

**A JOINT STATEMENT FROM BOSTON AREA RELIGIOUS LEADERS**  
***On the horrific events in Charlottesville, Virginia***

Wednesday, August 16, 2017

Would that the troubles visited upon Charlottesville were unique. Alas, they are not.

White bigots, some proudly wearing Nazi regalia, shouting racist invectives and egging for a fight, engaged in brutish scuffles, fear-mongering, and even murder in broad day light... These, alas, are unoriginal sins.

What is surprising and utterly disheartening is the failure of some of our national political and religious leaders, including President Trump, to call out this behavior instantly, unequivocally—to decry it with instinctive, full-throated condemnation. There should not be any hesitation in naming and denouncing these vicious acts of pure, unadulterated racism, bigotry, and anti-Semitism.

As religious leaders, we are outraged by these unimaginative, but vicious transgressions. We are heartbroken at the tragic loss of life in Charlottesville. May the murder of Heather Heyer and the deaths of state troopers Jay Cullen and Berke M.M. Bates call us to recommit ourselves to the hard work to which the US Constitution calls us as human beings, created by God, equal and beautifully diverse.

We take some heart, however, that precisely because the sins in Charlottesville are unoriginal, we have resources to respond to them, if we heed the lessons of history and reflect deeply on the spiritual and ethical teaching of our respective traditions.

The remedy for these unoriginal sins include an unwavering commitment to justice and peace; a collective summons to renewed moral decency; open-hearted engagement with the “other” whom God also fashioned from earth and breath; and honest reflection about the roots and branches of racism and bigotry in our own communities, whether in Charlottesville or Boston.

The remedy also requires us to admit that it is far from “self-evident” in this country that “all people are created equal.” Rather, this remains a sacred aspiration to which we the members of these United States—northerners and southerners alike—struggle to achieve. To do so, we must work daily to dismantle entrenched systems of oppression and degradation.

As clergy and religious professionals living together in the historic city of Boston, we stand united in support of the foundational democratic value of pluralism—religious, ethnic, racial, and otherwise. As we decry the abhorrent behavior of the violent bigots in Charlottesville and the underwhelming response of some of our national leaders, we also call on our communities

to rededicate themselves to serving as agents of healing in our homes, houses of worship, work places, schools, playgrounds and streets.

***\*Knowing that many people in our communities will gather for prayer and public action this weekend, we offer the following questions for contemplation and discussion:***

- What is one concrete action you can take today to oppose the despicable actions in Charlottesville and elsewhere in our country?
- How can you help address issues of racism and bigotry in your own community?
- Where might you engage in meaningful conversation and/or action with people from other religious and cultural communities?
- What sustains you in your peace and justice efforts? What resources do you need to carry this work forward?