8) Work with dioceses across the country to fund and pilot a Catholic education teacher diversity recruitment strategy and campaign.**



**9) Develop a training curriculum and courses for clergy and religious that include cultural competency, Catholic social teaching, and intercultural liturgical formation.**

**10) Develop mechanisms and metrics of eligibility to fully restore closed offices and/or fully fund those defunded offices of Black Catholic ministry across the country to increase Black Catholic representation at the diocesan decision-making table.**

## **Conclusions and Summary**

FADICA and Catholic philanthropy have a tremendous opportunity to assist in raising awareness, investing in the Black Catholic community, and helping the Church to define anti-racism in an institutional context inclusive of Black Catholic flourishing.

Therefore, for the Church, pursuing an anti-racist agenda is a time-bound, mission-based undertaking. A just Church, perhaps, makes an act of reconciliation with those it has harmed and vows to sin no more through a transformation of its actions, moving the faithful toward liberation and salvation.

This report provides the context—directly from Black Catholic voices and experiences—and the practical steps needed to (re)embark upon the sacred and necessary expedition. The Black Catholic dreams and imaginings for a future Church can be read as a prayer for a future—by faith—that is not yet but is always already in the making.

What sprung forth from these conversations and practices of imagining is a rich, complexly-hued tapestry of a fierce Easter people working with an ‘urgency of now’ to bring about justice in the very Church they affirm as their own.



**The story of African American Catholicism is the story of a people who obstinately clung to a faith that gave them sustenance, even when it did not always make them welcome. Like many others, blacks had to fight for their faith; but their fight was often with members of their own household. Too long have black Catholics been anonymous. It is now clear that they can be identified, that their presence has made an impact, and that their contributions have made Catholicism a unique and stronger body**



**-Fr. Cyprian Davis, OSB,  
*The History of Black Catholics in the United States***

# *The REImaginelution*

The REImaginelution, LLC, is a strategic consulting firm working across industries at the intersections of imagination, policy, practice, and prophetic hope to radically reimagine systems and institutions toward racial justice and systemic transformation by engendering freedom of the human spirit; and catalyzing the power of the imagination to reweave organizations, systems, and the world for collective healing and liberation.



**David W. Robinson-Morris, Ph.D.**

Founder and Chief

Reimaginelutionary

drm@drmphd.com

www.REImaginelution.com

## **A Note on Anti-Racism versus Black Catholic Flourishing**

Dr. David Robinson-Morris distinguishes between anti-racist resources and resources that focus their attention on Black Catholic thriving and flourishing. Anti-racism, he notes, is an active practice of identifying and eliminating racism by altering systems, organizational structures, attitudes, policies, and practices, but it is largely a non-Black-centered endeavor.[1] Conversely, Black flourishing and thriving requires a wholly different orientation to anti-Black systemic racism, which centers education, healing, understanding, joy, and love for beauty of Blackness that can be celebrated without fear or surveillance.

[1] NAC International Perspectives: Women and Global Solidarity. Anti-racism. Retrieved from Text.

**Suggested citation:** Robinson-Morris, David. *And the Walls Came Tumbling Down: A Report on U.S. Black Catholic Dreams toward a Just Church: Executive Summary*. June 2024: Commissioned by FADICA, in collaboration with The REImaginelution, LLC.





# FADICA

## Catholic Philanthropy Network

FADICA is the leading philanthropic peer network serving as a catalyst for a vital Catholic Church, Catholic ministries, and the common good. We promote the growth and effectiveness of Catholic philanthropy inspired by the joy of the Gospel and the Catholic social tradition. FADICA supports its members through education, exchange, fellowship and faith, research, joint funding opportunities, and interaction with Catholic leadership.

[www.fadica.org](http://www.fadica.org)