

Racial and Religious Harmony

In pursuing the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable's Mission- "to increase love, harmony, and understanding" this compilation is presented as material for starting deeper more meaningful conversations among friends, families, in our homes and neighborhoods, our schools and at our places of work. It is our hope that these conversations will bring greater understanding of our diverse scriptural perspectives on the issue of race and promote ways forward in healing and building a more inclusive, loving, safe for all, community.

Some of the following quotes are from leadership in the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable itself and others are scripture or taken from recent articles. It is well understood that this paper is not all inclusive but simply offered as a starting point towards building greater understanding amongst people of various world views and faiths. We look forward to hearing how you have been able to use this compilation and the hoped for positive action and outcomes. We encourage at least two individuals of diverse religious and/or racial backgrounds to collaborate and organize a gathering of whatever size feels comfortable; simply two friends meeting and discussing these articles is a perfect place to start building these conversations!

If you would like assistance with setting up a discussion group or something larger, please feel free to reach out to us: For this project- Jan Saeed, jsaeed@westminstercollege.edu

For general questions- contact@interfaithroundtable.org

"Like the bee gathering honey from the different flowers, the wise person accepts the essence of the different scriptures and sees only the good in all religions." Mahatma Gandhi.

(from 2021 Interfaith Roundtable Chairperson Zeynep Kariparduc's email tag)

(Faiths are listed in alphabetical order in the compilation)

Racial and Religious Harmony Compilation

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Baha'i Faith

As a Baha'i, I have been raised to believe in the oneness of humanity and unity of all religions, and the teachings of the Faith also tell us that racism in America is the most vital and challenging issue. The following quotes give me the guidance I take each day in working on myself and asking, "what can I do today to move forward on changing or affecting my sphere of influence?"

"Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest." (Baha'u'llah, Arabic # 68 of the Hidden Words)

"Let neither think that the solution of so vast a problem is a matter that exclusively concerns the other. Let neither think that such a problem can either easily or immediately be resolved. Let neither think that they can wait confidently for the solution of this problem until the initiative has been taken, and the favorable circumstances created, by agencies that stand outside the orbit of their Faith. Let neither think that anything short of genuine love, extreme patience, true humility, consummate tact, sound initiative, mature wisdom, and deliberate, persistent, and prayerful effort, can succeed in blotting out the stain which this patent evil has left on the fair name of their common country." (Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 39)

"So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth"

<https://www.bahai.us/path-to-racial-justice/>, <https://www.bahai.us/the-vision-of-race-unity-americasmost-challenging-issue/>

(Offered by Jan Saeed, current vice chair and first chair of the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable, April 2021)

Buddhist Faith

The Buddhist teachings are grounded in a clear recognition of suffering, an ethical commitment to non-harming and an understanding of interdependence: We can't separate our personal healing and transformation from that of our larger society. The historic and continued suffering of people of color in this country—of African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans and others—is our collective suffering. The harm caused daily is our collective responsibility. Once we see this suffering, our freedom unfolds as we respond with a wise and compassionate heart.

....As Buddhists we see the timeliness of adding our voices to theirs, knowing it will take a dedicated focus to recognize how the hidden biases and assumptions of our society deprive people of color of their basic rights to justice, opportunity and human dignity.

Our collective aspiration within the Buddhist traditions is to become truly inclusive and beloved communities. In this process we are committed to honestly and bravely uncovering the ways we create separation and unintentionally replicate patterns of inequity and harm. In the same spirit, we are committed to engaging with other faith and social justice groups in support of undoing racism throughout our society.

..... In his time the Buddha was a revolutionary voice against racism and the caste system: "Not by caste, race, or creed, or birth is one noble, but by heart alone is one a noble being."

<https://jackkornfield.com/statement-on-racism-from-buddhist-teachers-leaders-in-the-unitedstates/>

Christian Faith Communities

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

"This issue is dear to my heart. The following quotes from the Church Presidency inspire me to work on this in community with my interfaith brothers and sisters."

"The shocking police-produced death of George Floyd in Minnesota last May was surely the trigger for these nationwide protests, whose momentum was carried forward under the message of 'Black Lives Matter,'" said President Oaks. "Of course, Black lives matter! That is an eternal truth all reasonable people should support."

President Oaks repeated several recent teachings of Church President Russell M. Nelson on racism:

- We should "build bridges of cooperation instead of walls of segregation."
- "Any of us who has prejudice toward another race needs to repent!"
- Latter-day Saints should "lead out in abandoning attitudes and actions of prejudice toward any group of God's children."

These prophetic clarifications can, President Oaks said, help us repent, change and

improve.” [devotional address](https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/dallin-h-oaks/racismother-challenges/) on October 27, 2020 <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/dallin-h-oaks/racismother-challenges/>

President Russell M. Nelson stated this April 2021, “God does not prefer one race over another. His doctrine on this matter is clear. He invites all to come unto him, ‘Black and white, bond and free, male and female.’ I assure you that your standing before God is not determined by the color of your skin. Favor or disfavor with God is dependent upon your devotion to God and his commandments, and not the color of your skin. Our Black brothers and sisters the world over are enduring the pains of racism and prejudice. Today, I call upon our members everywhere to lead out in abandoning attitudes and actions of prejudice. I plead with you to promote respect for all of God’s children.”

President [Gordon B. Hinckley said, in 2006](#), that no one who makes racial slurs or denigrating remarks can consider himself or herself a Christian.
(Offered by Michael Bourne, Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable Board Member, April 2021)

Episcopalian

“I have been on the Salt Lake Hate Crimes Committee ... for some time and learning a great deal from that exposure. However, recently I participated in a 10-week Episcopal Church course on this whole issue called "Sacred Ground" comprised of readings and group discussion on issues of injustice and intolerance throughout history. The most important lesson of this course that I learned was that we as individuals need to examine ourselves and see what we have deep inside us (and we probably all do) and put to right first. It was very eye opening and soul searching and privately laying oneself bare. The idea being that before we can work on this on a wider scale we need to identify and recognize and overcome our own biases first.”

“.... I would like to suggest that we seek to reach much deeper and work on how to recognize and recover from biases that we all have within us from our upbringing and life experiences.”

Included below is the recent Episcopalian Pastoral Letter on Racism from The House of Bishops as well as the 10-week course mentioned above.

(Offered by Josie Stone, past chair of the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable, April 2021)

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/sacred-ground/syllabus-preview/>
<https://www.epicenter.org/pastoral-letter-on-racism-from-the-house-of-bishops/>

Evangelical

“The Bible uniformly teaches the essential dignity of all humans and the shared desire to belong in community. Yet, the devastating reality of sin results in denigration and alienation. Christians affirm that the gospel brings reconciliation not only between God and humanity, but also among estranged groups of people (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:14–18; Colossians 3:11).

God will ultimately form a new humanity from “every nation, tribe, people and language” (Revelation 7:9).

In light of this biblical vision, racism is an affront to the value of individuals created in God’s image and to the divinely designed diversity of redeemed humanity. This denial of personhood and belonging runs contrary to the peace and unity that God intended in the beginning and that the Bible depicts as our destiny.

(Excerpted from document of the National Association of Evangelicals;
<https://www.nae.net/affirming-the-dignity-of-all-races-and-ethnicities/>)

Greek Orthodox

“Allow me to begin with a statement that the Hierarchy of our Orthodox Church gave on the topic of racism, I quote:

“The essence of the Christian Gospel and the spirit of the Orthodox Tradition are entirely and self-evidently incompatible with ideologies that declare the superiority of any race over another. Our God shows no partiality or favoritism (Deuteronomy 10:17, Romans 2:11). Our Lord Jesus Christ *broke down the dividing wall of hostility that had separated God from humans and humans from each other* (Ephesians 2:14). In Christ Jesus, the Church proclaims, there can be *neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, but all are one* (Galatians 3:28). Furthermore, we call on one another *to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to expose them* (Ephesians 5:11). And what is darkness if not hatred? *The one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness* (1 John 2:11)!”

This brief passage for us as Orthodox Christians lifts up and brings forward the biblical notion of oneness and solidarity, while at the same time condemning acts of hatred and racism. Our Holy Scriptures go beyond mere tolerance and outright condemnation of racism and discrimination. They also inform us about the manner in which we ought to act, profoundly and personally, namely through the way of love. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him (1 John 3:15-16). Therefore, hatred and bigotry, racism, and discrimination, or indeed any other action or attitude that violates the “other,” who is our neighbor, our brother and sister, are the exact opposite of love and fail to embrace Christ’s command to love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:31).

We should all strive for politics of empathy. This should be an attempt to imagine what it is like to live as a person or persons of ethnic background or race other than our own. This is our call as we are called to a deeper level. Our struggle is to learn how to love and is one that includes rooting out racism in our own hearts and in the very structures that constitute the political, cultural, and economic matrix within which we locate ourselves. The first requires incessant self-reflection; the second requires action. We should not block our own growth in the love of our family, friends, strangers, and an enemy so that with this self-reflection we can move to prophetically call attention to injustice, education, mobilizing a movement and the involvement, participation in, and facilitation of racism training.

Our pursuit in life is following the example Christ left us, to love as God loves, and to love one another as God loves us.

(Offered by Father Elias Koucos, Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable past chair– April 2021)

Family Federation for World Peace and Unification

“Humankind is confronting today's chaotic world and pursuing a peace that transcends nationality. However, to this day, a world of peace for all people has failed to materialize. Since this is so, if there is one ideal with potential, an ideal that can give people hope, it is the ideal that advocates the logic of a peaceful world with God at its center. This is the only ideal that can give this chaotic world a chance to find a new direction and a new history. If we think about it logically, the only possible outcome has to be the kingdom of heaven on earth. The kingdom of heaven is a world of peace with God at the center. From that center, all conflicts based on history, religion, race and any other obstacle can be overcome. God must remain the single, unchanging center.” (Cheon Seong Gyeong 2014: The Holy Scripture of Cheon IL Guk (Heavenly Kingdom) Book 10; P. 1035)

“As the gap between the mind and body widens, the amount of distress increases. Suffering and tragedy take hold. Thus, we need to narrow the gap between our minds and bodies until they unite into one. If we cannot do that, this world will never know peace or happiness. Even if the global battle ends, and we try to live in peace, we will not see hope, fulfillment or peace unless each of us ends our own battle, the battle within oneself. The problem is within me, within myself. I have to resolve my own fundamental issues. Once I do so, when I come upon ideal surroundings in the external world, I will feel a peace and fulfillment that permeates my mind. In order to realize a free and happy kingdom of heaven, we need to connect with the world on that basis. No matter how well organized the environment may be, if we remain in a situation where our own problems have not been solved, we cannot blend into that happy environment.” (Ibid, p.1053 Section 31)

(Offered by Rev. Wendy Stovall, Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable Board April 2021)

Roman Catholic

“God has found a way to unite himself to every human being in every age.” Pope Francis.

Catholic social teaching identifies racism as a “particularly destructive form of evil” and it arises when any individual or group claims to be superior to others. The claim of superiority often leads to unjust treatment of others. Exclusion of the other results in “verbal abuse, violent acts and discrimination based on ethnicity or race.” The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) describes racism as “sinful” because racist acts are by nature unjust; “They reveal a failure to acknowledge the human dignity of the persons offended, [and] to recognize them as neighbors Christ calls us to love” (Matthew 22:39).

All humans are created equally in the image of God. We proclaim this belief, and note that when people choose to reject it, fear, prejudice and hatred against the other arise. “Every racist act...

every joke, every disparaging look as a reaction to the color of skin, ethnicity, or place of origin—is a failure to acknowledge another person as a brother or sister, created in the image of God. In these and in many other such acts, the sin of racism persists in our lives, in our country, and in our world.” (USCCB). Racism may be manifested in individuals, in institutions and in governments. We can and must combat racism. A pathway toward justice flows out in the words of the prophet Micah:

You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the LORD requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

To do justice require us to examine our consciences and resolve to promote right relationships with others. “If we acknowledge our sins, [God] is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing.” (1 John 1:9) To love goodness demands pursuing “what leads to peace and to building up one another.” (Romans 14:19) The process “requires a determined effort, but even more so, it requires humility; it requires each of us to ask for the grace needed to overcome this sin and get rid of this scourge.” The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops ‘hope to provide a Christian call for all of us in this country to “walk humbly with our God” so that, by his grace, racism will be eradicated.’

(Excerpts from the document *Open Wide Our Hearts*, a Pastoral Letter on racism, written by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2019. Offered by Susan Northway, Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable Board Member, April 14, 2021)

<https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/upload/open-wide-our-hearts.pdf>

Hindu Faith

“The essence of Hinduism is being all inclusive.” (Indra Neelameggham, Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable Board Member, 2021)

"Hinduism is a way of life of most in Indian subcontinent which is a multiracial society with multi-theistic philosophy - some call it polytheism or a democratic religion. Differences exist, societal problems come from the 'competitive nature among many living beings - which creates predatory problems. Understanding and overcoming prejudices is 'wisdom'." (Neale Neelameggham, Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable 2021)

An article on race and Hindu beliefs included the following:

“Acknowledge that racism is real, and that it exists in our communities in spite of our diversity. We must be mindful of our implicit biases and work through them, constantly reminding ourselves of what our sacred teachings tell us — that we are all embodied spirits.....”

<https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/dharma-demands-us-to-fight-for-racial-justice>

Islamic Faith

"In the holy Quran (Muslim Sacred Book like the Bible, Torah) G-d All mighty in verse 13 of Chapter 49 states:

"O mankind, we created you from a single pair of a male and a female. And made you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other (not for you to despise each other). Verily, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah (G-d) is the one who is the most moral (righteous)."

The holy prophet Muhammed peace be upon him, in his last sermon told his followers the following:

"All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab, also a white has no superiority over black nor black has any superiority over white except by piety (morality) and good conduct.

It is clear from teachings that human conduct is more detrimental than mere skin color or ethnicity of an individual. Hence, the hate that is propagated by false teachings in our midst and communities has no place in any religion. It is something we should shed as one sheds their other burdens that cause strife and disunity in our human family.

(Offered by Imam Yasir Butt, Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable Board Member and Zeynep Kariparduc, current Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable chair, April 2021)

Jewish Faith

I personally think everyone needs to do self-examination on this issue including their own faith. Sometimes our scriptures are misread. Sometimes, it is up to faith leaders to promote the appropriate interpretation of scriptures.

In Hebrew Scriptures, there are many instances where racism is rejected, G-d created ALL people in G-d's image, no matter what color. G-d is not assigned a color or even a religion!

...And most importantly, as I have heard Rabbi Benny Zippel say so eloquently – "we must learn to love with the same intensity as those that have hated." I would say, let's even learn to love at the highest of all levels. Let's see the G-d spark that is in everyone.

How do I go about this as a Rabbi with the concept of a "chosen people?" I construe this to mean that Jewish people are chosen for a specific mission. We are a vital organ to the body of beliefs. But every other life affirming belief system is also a vital organ, and also chosen, though their role may be different. None is superior over another. It takes both a liver and kidneys (and more) for the body to function. Each faith has its deployment. And each person has a mission to discern their own deployment and do their best to fulfill it.

G-d's love is infinite. G-d not only loves each one of us, G-d is "in-love" with each one of us. In my faith and my personal belief, this is why the golden calf was in a sense, a betrayal of the holy marriage, which even had a written contract - the Ten Commandments. Moses had to break the marriage contract (the Ten Commandments) due to the transgression, and another set had to be issued. (Note - A loving G-d provides 2nd chances and more!)

Bottom line: The concept that one life affirming faith or belief system is better than another, creates the same deleterious impacts as racism. Every piece of infinite wisdom is also infinite.

(Offered by Rabbi Alan Bachman, past chair and Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable Board member, April 14, 2021)

Oglala Sioux Faith

(quotes from spiritual leader Black Elk [1865-1950] of the Sioux Nation now on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota)

“The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells the Great Spirit, and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us.”

“The Universe is circles within circles, and everything is one circle, and all the circles are connected to each other. Each family is a circle, and those family circles connect together and make a community, and the community makes its circle where it lives on the Earth. It (the community) cares for that part (of the Earth) but cares for it as a circle - which is to say in a cooperative and egalitarian way, where everybody is cared for, and everybody is respected.”

“All things are our relatives; what we do to everything, we do to ourselves. All is really One. “

“Peace will come to the hearts of men when they realize their oneness with the Universe. It is everywhere.”

“Let every step you take upon the Earth be as a prayer.”

Sikh

“To put it plainly, we need to stand in solidarity with the Black community. I urge my fellow Sikhs to take a stand against the forces that oppress and harm our Black neighbors. This is our call to action. Our complicity in white supremacist institutions and systems directly harms Black communities—and our continued inaction goes against our principles of equality, true justice, and recognizing humanity in all.” *Simarpreet Kaur*
<https://www.sikhcoalition.org/blog/2020/sikh-view-kenosha-combating-systemic-racismrequires-standing-black-america/>