



# A Note to the Mayor's Office Discrimination and Racism in Philadelphia

By Sherita Mouzon, January 2019

As a lifelong Philadelphia resident, I have witnessed multiple forms of discrimination: the public-school system with unsanitary conditions; the disrepair of the buildings; seeing my husband get pulled over for driving while black; being turned down for certain jobs because of the color of my skin.

As a child, my mom would always take us by way of walking to Center City. Even then, I was so in awe about how clean and beautiful Center City looked compared to my North Philadelphia neighborhood. And now fast-forward, the wealth and privilege you see in Philadelphia is astounding! Then you go to the poor black and Latino areas, all you see are delis that sell beer and poor-quality foods. And if you go to the suburbs, you will see no such thing.

In Philadelphia, you also see how gentrification is pushing out low-income residents. Why can't all the abandoned properties be fixed up to house homeless and low-income people? Philadelphia has a ton of these properties.



"Kids should be able to play in a nice playground."  
-Annette S., 11, Witnesses to Hunger, 2018 ©

## The Trauma that is Not Spoken About

To grow up knowing that you can't afford to feed your family because you are discriminated against on the job, and when you apply for public benefits, and then add to that unfair housing practices and bias and racism in law enforcement, *isn't that trauma?* How would anyone feel? Words that come to my mind are despair, anger and resentment! Why does the city of Philadelphia cater to and offer resources to the privileged? What about that mother who, like myself, is looking for help to make a better life for herself and her children?

### On the Next Pages.

On the following page, I show you photos from Members of Witnesses to Hunger from 2008. In the page after that, I show you the pictures that their children took, ten years later. We hosted a Youth Forum in September 2018. We asked the children to tell us things about their community they didn't like and wanted to improve. A lot of the pictures and the responses were of the trash that was all over the neighborhoods and the abandoned buildings.

### Let's Take Action

I hope with the Center for Hunger-Free Communities Spotlights that we can work together to raise awareness and find ways to prevent this cycle from happening. In my role as an advocate, it's important to talk about the trauma that poverty, racism and discrimination cause in the lives of Philadelphia residents and our children. It's time that we do something about it.

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## Photos from Witnesses to Hunger 2008



### Drug House

This is on a corner of my block. It was a drug house. It had no electricity, no nothing. A man and a woman were squatting in there because they didn't have anywhere to go.

-Imani S., Witnesses to Hunger, Philadelphia



### Abandoned Houses

Living next to abandoned houses.

-Erica S., Witnesses to Hunger, Philadelphia



### Stoplight

You see the abandoned buildings and the broken-up sidewalks and just holes in the street, and all different kind of stuff, negative stuff. That's discouraging. And you think of all the homeless people in the city. How could I go about maybe buying one of these houses and fixing it up for myself to live in?

-Erica S., Witnesses to Hunger, Philadelphia



## Children of Witnesses – September 2018



### Man's Junkyard

Anthony T. Hicks once said, God's garden has become man's junkyard.

-Nafisa M., 16, Witnesses to Hunger, Philadelphia



### New Buildings

A new building in North Philadelphia. All these new buildings and people are still hungry in Philadelphia.

-Joanna M., 11, Witnesses to Hunger, Philadelphia



### Pile of Litter

This is a pile of litter I found in my neighborhood while with my friends. Litter makes my neighborhood dirty and sets a bad image.

-Marcus T., 16, Witnesses to Hunger, Philadelphia.