



Statement on Racism from the National Commission of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation of the U.S. Secular Franciscan

*How long, O LORD, must I cry for help and you do not listen?
Or cry out to you, "Violence!" and you do not intervene?
Why do you let me see iniquity?
Why do you simply gaze at evil?
Destruction and violence are before me;
there is strife and discord. (Habakkuk 1: 2-3)*

Once again, the wound of racism in our society has been exposed because of what appears to be careless and irresponsible behavior by persons whom we should trust to keep peace and encourage non-violence: law enforcement officers and public officials.

The National Commission of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States, hereby declares that racism is morally wrong. It does not love or respect life. Neither Scripture, our Rule of Life nor our faith justifies it, for any reason, or under any circumstance.

Our Catholic social teaching calls us to respect and honor the dignity of every human life, from the womb to natural death. It makes no exclusions on the basis of color or ethnicity and calls out no other distinction to be excluded. We are called to honor and respect the lives of people we love and people whom we may find it hard to love; people who are like us and people who are different from us.

The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many others each have their tragic and brutal circumstances, but share a central question that cannot be ignored: If they had been white, and the circumstances were identical, would they be alive?

As Catholic Christians and Franciscans, we owe it to ourselves to do the following in response to racism:

- To identify and eradicate the structures in our societal institutions that perpetuate racism, and replace them with structures that are fair and just, and that value the lives and gifts of every person.
- To pray for an end to racism; indeed, to pray for interracial solidarity, for our laws and our faith practices to reflect our compassion and value for the dignity of every human life; and that we lovers and followers of Jesus and Francis of Assisi, be leaders in bringing about a rightly informed sense of racial equity and justice in our land and in our Church.
- To identify and confront our own unconscious racial biases. After a shared history of hundreds of years in this country, we all have them. They make their way into our lives and culture, often unnoticed. But we can become more just and open by discovering these unconscious biases and replace them with love and engagement.

And finally, we need to have safe and meaningful dialogue about those racial biases. We owe it to ourselves and to our brothers and sisters to develop a strong sense of community and fraternity through peaceful conversations. This is truly a conversion moment where dialogue and education are needed. Our Holy Rule calls us to be "bearers of peace" and we all must bear the burden of peace as we walk this journey towards holiness as brothers and sisters, with open hands and joyful hearts.

Come, Holy Spirit! Lord, make it so!