

No Place for White Supremacy

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White supremacy and racial superiority has no place in today's America. Last week we saw images of a noxious rally with a message of hate in Charlottesville, Virginia. Groups of individuals with White Supremacist and Neo-Nazi ties attacked those who came to show their solidarity against such bigotry. One person was killed and many others severely injured.

All the great world religions call on their followers to live in good will and peace. It is only when these religious beliefs are perverted that misguided followers choose the path of hatred and violence. Christians believe Jesus called his disciples to form a church that would be multiethnic, multinational, from every family, language, people and nation. This message is opposite to hatred. It says love your enemies, live in peace and settle disputes without violence. The White Supremacist agenda is exclusionist, while Jesus' agenda of "God so loved the world" includes white, black and yellow. God equally loves them all.

The history of our country is based on striving to treat all persons with equal rights and equal opportunities. Over the 241 years since the Declaration of Independence, we have not always met this ideal. Yet, our Constitution, our courts and our legislative bodies have made great strides toward achieving equality. It is ironic and tragic that the events in Charlottesville took place but a few miles from the home of and shrine to Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the Declaration of Independence.

I served near Charlottesville as an Episcopal Rector of a Parish in the 1990s. I was the first non-white Rector to serve an Episcopal Anglo parish in Virginia. I did experience the ugly head of racism at times during my time of serving there. I also witnessed reconciliation and people of all races learning to work together in harmony. Change is possible.

Threads of the disease of racism are still found widely in our country. It lingers in implicit and covert ways in our cities, schools, culture, and society – even in some unconscious attitudes. Often it is based upon the belief that white people are superior than people of other races. Therefore, they should dominate other people of color. Historically, this gave some their supposed divine right to chattel slavery. Four million blacks were denied personal freedom at the outbreak of the Civil War. Christian churches in North America and later in South Africa mistakenly used the Bible to justify holding slaves, supposedly to civilize and liberate them from savagery.

This caused much suffering, death and scars which linger to today among us in America. Close to the end of the Civil War President Abraham Lincoln in his second Inaugural Address spoke to the wounded soul of the nation. He said “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

We carry the scars of the sins from our dark past. The Charlottesville White Nationalist march reminds us that these demons are still haunting us. We must

counteract bigotry, hate and racism. It means owning up to American history and seeking ways for redemption and healing. The America we live in today is an example of democracy, a light on the hill of equality, prosperity, and liberty. But under this veneer, there remains much pain from an ugly history of oppression, hatred and segregation.

Our nation is now not one dominant race. We are now a nation of many ethnicities and colors, which give us our beautiful heritage. We dare not retrace our footsteps to the past to resurrect the ugliness of racism and racial superiority. We are created equal in the image of God, and need to live in good will, peacefully with each other.

We all need to stand up against all forms of bigotry. One of Jesus' prime teachings concerned our relationship with our fellow humans. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." The Bible offers an inclusive and healing message for a divided nation: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28).

There is no place for white nationalist or racial supremacy in the church of Christ, or in America. I appeal to people of faith not to stay silent spectators but to stand in solidarity with those who seek unity, and reconciliation to heal the wounds of our past sins. Unite us in peace to solve our differences and advance a common prosperity to make America beautiful, a land where we all can cherish liberty and freedom.

