

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States of America

The Honorable Kamala Harris
Vice President of the United States of America

The White House Washington, DC 20050
April 2, 2021

Dear Mr. President:

As religious and civic leaders committed to racial justice and who seek to advance the common good, we write to strongly urge you to issue an Executive Order establishing a United States Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Commission, effective immediately.

We have a great appreciation for your longstanding commitment to human dignity and racial equity, and we share those values with you. Considering this and recognizing the dire urgency of recent events around racial justice- including deep health racial inequities exposed by COVID-19, rampant racialized policing, and unconscionable economic inequality, we believe that the establishment of a TRHT Commission is, in the words of Victor Hugo, an “idea whose time has come.” Ultimately, we believe that a TRHT Commission would serve as an essential vehicle for genuinely restoring the soul of America.

We stand with Congresswoman Barbara Lee and Senator Cory Booker, both of whom have introduced resolutions in the House and Senate, respectively, in calling for a commission that properly acknowledges and memorializes the truth of our history, and acts as a catalyst for progress toward discarding the historic founding belief of this nation in a hierarchy of human value based on race—which some have called America’s original sin. The commission would also help our nation to embrace not only our common history but our common humanity and common commitment to permanently eliminate systemic racial inequities in our nation. Most of all, the commission will undergird a core belief of our faith in the inherent dignity, value, and worth of all humans equally created in the image of God.

We stand with Congresswoman Barbara Lee and Senator Cory Booker and all co-signers on the House and Senate Resolutions, in urging you to issue this **executive order** to establish a **Truth Racial Healing and Transformation (TRHT) Commission** that will examine the systems in place that lead to the disenfranchisement and marginalization of Black people and that will shed light on the legacy of institutional racism and how it continues to impact every aspect of American Life.

To this end, we respectfully submit to you the following resolution: “Faith Leaders Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Resolution” that demonstrates our commitment to be part of the TRHT movement at this critical moment in American history:

Whereas the institution of chattel slavery, considered by many to be America's original sin, legally ended with the ratification of the 13th Amendment of the American Constitution, on December 6, 1865,

Whereas the legacy of systemic racism has pervaded and sabotaged the pursuit of the American dream of freedom and opportunity by the descendants of enslaved Africans since the founding of this country, stunting and stymying efforts "to form a more perfect union,"

Whereas the United States of America is experiencing and confronting a period of racial reckoning, the likes of which have not been seen since the second reconstruction in the aftermath of the Civil War and the third reconstruction during the height of the Civil Rights Movement,

Whereas systemic racism and white supremacy in America are at the center of the current triple pandemics of COVID-19, racial inequities, and economic disparities,

Whereas white churches have often historically not only been complicit in, but also, have often proactively perpetuated racial discrimination and racially motivated oppression and violence justified by a misuse and abuse of the Bible and Christianity,

Whereas we believe that all persons are made in the divine image of the Creator, without exception, and that all persons are fundamentally worthy of dignity, equality, love, and respect,

Whereas we believe in the words of the Old Testament Prophet Amos who declared, "let justice roll down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream,"

Whereas we believe in the words of Jesus of Nazareth who said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,"

Whereas Joseph R. Biden, the 46th President of the United States, stated in his inaugural address, "A cry for racial justice some 400 years in the making moves us. The dream of justice for all will be deferred no longer,"

Whereas over the past three decades more than forty countries on four different continents have established Truth Commissions, recognizing that radical truth telling must precede and is essential for racial reconciliation and transformation,

Be it, therefore, resolved that we as a diverse and broad cross section Church and faith-based organization leaders urge the Biden-Harris administration to establish, via **executive order**, a **Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Commission** in the United States of America to inform and educate the public about the historical context for current racial inequalities and inequities, and to begin the long process of rooting out systemic racism, creating proposals for addressing and repairing past harm, and building a more just and genuinely democratic nation for every American.

Sincerely,

Adam Russell Taylor, President, Sojourners

Jim Wallis, Founder and Ambassador, Sojourners

Rev. Terrance M. McKinley, Senior Pastor, Campbell AME Church | Director of Racial Justice, Sojourners

Minister Onleilove Alston, US Coordinator, Mothers of the Nations

Mr. Scott Arbeiter, President, World Relief

Bishop Carroll Baltimore, President/CEO Global Alliance Interfaith Networks

Dr. Paul Baxley, Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Rev. Dr. Timothy Tee Boddie, Consultant, Sojourners

Mr. Tim Breene, CEO, World Relief

Rev. Dr. Amos C. Brown, Third Street Baptist Church of San Francisco

Rev. Dr. Walter Brueggemann, United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, Executive Director, Churches for Middle East Peace

Mr. Shane Claiborne, Author and Activist, Red Letter Christians

Rev. Dr. Leslie Copeland-Tune, Chief Operating Officer, National Council of Churches USA

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop, The Episcopal Church

Marie Dennis, Senior Advisor, Pax Christi International

Dr. John Faison, Sr., Senior Pastor, Watson Grove Baptist Church

Mr. Max Finberg, Minister, Third Street Church of God

Rev. Dr. Robert M. Franklin, President Emeritus, Morehouse College

The Rt. Rev. J. Christian Giesler, Director of Mission Engagement, Episcopal Church

Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, General Secretary Emeritus, Reformed Church in America

Rev. Dr. Neichelle R. Guidry, Dean of Sisters Chapel, Spelman College

Rev. Dr. Richard Hamm, General Minister and President, Christian Theological Seminary

Mr. Edward Haddock, III, President, The Edward E. Haddock, Jr. Family Foundation

Rev. Dr. Cynthia Hale, Senior Pastor, Ray of Hope Christian Church

Ms. Lisa Sharon Harper, President and Founder, Freedom Road, LLC

Rev. Fred Harrell, Senior Pastor, City Church of San Francisco

Rev. Teresa Hord Owens, General; Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada

Rev. Dr. Joel Hunter, Chairman, Community Resource Network

Ms. Hyepin Im, President and CEO, Faith and Community Empowerment
Rev. Joanne Lyon, General Superintendent Emeritus, The Wesleyan Church
Rev. Carlos L. Malave, Executive Director, Christian Churches Together
Sr. Donna Markham, OP, PhD, President and CEO, Catholic Charities, USA
Rev. Dr. Walter McCray, President, National Black Evangelical Association
Rev. Brian McLaren, Author, Center for Action and Contemplation
Rev. Melanie Mullen, Director of Reconciliation, Episcopal Church
Ms. Patricia Prasada-Rao, Coordinator, Repentance Project
Rev. Dr. Soong-Chan Rah, Milton B. Engebretson Professor, North Park Theological Seminary
Bishop Lawrence Reddick, Senior Bishop, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
Mr. Stephen Reeves, Executive Director, Fellowship Southwest
Rev. Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, Senior Pastor, Grace Baptist Church
Rev. Dr. Alexia Salvatierra, Assistant Professor, Fuller Theological Seminary
Rev. Dr. Rob Schenk, President, The Dietrich Bonhoeffer Institute
Sr. Ann Scholz, Associate Director of Social Mission, Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Dr. Ronald Sider, President Emeritus, Christians for Social Action
The Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers, Canon for Evangelism, Episcopal Church
Rev. Ron Stief, Executive Director, National Religious Campaign Against Torture
Rev. Cecelia Williams, President and CEO, Christian Community Development Association
Minister Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, Director, School for Conversion
Mr. Jim Winkler, President and General Secretary, National Council of Churches, USA