



Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange Congregational Stance  
on Affirmative Action  
February 1996

**Affirmative Action in the State of California**

*A Resolution of Religious Congregation of California (names to follow)*

Whereas, for centuries, people of color and women have been excluded from economic opportunities, and the effects of past discrimination continue to limit educational, job, and business opportunities;

Whereas, in the 30 years that have passed since the Civil Rights laws were enacted,

- women are still being paid less than men to perform the same job,
- minorities are under-represented in the upper levels of management in corporate America,
- African Americans are more likely to be denied a mortgage loan; and
- minorities have a smaller share of the public contracting procurement dollar than their availability indicates;

Whereas, affirmative action provides women with redress against discrimination on the basis of gender and on the basis of race;

Whereas, affirmative action is a tool in the fight against discriminatory practices against older workers and senior citizens;

Whereas, affirmative action works against discrimination on the basis of a physical disability or sexual orientation;

Whereas, in 1992 over 50% of African American children under 6 and 44% of Hispanic children lived under the poverty level, in comparison to 14.4% of white children so afflicted;

Whereas, racism and sexism have already cost our nation too much in human potential, and we believe that affirmative action is still an important tool for achieving an integrated society and a truly diverse work force;

Whereas, affirmative action seeks to desegregate the workplace by facilitating the entry of qualified Americans to all levels of the work force. Programs can include measures to eliminate discrimination in hiring, promotions and terminations. Programs can also seek to increase representation of women and minorities in employment, government contracting and institutions of higher learning;

Whereas, the present affirmative action laws are well-regulated and can only be used to respond to demonstrated and serious imbalances in the work force when they are flexible, time-limited, and applied only to qualified workers;



Whereas, in 1993, the unemployment rate for the African American population was more than twice that of whites, while the median income of African Americans was barely more than one half that of whites, and Hispanics fared only modestly better in each category;

Whereas, in 1995, a study by the California Senate Office of Research showed that, compared with their representation in the general work force, whites were over represented among new hires at the top of the career ladder, African Americans and Hispanics were over-represented at the bottom;

Whereas, unequal access to education plays an important role in creating and perpetuating economic disparities, shown by the fact that less than 3% of college graduates suffered unemployment in 1993; the same year in which only 12.2% of African Americans, and 9.0% of Hispanics held college degrees;

Whereas, according to the Labor Departments "Glass Ceiling Commission," affirmative action has been an important tool in helping white women move up into middle management; the same commission reports that white males hold 97% of senior management position in Fortune 1000 industrial and Fortune 500 service industries; and African American men with professional degrees earn only 70% and African American women only 60% of the amount earned by their white counterparts, bearing out the continued need for affirmative action;

Whereas, affirmative action brings the diverse skills, knowledge, and abilities of women and minorities into the US labor market: studies show that minority-owned businesses make investments and provide jobs in urban areas that other businesses ignore, thus improving the conditions of our least-developed communities;

Whereas, in 1994 Assemblywoman Barbara Lee introduced a funded (\$800,000) Disparity Study which was vetoed by Governor Wilson, and therefore there exists no official statistical data to justify overturning the Civil Rights laws now in existence;

Whereas, we ourselves, religious Congregations who work in South Central Los Angeles as well as in other inner city locations, have witnessed the Los Angeles riots, resulting in part, from still in adequate opportunities for minorities, and their lack of trust in those who exercise power;

Whereas, meaningful progress has been made in combating discrimination in employment and educational opportunities, but discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, and gender still persists;

Whereas, while there are numerous practical and economic reasons to continue affirmative action, the most fundamental reason is the human dignity of each person, and the demands of fairness;

Whereas, we understand the key question to be "Do we make a commitment as a society to equal access and opportunity for everyone, or do we let the racist and sexist nature of our attitudes and institutions determine the chances people have in life?"

**Therefore, the above named Congregations of Religious support protection of the right of agencies, employers, businesses, and educational institutions at all levels; city, county, state, and national, to undertake necessary affirmative action programs, We, further, reject any effort to prohibit government or**



**other named agencies and institutions from instituting such affirmative action programs.**

### **A Statement of Commitment**

**In addition, as Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange in the spirit of our charism of unity and reconciliation we commit ourselves to:**

Reaffirm our vision of wholeness that encompasses all of creation.

Join other elements of society in providing remedy for those who have been historically disadvantaged and discriminated against because of their race, national origin, or their sex.

Provide information & education to, and compassion & patience for, the privileged members of our society so they will understand the demand of justice for people of color and women.

Reaffirm our commitment to live respectfully in a culturally diverse community.

Work toward including all members of this ethnically and racially diverse nation in full participation in society, incorporating their diverse gifts and contributions that the common good be achieved.

Personally and corporately repent for past injustices and, when required, give up our privileges for the sake of justice for our sisters and brothers.

Take personal and corporate action as a congregation or community to visibly support affirmative action as a positive measure to redress past and current injustice and to build true community.

(Based on A Call to People of Faith to Uphold Affirmative Action of the Northern California Ecumenical Council)