

The State of Connecticut African-American Affairs Commission mourns with the City of Charleston, South Carolina. On June 17th the nation was brought to its knees by a deranged, racist who sought to use terrorist tactics to execute innocent, God loving people who were worshiping during bible study. Such an abominable act against people of African descent is regrettably sown into the fabric of America. The institution of slavery was the tool used to foster the economic prosperity for this country, both in the South and North. This institution also led to the establishment of the KKK, the sanctioned lynching of black people, the massacre of the black residents of “Black Wall Street” in 1921 (Tulsa, OK), creating and arming white militias to bring back “run-aways”, the Jim Crow Laws and church bombings. These assaults against humanity have been responsible for creating and fostering the racial divide that America has yet to eliminate. America continues to relive the nightmare.

The question that must be asked is, do we have the will to seriously address the issue of race in America? In order to thoroughly deal with this issue we must dig deep and understand the past before simply “moving forward”. The seeds of hate that manifest itself in the recent massacre were planted many decades ago. By ignoring the history of violence and injustice against black people allows those toxic seeds to germinate and become both overt and covert policies of inequity and bias. We must seize this moment in the nation’s history and be honest. Already steps have been taken to remove the Confederate flag, the symbol of the brutal oppression and defiance, from the South Carolina capitol grounds and from some major retail stores. As we delve deeper, conversations and meaningful discussions must give rise to real solutions that have eluded America from achieving its goals of equality and justice that were crafted in the country’s enabling documents. Indeed we need to take time to mourn and grieve the losses of the nine victims, their families and friends, the City of Charleston and this nation. But we must be steadfast and endeavor to do everything in our will to deal with the root causes of this tragedy. That must begin with uncomfortable dialogue designed to yield meaningful outcomes.

We can act assertively and take the steps to prevent a repeat of another heinous act of domestic terrorism and violence. The capacity to put our house in order is at our fingertips. It is incumbent for us to take responsibility and grab the reins of justice and equity and to move in a direction that puts America in the same mindset of offering forgiveness and love that was expressed by the families of the victims. The Commission urges you to become involved in this journey to rid ourselves of racism, terrorism and injustices that has kept America hostage for too long. The African-American Affairs Commission will remain resolute in its effort to devote its resources towards the elimination of deep seeded racism. The Commission is firmly committed to working with the community statewide to ensure it gets an exemplary education, quality health care, meaningful employment opportunities and an enriched overall quality of life.

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