

August 30, 2017

Dear Religious Leader:

Our country has recently been torn by hatred and political violence. Lives have been lost as contests over ideas turn bloody. Angry rhetoric has turned to angry action in city after city. Distrust is so great that it often seems that as a country we have forgotten how to love one another.

Sixty years ago, our country faced a similar crisis. Discrimination and hatred threatened every aspect of our civic life. No one bore the brunt of that discrimination more than our country's African American community. And yet, from that community, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. provided an answer that is just as relevant today.

In his essay "Nonviolence and Racial Justice" published in the *Christian Century* in February 1957, Rev. King laid out a path forward for the country on the basis of nonviolence. He wrote:

Hence the basic question which confronts the world's oppressed is: How is the struggle against the forces of injustice to be waged? There are two possible answers. One is resort to the all too prevalent method of physical violence and corroding hatred. The danger of this method is its futility. Violence solves no social problems; it merely creates new and more complicated ones. Through the vistas of time a voice still cries to every potential Peter, "Put up your sword!" The shores of history are white with the bleached bones of nations and communities that failed to follow this command.

Rev. King went on to propose nonviolence as the right answer, identifying authentic Christian love of neighbor as its key element, observing:

At the center of nonviolence stands the principle of love. In struggling for human dignity the oppressed people of the world must not allow themselves to become bitter or indulge in hate campaigns. To retaliate with hate and bitterness would do nothing but intensify the hate in the world. Along the way of life, someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate. This can be done only by projecting the ethics of love to the center of our lives.

As our country again confronts issues of too often violent racial and ideological division, we believe it is time to recover the principles articulated by Rev. King, and reaffirm that, especially in dealing with those with whom we disagree, love, not hate, and nonviolence rather than violence is the best path forward and the only path to a sustainable civil society.

In order to help lead our country away from the precipice of violence and toward a future of honest and open civil discourse and respect for the dignity of each person, we are asking you and other religious leaders to add your names to ours, endorsing the principles of nonviolence laid out by Rev. King in 1957. The complete text of his essay is enclosed.

Please let us know via email at statement@kofc.org if we can add your name to this signature statement:

This year, as we observe the 60th anniversary of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s historic essay "Nonviolence and Racial Justice," we the undersigned take this occasion to reaffirm the continuing relevance of the principles of nonviolence and love of neighbor as foundational for an American society that is just and humane.

We also ask you to invite other faith leaders in your community to join this effort. We are very pleased that among the first signers are His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and Bishop George V. Murry, S.J., Chair of the new USCCB Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism.

With gratitude for your consideration, we are

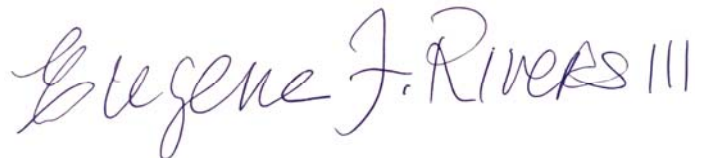
Respectfully,



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Enclosure