

July 2020 PJIC Update

Sisters of Charity of New York Office of Peace Justice and Integrity of Creation

Join White Faith Leaders Declaration of Responsibility in the Struggle for Racial Justice LCWR has invited us to participate in a body of anti-racism work led by white clergy and faith leaders that will complement and be accountable to black leadership within from Faith in Action.

They are asking all white clergy and faith leaders to sign on and circulate this White Faith Leader Declaration. This statement is the product of a faith national call with more than 800 white faith leaders which included Cardinal Tobin and Bishop Stowe. It has been vetted by a team of clergy and organizers of color. Would you be willing to [add your name](#) if you identify as white and to share this declaration widely?



This initiative springs from a challenge from black clergy and organizers to do deep work in white spaces to uproot white supremacy and anti-blackness. The work led by white faith leaders will aim to lead anti-racism formation among white congregants; mobilize white people to support organizing and policy change goals led by people of color; and organize public actions to reject any public narrative that would seek to use racism, white supremacy, and anti-blackness to divide us in the run-up to the November elections.

Declaration of Responsibility in the Struggle for Racial Justice

“They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying ‘Peace, Peace’ when there is no peace” - Jeremiah 6:14, Hebrew Scriptures

As White faith leaders and clergy, we are called to take responsibility for our part in the struggle against anti-blackness and for racial justice. Many of us, and particularly our white Christian traditions, have been complicit with racism through colonization, slavery, segregation, lynching, and racialized mass incarceration. Collectively, we have allowed our fear to give way to silence, allowing racist theologies and praxis to find welcome in our places of worship and our communities. At our worst, we have been complicit with the forces of religion that serve to dehumanize Black, Brown, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native peoples, and offer “salvation” to people of color only when they adopt the trappings of whiteness.

At the dawn of the Summer of 2020, our nation is in a crucible wrought by racist systems and structures that permeate every facet of life in the United States, including health care, employment, education, wealth, the criminal justice system, and housing, and they infect far too many faith institutions and traditions. Those of us in the Christian tradition have also been complicit with anti-semitism and Islamophobia. We are here, with the future of this nation and its faith traditions in the balance, because we too often have embodied the words of the prophet Jeremiah in the Abrahamic traditions, by treating “the wound of God’s people carelessly, saying ‘Peace, Peace’ when there is no peace” because there is no justice.

These wounds are disproportionately afflicting Black, Brown, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native communities, and we recognize that our embrace of dehumanizing theologies wounds the souls of White people as well. Every time we forget that each person is made in the image of God, we move further away from our own humanity. Ideas and systems that support white supremacy are a cancer that eats away at our minds, hearts, and souls, and reinforce systems of inequality that hurt poor and working class White communities as well.

Yet there have also been many times faith leaders, including White faith leaders, have labored for justice, including work for abolitionism, voting rights, civil rights, a just immigration system, and an end to racialized mass incarceration. In the spirit of this tradition, we are calling all White clergy and faith leaders to join us in uprooting theologies and practices that promote or accommodate interpersonal, structural, and systemic racism, and replace them with life-giving ways of making meaning, building relationships, and

reconstructing just systems and structures. Together we will go on a journey of transformation in the weeks and months ahead to ground ourselves in the deep truth that our own liberation and wholeness are woven into the larger struggle for racial justice. We will sojourn in deep solidarity with Black, Brown, Asian/Pacific Islander and Native clergy and faith leaders to embody the beloved community.

On our Journey we will learn to ATONE/REPENT:

- We atone for our personal acts of racism
- We atone for our failure to hear the cries of our kindred
- We atone for our silence in the face of racial injustice
- We atone for our tight grip on leadership and control of faith institutions and traditions
- We atone for valuing law and order and possessions more than the lives of Brown, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native Peoples
- We atone for our complicity with unchecked police violence and racism toward people of color
- We atone for calling for peace while failing to address deeply rooted racial injustice and inequities

On our Journey we will learn to AFFIRM:

- We affirm our humanity as White faith leaders who are accountable to Black, Brown, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native leaders
- We affirm the release of the captives of our racialized incarceration state
- We affirm the necessity of a truth and reconciliation process for our faith traditions and nation
- We affirm that justice demands fighting for restitution and reparations from our faith traditions and our nation for Black, Brown, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native communities
- We affirm the need to build redemptive power with our colleagues of color to bring systemic and structural change to our nation

On our Journey we will learn to ACT:

- We will act by bringing our prophetic voices into the public arena
- We will act by leading our congregations to confront our racism and anti-blackness
- We will act by calling for the firing of racist police officers
- We will act to transform our system of policing, criminal justice, immigration, and mass incarceration systems that are decimating Black, Brown, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native communities
- We will act by taking responsibility for our part in the struggle against anti-blackness and for racial justice

The Voting and Anti-Racism Committee ask that Sisters, Associates, and Companions, reflect on, pray with and consider signing on to this statement. We found it a powerful call to repentance and action. How will we atone, affirm, and act as a community of faith? If you are interested in sharing your reflections, thoughts, or prayers, please contact Owen Smith at osmith@scny.org

