

FOR IMMEDIATE
August 15, 2017

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, on behalf of the NC NAACP and the Moral Movement, calls on all political leaders to denounce the hate-driven violence of white nationalist groups as well as the political agenda they promote:

The words of Jesus from Matthew's gospel speak to all Americans as we face the moral crisis of white nationalists beating, killing, and intimidating fellow Americans in Charlottesville, Virginia.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye,
But considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

How wilt thou say to thy brother,
Let me pull the mote out of thine eye;
And, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

Thou hypocrite.
First cast out the beam out of thine own eye;
And then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote from thy brother's eye. (Matthew 7:3-5, KJV)

Our political leaders, from President Trump, Paul Ryan & Mitch McConnell to senior leadership among the Democrats, have said they oppose the violent white supremacy that killed Heather Heyer and injured dozens in Charlottesville. And we should. We should hold her and her family in deep love and prayer as well as all those emotionally and physically injured.

The test of any politician, however, is the policy they pursue. Will these same political leaders renounce the mean-spirited, race-driven and socially violent policy agenda of white supremacy that precipitated and emboldened the actions and attitude of white supremacist and nationalists? Will they stand together to embrace a moral agenda that works to reconstruct America?

These are the questions we must ask of our political leaders after Charlottesville.

- Will they issue a Joint Call and Resolution for the dismantling of all alt-right (i.e. white nationalist) policies and the immediate termination for cause of all government personnel who promote race-hatred from inside the White House, including Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller?
- Will they fully reinstate the Voting Rights Act to stop racist voter suppression and gerrymandering?
- Will they acknowledge the racist voter suppression practices in 2016 and endorse the unanimous decision of SCOTUS about racial gerrymandering in North Carolina?
- Will they stop racializing Obamacare and claiming everything Obama did is bad, following the white nationalist narrative?

- Will they stop racist attacks on immigrants and oppose the RAISE Act and extreme deportation policies that are tearing undocumented families apart?
- Will they condemn political rhetoric and policies that target the LGBTQ, Jewish, and Islamic communities?
- Will they renounce the use of racial fear to justify the continued escalation of a war on terror and the perpetuation of a war economy of limitless growth?
- Will they challenge and stop Attorney General Sessions from ending affirmative action?
- Will they increase and call for support of federal investigation of unarmed blacks killed by police?
- Will they repent of how silent they were when Trump promoted birtherism to the delight of all white nationalists for years as he was building a racist base for his campaign?
- Will President Trump and the evangelicals who have embraced him repent of the race-baiting and hate-baiting Trump used in his campaign and continues to use? Or will they keep silent and continue to consecrate his actions with their prayers and support?

To say you are against white supremacy without standing against the rhetoric that emboldens white supremacists and the policies they endorse reeks of a terrible ignorance or deliberate hypocrisy. First, remove the beam from your own eye. First, drain your own swamp.

After Charlottesville, our nation is presented with a clear fork in the road. We must make a moral choice. We can take the righteous road of repair, as we were urged to do by the realistic recommendations of the Kerner Commission, following several major riots in our largest cities in 1967. Or we can, as we did half a century ago, follow those who would lead our nation down the road of denial and retreat.

Instead of repairing the social, moral, and cultural infrastructure of God's human family, much of the party of Lincoln—the Republican Party—left their founders' better angels and embraced instead the divide-and-conquer politics of racial fear. Nixon's Southern Strategy began systematically pandering to powerful white nationalist groups which were the infrastructure of the old southern Democratic Party. Nixon, quite sensitive about his failing to achieve a majority vote in 1968, set out to add all of Wallace's voters to his column by 1972. This strategy included inviting white nationalists who had run the Democratic Party's county and state organizations for a century of slavery and another century of segregation into leadership of the Republican Party in the ex-slave states.

But today's Democrats are also not totally absolved in these matters. Many Democrats refuse to name and confront policy driven racism and instead attempt to frame every issue in economic terms for the white middle and working class. This cannot continue. We can't talk about racism only when a Charlottesville happens. All parties must face the political agenda of white nationalism and denounce it line by line.

Let us be clear: white supremacy is not now nor has it ever been a strictly Southern sin. The statue of Robert E. Lee for which extremists in Charlottesville were willing to kill was installed during the Presidency of Woodrow Willson, a Democrat from New Jersey, after he played “Birth of a Nation” in the White House. 100 years before Donald Trump and the Republican Party courted white nationalists, Wilson used this nation’s bully pulpit to uplift the narrative of white nationalism. Racism is not a partisan or regional issue in America. It is our nation’s original sin.

To condemn racism and hate while condoning the policies of white nationalism under the cover of a so-called conservatism is not condemnation at all. Dr. Eddie Glaude of Princeton University reminds us in a [TIME article](#) of James Baldwin's insight into America's racial sickness. "But these condemnations all seem a little too easy to me," Glaude writes. "No matter their intentions, they smack of a certain kind of sentimentality. As James Baldwin noted, sentimentality is 'the mark of dishonesty;...the mask of cruelty.'"

Still, we know that another way is possible. Following this nation’s Civil War, during Reconstruction, and again during the Second Reconstruction of the 1950s and 60s, moral leaders came together from both sides of the aisle to repent of this nation’s sins and turn toward rebuilding a nation for all. Every effort for reconstruction in America has required a movement of people coming together across the dividing lines of race, class, and party to engage our deepest moral traditions and imagine new possibilities. Now is the time for a Third Reconstruction in America. We who believe in freedom insist that we are going forward together, not one step back.