



Bishop LaTrelle Easterling

BISHOP, WASHINGTON EPISCOPAL AREA

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On Juneteenth 2020, as America remembered the evils of slavery and White supremacy, Bishop LaTrelle Easterling and members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference gathered to demand that Christians address the sin of racism and that local, state and national politicians stand for justice for all people. Below is an excerpt of her remarks calling on us all to rise united to end racism so that all can be free.

Juneteenth March for Freedom and Justice Demands

This nation for 200 years enslaved Black and brown humans for economic gain. The consequences of that enslavement, which in this case is the insidious ideology that some persons are less human than others, still infects the fabric of this nation. And to be clear, this racism is ungodly, unconstitutional and unpatriotic.

The inherent worth, dignity and sacredness of Black men, women and children is not debatable, nor do we need justification to exist and enjoy the foundational unalienable rights of this great nation. The Emancipation Proclamation was signed 155 years ago. 155 years is a long time to continue to strategically, systematically and intentionally get something wrong. Yet, as Dr. King notably taught, the time is always right to do what is right. As a bishop of The United Methodist Church, a citizen of this country, and as a mother, I demand that the leaders of this country and all of her institutions finally do what is right, which is to live her creed, uphold the rights established in her founding documents and the amendment that abolished the enslavement of God-breathed people. On behalf of those who have and are suffering under unjust laws, policies and practices,

For a veteran officer to continue to leverage his full body weight on the neck of another human being as the man repeatedly stated he could not breathe, gasped for air, and called for his mother is abhorrent. It was not done to enforce nor uphold the law. It was done to send the same message of terror that was being communicated through the whip, through lynchings, Jim Crow, and acts such as the Tulsa race massacre - that you had better remain in your place of subservience.

But today, I extol the sacred message God spoke when God breathed life into dust, the message continued when Jesus the Christ opened the scroll and proclaimed good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind and that the oppressed be freed. The message expressed at this nation's founding that all men are created equal to demand that its meaning truly not only men of European descent but mean women, black men and all others. Hence, we demand that this country root out the structural sin of institutional racism and white supremacy.

It is time for this nation to be both cognizant and conscious. It is possible to be cognizant of an issue, challenge or problem without being conscious of one's role or complicity therein. The architecture of whiteness and white supremacy is only maintained by the silence, complicity and support of persons of privilege in this country. It is not enough to say I am not a racist. If you have not committed to the practice of being an anti-racist, then you are complicit in racism. The UMC states in her social principles that we condemn racism, ethnocentrism, tribalism and any other ideology that believes one group of human beings is superior to any other. We utterly reject laws, policies and social practices that marginalize, discriminate and/or encourage the use of violence against individuals, communities or other social groups based on perceived racial, ethnic or tribal differences.

The time is now. *We Rise United. We Must End Racism for All to Be Free!*

"Inspiring and equipping local faith communities to develop disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

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To that end we are asking lawmakers at local, regional and federal levels to:

1. **Stop the over-policing, dehumanization and criminalization of black people and communities of color.** ([Resolution 3379](#): Stop Criminalizing Communities of Color in the US and [Resolution 5031](#): Humanizing Criminal Justice)
 - a. Make the enforcement and protection of international human rights law central to criminal justice and immigration policy.
 - b. Police departments publicly establish standards of police conduct and policies for promotion that incorporate training in peacekeeping, life-protecting, other service roles, and law enforcement. The standards must include strict limits on the deadly use of force;
 - c. The composition of police agencies should reflect the communities that they serve, including geographic residence, diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc.;
 - d. Law enforcement agencies should be held accountable by the communities they serve. We encourage churches to coordinate events with these agencies to allow for open dialogue with the community and to safely air grievances and concerns to authorities in order to ensure a culture of trust and transparency;
2. **Stop creating, implementing and supporting policies that perpetuate economic injustice.** ([Resolution 3378](#): Racism and Economic Injustice Against People of Color in the US)
 - a. The United Methodist Church advocates, encourages, and will support a new multiracial, mass movement for racial and economic justice in the US; and
 - b. Our annual conference, districts, and local churches are being engaged, intentionally, in being an anti-racist church, not merely on paper, but in action. Church bodies at every level will seek to educate themselves on the extent of racism in business, education, government, housing, and health care and find ways to advocate for the elimination of specific instances locally and nationally.
3. **Stop hate speech, code words and political maneuverings which incite violence against people of color.** ([Resolution 3422](#) Speaking Out for Compassion: Transforming the Context of Hate in the United States)
4. **Work for the elimination of racism in all its forms, institutional and personal.** ([Resolution 3371](#): A Charter for Racial Justice in an Interdependent Global Community and [Resolution 3376](#): White Privilege in the United States)
 - a. We demand that every person examine and make a decision to root out their own racist ideologies, mythologies and practices and commit to being an anti-racist.
 - b. United Methodists will intentionally work with and support political officials, police chiefs and other law enforcement personnel, and those in the judicial system in their efforts to root out the demons of racism, classism and systemic oppression. United Methodists will also partner with other religious leaders to teach the precepts contained in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament that all flesh is equal and that racism is sin.

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