

# OUT OF THE DEPTHS WE CRY

The psalmist wrote with tears, “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,” (Psalm 130) and it is with our own sense of anguish, anger, grief, and sorrow that we—as majority culture clergy serving Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Unitarian Universalist, and Unity faith communities in Central Virginia—lament and confess the sins of racism, White supremacy, and privilege that have stained our continent for more than four centuries. The names of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Dreasjon (Sean) Reed, George Floyd, and Rayshard Brooks are only the latest among the innumerable victims of White supremacy’s tragic terrorizing legacy.

Both the enslaved and the native peoples of this continent and their descendants have been repeatedly exploited, oppressed, abused, raped, and killed by the majority culture—their conquerors without conscience and then later by their conquerors’ descendants—and not just once, but over and over for hundreds of years in a seemingly inescapable cycle of persecution. So when we see Black people being rundown in the streets by the abuse of police power, when we see Brown children ripped away from their Brown parents and held in cages as a punishment, when we see the racial inequities revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are awakened to the injustice. We in the White community must acknowledge and confess that the roots of such behavior and disproportionate suffering and deaths are buried deeply in American culture. We must acknowledge, repent, and seek forgiveness for the profound brokenness that denies the divine image in which all human beings are created. If we remain silent and fail to confess past sins, we become complicit in the perpetuation of these injustices.

There can be no unity or reconciliation without confession and forgiveness. The time for platitudes is over. Now is the time for action. As persons created and called to love one another as God loves us, we therefore affirm our commitment to speak with one voice against the racism and the insidious venom of White supremacy that has led to the deaths of so many unarmed Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color in our country, and diminished the souls of White people who have benefitted from that oppression. We grieve with, pray for, and stand in solidarity with the families and friends of all whose loved ones have been and continue to be victims of systemic injustices and racist violence. This is why some of us have joined in the protests and walked with our Black and Brown brothers and sisters.

Together, we commit our efforts to confront and exorcize these sins within ourselves as individuals, households, faith communities, and as residents of Central Virginia, this nation, and beyond. Although we all fall short, God’s forgiving love and grace empower us to stand in solidarity through word and deed in order to foster accountability and right action on behalf of ALL God’s children. In the words of Psalm 130, “For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem.”

We stand in solidarity with all religious leaders, faith groups, and community organizations working at this time to bring people together for dialogue, healing, and change. We invite you to join with the religious leaders of this community in an upcoming service of repentance and commitment, and engage with us in an online dialogue across the racial divide with a desire to heal that which separates us. The healing is in the understanding and in the resolve to change policies and practices which divide us with behaviors that unite us in respect for our diversity and a valuing of our uniqueness as a people made in God’s image.

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