



AMERICA | SPECIAL CONTENT

PREVIEW EDITION

Racism is the United States' original sin, one that has divided our nation for generations. In their 1979 pastoral letter "[Brothers and Sisters to Us](#)," the U.S. bishops noted that "racism is more than a disregard for the words of Jesus; it is a denial of the truth of the dignity of each human being revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation."

Unfortunately, we continue to need this reminder even 40 years after the letter's publication. Authentic moral leadership must challenge the sinful structures of our country and our church.

"There is an illusion about America, a myth about America to which we are clinging which has nothing to do with the lives we lead and I don't believe that anybody in this country who has really thought about it or really almost anybody who has been brought up against it—and almost all of us have one way or another—this collision between one's image of oneself and what one actually is is always very painful and there are two things you can do about it, you can meet the collision head-on and try and become what you really are or you can retreat and try to remain what you thought you were, which is a fantasy, in which you will certainly perish."

—James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name*

As America's editors note, "The just world we are called to create will require from each of us nothing less than the radical acts of the love and mercy to which the Gospel testifies." We have assembled this packet as an aid for educators and parish groups as they work to confront racism.

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The Editors: Catholics must combat racism and bigotry at every turn.

On Saturday Aug. 12, 2017, a “Unite the Right” rally was organized by white nationalists in Charlottesville, Va., in opposition to the planned removal of a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee by the city of Charlottesville. Participants in the rally, many drawn from far distances, chanted Nazi-inspired slogans like “Blood and Soil” and “Jews will not replace us!” A day fraught with tension was then tragically punctuated by bloodshed, when a driver, later identified as a member of a white supremacist movement, drove his car into a crowd of peaceful counterprotesters and one person died, while more than two dozen were injured.

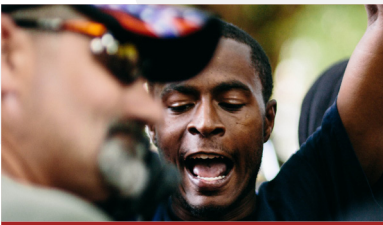
It should seem obvious—an automatic reflex—to condemn the white supremacy, racism and hate that led directly to this unconscionable violence. It certainly is to our fellow Americans whose lives are haunted daily by the specters of racism and anti-Semitism. Yet it was not obvious to the president of the United States. At least twice Mr. Trump publicly expressed a moral equivalence between the hate-mongers who had organized and led the demonstra-

tion and the contingent that had assembled to stand up to bigotry and intolerance. It is not possible to parse this failure of leadership in any way but to conclude that the president is either unable or unwilling to provide the moral witness his office requires.

It therefore falls to the people to act. In the face of bigotry there can be no ambivalence: We must denounce in sure and certain terms all forms of white supremacy, anti-Semitism and violence, which stubbornly remain a part of the American experience. We must also acknowledge that this legacy of racism and oppression manifests itself today in unjust social and economic realities that tear at our nation’s social fabric and put lives, especially the lives of people of color, at risk. “We stand against the evil of racism, white supremacy and neo-nazism,” a statement of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said over the weekend. “We stand with our sisters and brothers united in the sacrifice of Jesus, by which love’s victory over every form of evil is assured.”

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OLGA SEGURA

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