
A Prayer Guide for the Overlooked

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CARL SPAIN CENTER

RACE STUDIES & SPIRITUAL ACTION



Rural Low-income

Communities

"There are thousands and thousand, I would say millions of people in the negro community who are poverty stricken - not because they are not working but because they receive wages so low that they cannot begin to function in the main stream of the economic life of our nation. Most of the poverty stricken people of America are persons who are working every day and they end up getting part-time wages for full-time work. So the vast majority of negroes in America find themselves perishing on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. This has caused a great deal of bitterness. It has caused a great deal of agony. It has caused ache and anguish. It has caused great despair"

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., 1968



When Dr. King, Ralph Abernathy and others who were part of the newly formed Poor People's Campaign visited the Mississippi Delta in 1966, they were keenly focused on understanding the plight of the poor in the rural south. As documented in a 2018 [article](#) in the Atlantic, it was one visit to a children's daycare in Marks, Mississippi that remained permanently ingrained in Dr. King's memory.

"It took them a moment to notice that the bright-eyed children were malnourished. At lunchtime, the teacher brought out a brown paper bag of apples and a box of crackers. When she cut an apple into quarters, and gave one slice, and four or five crackers, to each of the waiting, hungry students, King and Abernathy exchanged solemn glances. This was all the children had for lunch, they realized with shock. Neither man had ever seen poverty like this. Dr. King began weeping and had to leave the classroom."

Ryan Bowman, ACU's Director of the office of Multi-Cultural Affairs, experienced first-hand how such conditions can impact rural low-income communities and the psyche with they live.

"When it comes to COVID 19, the impact that it could have on rural low- income communities would be catastrophic. When we look at communities who have historically been impacted by racism, economic castration and lack the presence of justice, the outcome is nihilism. Nihilism is the state of hopelessness. Sadly, many of our rural communities have been diagnosed with this state of hopelessness. Underserved communities must confront their lack of healthcare, little-to-no insurance and working unskilled jobs that place them in the middle of the crisis with little or no hope but to continue to work in atmospheres that could leave them and their families exposed. As a result, individuals in these circumstances have one or two options. They will either work through it and persevere, or they will give up. People who survive day to day in underserved communities are close to giving in to the state of nihilism. I served in a community for 12 years that had never seen racial or economic justice. I was surprised at the pride and joy in which they held on to. It made them the great human beings that they are. Meanwhile, I have watched the generations that came after them throw in the towel because of the social conditions they felt they couldn't escape. Escapism became the new narcotic. The children and grandchildren of a generation that fought so hard to maintain their dignity were giving out.

We must not forget the "untouchables" in our own communities or the communities that surround us. COVID-19 has caused a level of destruction that has been silent and deadly. We cannot hear the cries of these communities because the spirit of nihilism obstructs them. It is up to the church to find them, revive them with adequate accommodations and assist them in their recovery."

In many rural communities, the healthcare system is already insubstantial. Not only has COVID-19 further exposed this reality, it is also threatening to endanger the health of rural communities' economy. Cliff Despre chronicled this well in a recent [article](#) for Salud America. He lists four factors that make rural communities, namely Latino, more vulnerable to COVID-19:

1. Age: "Their average age is 73.3."
2. Race: "15% of America's rural population is Latino."
3. Access to Healthcare: "Due to a shortage of physicians and rural hospitals closing, Latinos and others are even less connected to

emergency health services."

4. Economic Barriers: "Rural workers are less likely to have paid sick leave than urban workers. Many work multiple jobs. Or they work jobs that cannot be done remotely."

As we continue in our social distancing, may we not overlook those in rural low-income communities who face the increased threat of COVID-19 crippling their communities health, healthcare system and local economy.



Prayer and Lament are not inaction, it's work. When we pray and lament, we do so to a sovereign, omnipotent and omniscient God. Over the next week, we encourage you to practice total stillness and silence while making your sorrow and requests known to God (Philippians 4:6-7).

Prayers for rural low-income communities:

1. The Gospel would bring them comfort & hope in a time of despair.
2. Protection from the spread of the virus as they are likely forced to continue working.
3. Access to quality and accessible healthcare for those who are sick.
4. Access to protective supplies.
5. Relief from historic health and economic disparities.
6. Access to capital and federal loan and grant programs to ease the cash-flow crisis for rural providers.
7. Quality internet access for online schooling and telehealth.
8. Continued support and advocacy from the church and the government after the pandemic ends to address the social and psychological impact of poverty.

Prayers for yourself:

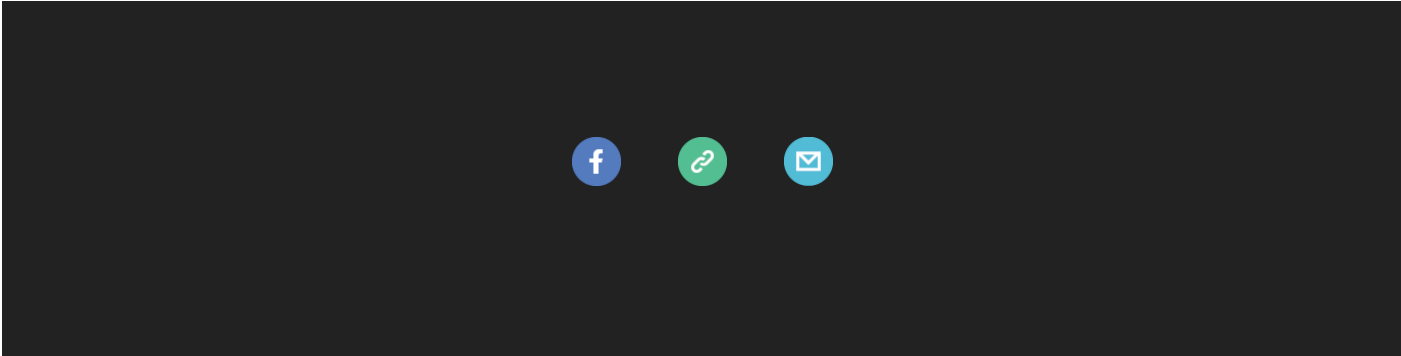
1. That the posture of your heart would be humble & empathetic towards rural low-income communities & their experiences.
 2. For a desire to relieve all types of suffering on earth, especially eternal suffering.
 3. For opportunity to build relationships with those from rural communities, especially racial minorities [who often live beneath the poverty line](#).
 4. To better love those living in rural low-income communities.
 5. To advocate for rural low-income communities.
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The Center aims to share its emphasis on scholarly research by providing materials, educational opportunities, and other relevant resources to any who have a desire to deepen their understanding on race and its function in the church and broader society. Each prayer guide we will include recommended resources that we believe will help inform the work we are doing at the Carl Spain Center and the work you are doing with us.

- On Lament: [Dare to Hope in God](#)
- The Other America by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr: [Transcript](#) & [Video](#).
- [How Coronavirus Is Crippling Rural Health Care, Especially for Latinos](#)
- The National Rural Health Association [coronavirus resource web page](#).
- [Coronavirus was slow to spread to rural America. Not Anymore.](#)
- [Rural Students and Families in Alabama Struggle Without High-Speed Internet](#)
- [Rural America at a Glance](#) - 2018 USDA Report

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