

# A Response to Racism by People of Faith

**Living while Black**  
**Running while Black.**  
**Driving while Black.**  
**Shopping while Black.**  
**Dying while Black.**

*"It is not enough for me to stand before you tonight and condemn riots. It would be morally irresponsible for me to do that without, at the same time, condemning the contingent, intolerable conditions that exist in our society."*

- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "The Other America" March 14, 1968

As Catholics committed to peace, we must condemn in no uncertain terms the sin of racism and the acts of degradation it engenders against members of our human family and particularly our black community.

We condemn racism and violence. We must remain steadfast in fulfilling a Catholic devotion to peace, justice and the dignity of all human life. Advancing human rights and uplifting all members of our society must be a national imperative, the responsibility for which falls to every American. (adapted from Joseph E. Nyre, Ph.D. President, Seton Hall University, N.J.)

In the words of Pope Francis:

*"The effects of unjust structures and actions are all too apparent. Our efforts must aim at restoring hope, righting wrongs, maintaining commitments, and thus promoting the well-being of individuals and of peoples."*

We have seen the names in the news - George, Ahmuad, Trayvon - the list goes on and on, sometimes lasting the length of one news cycle-sometimes not even that long until another name is added to the list.

The Washington Post reported that in 2019, 1004 African Americans were killed while in the hands of police. Blacks are 24% of those killed while in police custody despite being 13% of the population. <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org>. It should be noted that not all police departments are required to report deaths by race.

More systemically, this acceptance of violence spills over to the population - is there a difference between lynching and the shooting of an unarmed black runner by white men? Or are both acceptable means of control.

And now at the end of a month where over 100,000 Americans died from Covid 19, we discover that 23% of those deaths are African American, despite their making up 13% of the population. <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/05/27/as-us-coronavirus-deaths-cross-100000-black-americans-bear-disproportionate-share-of-fatalities.html>. Untold others are infected and where unemployment rages at rates not seen since the Great Depression of 1929, we find our streets on fire once again, reminiscent of 1968-1969. Reminding us, as well, that change has been slow to come.

As people of faith, what is our response?

Righteous anger at the disparities, requests for real, substantive action from our legislators, and spiritual leaders, and a critical look at our own responses to these inequities are all important. Recognition that as whites, we are privileged. We are able to walk, run, shop, drive and live without fear. We may be inconvenienced by the restrictions that COVID brings to us. Many of our neighbors of color work on the front lines and for them we are eternally grateful. But generally, we have homes where we can be socially distant, we have food and other products delivered, often by people of color and we have internet services to help us school our children and entertain ourselves. Are these benefits distributed in equal measure throughout our community?

How can we act? How can we challenge the disparities that are only more evident now in what has become a perfect storm of murder and pandemic? We must refuse to allow for division to take over our daily world. For when it does, prejudice, anger and failure follows us wherever we go. Those who would divide us, must be ignored. Seek out some of the resources to educate ourselves and our children and ACT by voting, by challenging racism and by living the life that Jesus and all our holy prophets demand of us.

**Some resources:**

75 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice - Equality Includes You - Medium

<https://medium.com/equality-includes-you/what-white-people-can-do-for-racial-justice-f2d18boe0234>

Resources for teaching children about racism

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2018/teaching-learning-race-and-racism>

- Submitted by the Peace X Peace Ministry