



## What We Say Matters

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**General Minister and President**

On January 6th, the nation watched in horror as a swarming horde of white supremacist insurrectionists stormed the U.S. Capital Building. We saw a Confederate flag carried into the rotunda, t-shirts promoting Nazi propaganda, elected representatives hiding in fear for their lives, and various bombs, guns, and weapons brandished against law officers who were either utterly overwhelmed, completely absent from the scene, or conspiratorially involved in the insurrection.

On March 16th, we heard reports of the most recent mass shooting incident at the hands of a white man that took the lives of non-white victims. Six of the eight victims of his murderous spree were Asian women.

The common denominator in these horrific events was the hate speech that emanated from the mouth of our former President.

For months he lied to America about a stolen election.

For months he referred to the Coronavirus as the “China virus,” after which hate crimes against Asian Americans rose at alarming rates.

This kind of pernicious, malevolent, vitriolic rhetoric is not new to America or unique to the former President– not even close. But it is especially virulent when it comes out of the highest office in the land. Throughout his time in office, the former occupant of the White House empowered the movement of white supremacists, who used his words to promote their agenda and increase their enrollment. They moved out of the margins and began taking center stage as the President continually referred to them as good people. In a presidential debate, he told them to “stand back and stand by” – a statement that gave recruiters on the dark web fodder for their propaganda, the result of which was an almost unprecedented overnight growth in their memberships.

Good people of faith who believe in a God who created all with equal worth and

value, and who endowed all with the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, must not remain silent and inactive while this hatred grows. Too often throughout American history, white people of faith have jumped on the anti-racism bandwagon as it rolled toward justice – only to jump off when they felt like they had done enough or when the demands on their commitments to justice reached a limit they were not willing to exceed.

Whites must commit to two things at this time as the anti-racism movement faces a rising tide of fascism and racial animus.

First, whites must join leaders and movements of color and stay in it to win it – not quitting when the going gets rough or when whites get tired.

Second, whites must take a backseat on this bus. They will not, should not, cannot drive this work. Stacey Abrams and Raphael Warnock and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ibram Kendri and Michelle Alexander and Val Demmings and Pramiya Jayapal, Deb Haaland, Sheila Jackson, and so many other leaders from historically under-represented communities who call for, organize, and instantiate pathways to equity and justice. Whites who likewise long for this kind of beloved community must actively disengage from a privilege that serves as one of the largest remaining obstacles to racial equity, a privilege that in the past has allowed us to exit the scene long before real justice had arrived.

Lives are being lost every day as white perpetrators of hate speech and hate crimes grow their ranks following four years of presidential favor. But racial justice and equity will not be denied, and white people of faith must add their efforts to it.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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