

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Religious Leaders call for compassionate responses to racial injustice.

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Dear people of Los Angeles,

As members of the Los Angeles Council of Religious Leaders, we speak for and through traditions and people as diverse and varied as Los Angeles itself: our religious communities are different in belief, custom, ethnicity, race, and language; we come from around the globe; and we work constantly to understand each other and promote our common humanity. We are your religious leaders.

Today our hearts are filled with sorrow. We see and feel the pain of many who express rage against systems and prejudices that have oppressed them and damaged their lives and those of their families. We join them in decrying racism and the pervasive devaluing of people of color. We understand the need to cry out, to protest, to march in opposition to all that keeps us from the full benefits of a free and just society—and those who are in our streets protesting in these days include members of all our religious communities, and even some of us. You are our own; we are yours.

We join you in your suffering. We grieve with you as you mourn. We share the anger of all who have been unjustly harmed. With you, we call upon those in public authority to understand our pain and have compassion on our suffering. We offer ourselves and our communities as places of refuge for those in fear. We are your priests, your rabbis, your imams and gurus and spiritual mentors. And we love you all.

Finding the humanity in one another across boundaries of faith and race and culture and class is the challenge of life together in a pluralistic society, a challenge we as a Council have embraced in the full recognition that even our own traditions have at times caused harm to others. Moving beyond that acknowledgement to support and advocate for one another is the natural result of the human solidarity we have learned from our work together.

We urge all Angelenos to join us, even in this time of anger, in the struggle to find compassionate responses to injustice and to recognize that formless violence often re-victimizes the very people who themselves struggle for justice, when people are hurt and property randomly destroyed. We also repudiate the misuse of legitimate anger to promote chaos and destruction. Our targets should be attitudes and prejudices and systems of wrong, and not people different from ourselves.

And we call for peace on our streets, in our homes, and in our hearts—not a peace that glosses over or obscures and protects injustice, but a peace that shines a clear light of truth on what we are doing to each other and especially to those too weak to resist.

We call for peace with truthful speech and honest lament, for a calm that creates space for the oppressed to both live and be heard, and gives time for all to grieve.

We call for government to be responsive, for law enforcement to be just and merciful, and for everyone to act for the true common good: a pluralistic, diverse society in which people of all races and faiths can thrive, in their variety, with integrity and in safety.

We, your religious leaders, ask the blessing of the Holy on you, our children, our brethren, and our neighbors, and we greet you with a kiss of peace and a loving embrace.

The Los Angeles Council of Religious Leaders

The Rev. John E. Cager – LACRL President (AME Church Ministerial Alliance)

Rabbi Sarah Hronsky – LACRL Vice President (LA Board of Rabbis, Temple Beth Hillel)

Canon Robert Williams – LACRL Secretary (Episcopal Archdiocese of Los Angeles)

The Venerable Bhante Chao Chu – President, Los Angeles Buddhist Union

The Rev. Linda Culbertson – General Presbyter, Presbyterian Church USA

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian – Primate, Western Diocese, Armenian Church

Randolph Dobbs – Los Angeles Baha'i Center

“Sistah” Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker – Director of Social Action, Connectional AME Church

Bishop R. Guy Erwin – Southwest California Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rabbi Morley Feinstein – Rabbi Emeritus, University Synagogue

Bishop Grant J. Hagiya – California Pacific Conference, United Methodist Church

Commissioner Nirinjan Singh Khalsa – California Sikh Council

Swami Sarvadevananda – Vedanta Society of Southern California

The Rt. Rev. Alexei Smith – Interreligious/Ecumenical Affairs, Archdiocese of Los Angeles

Sister Hedab Tarifi – Islamic Center of Southern California

The Rev. K.W. Tulloss – President, Baptist Minister's Conference of Los Angeles

The Rt. Rev. John H. Taylor – Bishop Diocesan, Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles

Rev. Felix Villanueva – Conference Minister, SCNC, United Churches of Christ

Mr. Roy Weinstein – Past President, University Synagogue

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ABOUT THE LOS ANGELES COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Representing faiths for more than three decades, the Los Angeles Council of Religious Leaders (LACRL), is an informal alliance of heads of major religious bodies in the Greater Los Angeles area consulting and collaborating in common cause. Past presidents include Rabbi Mark Diamond (Board of Rabbis of Southern California), Archbishop Hovnan Derderian (Western Diocese, Armenian Church of North America) & Bishop Jon J. Bruno (Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles).