

Fostering Racial Equity in the United States

THE
CARTER CENTER



Advancing racial equity and eliminating systemic racism in the United States is a priority at The Carter Center. The Center aims to rectify structures, policies, and practices that contribute to the wealth gap, health disparities, and inequalities in the United States. Four Carter Center programs – Democracy, Human Rights, Mental Health, and Conflict Resolution – help foster racial equity.



“People of power, privilege, and moral conscience must stand up and say ‘no more’ to a racially discriminatory police and justice system, immoral economic disparities between whites and Blacks, and government actions that undermine our unified democracy. We are responsible for creating a world of peace and equality for ourselves and future generations.”

– former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, founder of The Carter Center

Human Rights Program

The Center’s **Human Rights Defenders Forum** brings together activists, including those working on racial justice in the United States, providing a support network as well as a platform to discuss pressing challenges.

For more than 25 years, The Carter Center has supported President and Mrs. Carter’s advocacy to **abolish the death penalty** in

the United States and abroad. One of the key arguments against capital punishment in the U.S. advanced by the Carters has been the disproportionate impact on Black defendants.

The Carter Center has partnered with The King Center to advance **truth-telling efforts** through private and public convenings and a robust communications strategy, beginning in fall 2021. This will include working with Southern churches to facilitate truth-telling efforts within their congregations.

The program also will work with the National Center on Civil and Human Rights to develop campaigns to help Georgia activists use human rights framing to advance civil, political, and economic rights demands.

Democracy Program

The Carter Center’s democracy work in the United States supports inclusive and transparent elections. In the sea of disinformation surrounding the 2020 U.S. election, the program provided critical **public information and**

analysis to citizens, election administrators, and journalists.

The Center also supported Georgia’s election processes: It joined the **Georgia Bipartisan Task Force on Safe, Secure, and Accessible Elections** to advance voter participation and access, increase public knowledge of key election issues, and promote transparency; monitored **Georgia’s risk-limiting audit** of the presidential race; and drafted a **code of conduct** for political contestants in the January 2021 Senate runoff race. The Digital Threats to Democracy team launched a **limited observation of social media** during the runoff.

The Center also has worked on the participation of **indigenous people** in election processes, hosting conferences and conversations that bring together members of the Native American Voting Rights Coalition, election administration officials, state and federal legislators, academics, activists, and others to address barriers to Native American participation in U.S. elections.



Stacey Hopkins, who fights for the rights of Black voters in Georgia, participates in the Carter Center’s Human Rights Defenders Forum, where dozens of activists have gathered to share their stories and get support.



In Gwinnett County, Georgia, election workers count ballots in the manual recount of votes cast in the 2020 presidential election. The Carter Center monitored the audit.

In future election cycles, the Center will continue to work at the **intersection of racial equity and democracy** by increasing voter and civic information available to targeted communities; monitoring social media to mitigate harm posed by disinformation, which differently impacts communities of color; and building the capacity of partner organizations to use a rights-based approach to election observation and advocate for reforms that benefit communities of color.

Conflict Resolution Program

In partnership with Princeton University's Bridging Divides Initiative and Cure Violence Global, the Carter Center's piloted **violence mitigation efforts** around the November 2020 election.

The Center has begun building **nonpartisan community resilience networks** to be composed of a robust cohort of influencers with gender, racial, political, and urban-rural diversity. They will work in their communities to facilitate conversations about contentious issues, including racial justice; support discussions and information dissemination on civic- and election-related issues; undertake local conflict analysis; and issue emergency communications when issues arise that could spark violence.

With the Bridging Divides Initiative, the Center also is further designing a variety of **quantitative datasets**—from socioeconomic indicators to incidence of protest and past election results—to help understand which communities across the country might be at risk of unrest and violence.

The Center will produce **public campaigns promoting nonviolent solutions** and offering information about electoral processes.

Mental Health Program

The Carter Center works to establish behavioral health care, which encompasses treatment for mental illness and substance use disorders, as a basic human right and supports a **behavioral health care system that is equally accessible to all.**

It regularly **convenes diverse groups of mental health advocates**, including at the annual Rosalynn Carter Georgia Mental Health Forum, to advance public policy change. Program activities aim to reach people who are less likely to receive equitable care and emphasize the importance of prevention, reducing stigma, and bolstering resilience.

The Center **trains journalists** to report effectively on behavioral health issues. Accurate reporting on behavioral health increases

public awareness, decreases stigma and resulting discrimination against people with mental disorders, and has directly impacted policy and systems change. The structure of the journalist fellowship program emphasizes diversity, equity, and inclusion, and a direct line can be drawn between the diversity of fellows and the coverage of mental health issues in communities of color, where stigma and racism are deeply felt and experienced.

The Center is also leading the development of **school-based behavioral health initiatives** across Georgia and the advancement of national policies that ensure that all youth can access culturally appropriate and trauma-informed supports and treatment through schools, which has been shown to decrease discriminatory disciplinary measures and improve educational outcomes.

In addition, the Center leads the Georgia Parity Collaborative, in which diverse stakeholders work to enforce **parity in payment for behavioral health services** by public and private health insurance. Practices that deny coverage for behavioral health care are a form of discrimination that disparately impact vulnerable youth and families.



Radio reporter Deborah Wang participates in a meeting for mental health journalism fellows. The Carter Center's fellowship program emphasizes diversity and inclusivity to help ensure coverage of mental health issues in communities of color.