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We must link arms in pursuit of a loving nation

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In response to the aftermath in Charlottesville, Va., a group of Houston area faith leaders have written the following commentary.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” These are foundational words upon which this country was built and the creed which Americans are to believe and live by. There is no room for hate and bigotry with these words. These words are inclusive of all men — white, black, brown, educated, uneducated, rich and poor, people of faith and of no faith.



Michael Ciaglo / Houston Chronicle

In light of the horrific events in Charlottesville, Va., and elsewhere, and under the veil of weak support from the White House to condemn bigotry, anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia, we wish to lift up our voices and represent our faith traditions in concert with American values we all cherish.

What do we say to the world that is on the brink of war and brimming with hate? The late Richard Rorty taught that “the world [itself] does not speak. Only we do. Cultures with richer vocabularies are more fully human — farther removed from the beasts (his word) — than those with poorer ones; individual men and women are more fully human when their memories are amply stocked with verses.” We must speak up to a world that needs to hear our verses about truth, civility, love, and peace. We must strive to speak to a world that is mute without us so that we can gain victory with our voices over violence and inhumanity against men, women and children.

His eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo said, “As we learn more about the horrible events of yesterday, our prayer turns to the people of Charlottesville who offered a counter example to the hate marching in the streets. Let us unite ourselves in the spirit of hope offered by the clergy, people of faith, and all people of good will who peacefully defended their city and country. We stand against the evil of racism, white supremacy and neo-Nazism. Let us offer a special prayer of

gratitude for the brave souls who sought to protect us from the violent ideology displayed yesterday. Let us especially remember those who lost their lives. Let us join their witness and stand against every form of oppression.”

Rabbi Rick Jacobs, President of the Union for Reform Judaism, urged the President of the United States to stand up to inhumanity, unequivocally. Rabbi Jacobs wrote, “We commend the opening of President Trump’s statement condemning the ‘egregious display of hatred bigotry and violence’ but are deeply troubled by the moral equivalence evident in President Trump’s statement. White supremacists wielding Nazi flags and spewing racist vitriol need to be specifically condemned, not only violence and hate ‘on many sides.’”

Together, we call on the people of Greater Houston to “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Faith in such an enduring teaching is the beginning of love between us and all God’s acts of creation. Permission is not granted to human hands to destroy God’s handiwork; to do so is an act of ultimate moral weakness. Rather, defending the poor, sheltering the widow, feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, and loving your neighbor are demonstrations of ultimate moral strength.

If our nation’s moral authority emboldens White supremacists against Jews, blacks and other minorities, then we must link arms and hands, and join voices and verses to labor for a strong and loving nation; the America our forefathers bequeathed to us. We know the difference between good and evil; we have room in our hearts and our homes for those who know or will come to know the difference, too.

His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston

The Rt Rev. C Andrew Doyle, Episcopal Diocese of Texas

Rev. Lynn Hargrove, Presbytery of New Covenant

Bishop Scott J. Jones, The United Methodist Church

Rabbi David A. Lyon, Congregation Beth Israel,

Houston

Dr. John D. Ogletree, Jr.,

First Metropolitan Church, The Metropolitan Organization

Michael Rinehart,

Lutheran Bishop of the Gulf Coast Synod,

ELCA