

For Immediate Release: August 15, 2017

Contacts:

Eli S. McCarthy, Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Scott Wright, Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Kathy Dempsey, for National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

Now is the time to be bold, to be public, and to let our voices be heard.

Catholic Organizations Respond to the Violence in Charlottesville

As representatives of national and international Catholic advocacy organizations working for peace and justice, we condemn unequivocally the display of hatred, overt racism, and violence manifest this past weekend in Charlottesville, Virginia by members of white supremacist, Ku Klux Klan, and neo-Nazi groups.

These shameful acts expose in the most explicit way the racism and violence against African Americans and other racial groups in our country that has become deeply imbedded in our history and in our institutions, as well as those who embrace the hatred and genocide of Nazi Germany against Jews.

These acts of domestic terrorism have no place in our society.

We are equally indignant at the initial lack of strong condemnation by name of these groups by our government leaders, including our President, as well as the initial silence of many political and faith leaders that only enables and empowers those who espouse such hatred, racism, and violence.

Silence is complicity, and we acknowledge that Christians and faith leaders, including ourselves, have not been bold and clear in condemning each and every act of institutional violence and racism, or witnessing through acts of courage and solidarity at the side of African Americans and other groups targeted by this hatred and violence.

There is no place in our society for hateful words or violent actions that put the lives of our sisters and brothers at risk, especially African Americans and other people of color, as well as Muslims, Jews and people of other faiths.

As Christians, we are deeply saddened at the death of Heather Heyer, a para-legal who was passionate about justice and equality. Her mother's words that her daughter's death must not be an occasion for further hatred against the young man responsible for her death are words that we can only admire.

We are people of a God who embraces and upholds the dignity of every person. We are people of a Gospel that compels us to defend and protect life, especially of those who are most vulnerable.

Our God is a God of hope, and we, as God's people, are a people of hope.

Our God is a God of love, and we are commanded "to love our enemies," and "to return evil with good." No one is excluded from our circle of love, even those who commit such evil acts and espouse such hateful words. But as "perfect love casts out all fear," we refuse to be silent or afraid in the face of those groups who espouse hatred and violence.

We are called by our faith to be bold witnesses to nonviolence, and to nonviolently resist any display of hatred and violence.

As Catholics, we uphold the finest traditions and examples of nonviolence, and commit ourselves, in Pope Francis' words, "to make active nonviolence our way of life." Our faith calls on us to accompany and protect our African American sister and brother, and all God's people, and to work for a day when the Beloved Community will become a reality, and hatred, intolerance, institutional racism, violence and injustice will find no place among us.

But we must be vigilant. Now is the time to be bold, to be public, and to let our voices be heard.

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Franciscan Action Network
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Pax Christi International
Pax Christi USA
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Stuart Center for Mission, Educational Leadership and Technology