

The Ferguson Declaration: A Black Lives Matter Creed (Long Version)

Guest Post by Rodney Thomas, Pierre Keys, and Friends

July 31, 2016

We, the heirs of Black Churches and their traditions, in the Spirit of the Prophets, the Apostles, and the Early Church

1.1 We believe in God Our Creator and the Father, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, the Source and Fountain of Love (1st John 4: 8) who loves all people from every tribe and nation and who is the same God who appoints seasons of justice and peacemaking (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8).

1.2 We believe in Jesus of Nazareth - conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary - to be the risen Son of God who Ministered and Healed the Sick, Liberated the Oppressed and suffered under the occupation of the Roman Empire where he was persecuted, brutalized, and executed on Calvary. We celebrate the power of God bringing life into that which we thought was dead, represented by the resurrection of Jesus, giving us victory over sin and death (Colossians 2:14-15).

1.3 We believe in the Holy Spirit, Our Comforter and Guide throughout every dispensation who continues to prepare the World for the Good News that the Church Universal is called to proclaim and embody. The Spirit blows where God wills (John 3:9), breathing life in every generation (Ecclesiastes 7:10), making a better tomorrow possible until Christ's return.

1.4 We believe Black Lives Matter. Scripture speaks of the infinite worth of ALL of humanity (Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 9:6), and the Triune God distinctly created us with intentionality and purpose. God loves us in our DIFFERENCES and reveals that the Body will only find true unity in this midst of seeking the purpose of our divinely composed diversity (Revelation 5:9; Revelation 14:6). The holy writ portrays a sovereign God as caught up in the scandal of particularity moving through the lives

of the powerless from the election of Abraham, Moses, and the Hebrews out of Egypt to their Gentile neighbors in ancient Syria, Ethiopia, Persia, Egypt, and Palestine (Amos 9:7). In each of these circumstances we are able to testify to God affirming our differences and addressing unique plights throughout human history. In the Gospels, we see that Jesus heard the cry of the Syrophenician woman and healed her daughter (Mark 7:25-30). By sitting and listening to someone who was a cultural minority and recognizing her unique plight, Christ worked to set her and her daughter free from their captivity. The authors and signatories of The Ferguson Declaration: A Black Lives Matter Creed, express solidarity in word and deed with the movement begotten by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Collors, and Opal Tometi. This solidarity also includes but is not limited to, all other resistance movements such as #SayHerName, #AMillionHoodies, and #JusticeForFlint committed to nonviolent resistance as opposition to racism for the sake of the Common Good.

1.5 We believe the Scriptures reflect God's Preferential Option of the Poor from Genesis to Revelation (James 1:27, Psalm 68:5, Exodus 22:21, Proverbs 17:5). The Prophets of old taught that God loved and provided for all people, and yet widows, orphans, and migrants found favor with God. God requires justice for the poor and judges each government accordingly (Micah 4:3-4, Daniel 4:25-26). Jesus Christ the Son taught Divine Providence, and before he sent out his disciples, he assured them that God's loving-kindness reached even the smallest of birds, the sparrow (Matthew 10: 26-31). God's will is for the lowly of society to receive justice so that all persons in the human community can be made whole.

1.6 We believe in the Sanctity of all of life and that the Church should work with society to look after the general welfare of all persons from womb to tomb (John 10:10). We affirm that humanity was meant to live in liberty rather than chains, and that God has bestowed upon women and men the capacity to choose goodness and love. Worship of the Resurrected Savior should lead us to stride towards freedom and a Culture of Life (Romans 5:17).

Given this commitment to life and humanity's sacred worth, we are troubled throughout this planet, as our brothers and sisters of African descent continue to live under the weight of oppression:

2.1 "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having

slain the enmity thereby And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:11-22) We receive the Word through the Apostle Paul that the LORD Jesus was sent to bring peace (Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 2:14) to the nations. Our goal is for a social and spiritual renewal of our cities, our towns, our states, our country, and our planet, and the Gospel stories tell us that such restoration requires a confession of our sins. We reject the false doctrine as though Racial Reconciliation could happen apart from collective Repentance of White Supremacy (Acts 17:30, Luke 19:8-10).

2.2 “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” and “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.” (John 8:32;John 14:6-7) We reject the false doctrine that love of country means avoiding telling the Truth about our history. Neighborly love mandates that the Black church speaks truth to power, in love, so that the Church Universal and the World can see where Christ is (Ephesians 4:15): in the lives of the oppressed (Matthew 25).

2.3 “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” and “And when [Jesus] had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Colossians 1:12-4; Luke 4:17-18) We reject the false doctrine that State-sanctioned Wrath is superior to God’s way of Forgiveness and Freedom. Black Churches proclaim the Lordship of Christ, who is the head of the Church Universal as well as all other institutions (Philippians 2:11, 1st Timothy 6:15) We believe that free societies operate in their healthiest states when models the example set by Jesus. Forgiveness, accountability, and restoration should be a community’s priorities when it comes to non-violent offenders of the law. Black Churches call for an end to the War on Drugs, militarized police, the School-to-Prison pipeline, and the closure of the privatized prisons. We support the on-the-ground grassroots efforts of the people of

Ferguson as well as [#CampaignZero](#).` Lastly, due to the fact that we value the sacred worth of all persons, and respect those in authority, we must all work together for background checks and gun control to ensure the safety of police officers and civilians alike.

·2.4 “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places” and “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Isaiah 32:17-18; Romans 14:17). We reject the false doctrine that Peace should be separate from Justice. Christian justice must include economic equality and opportunity for all (Jeremiah 22:13). Just as swords will be turned into plowshares, so must jailhouses be transformed into schoolhouses. Just as no one should be profiled or harassed because of the color of their skin, no one should be discriminated by employers on the basis of race, gender, religion or, creed (Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11). Human dignity is intrinsic to all human persons and therefore all work is valuable in God’s sight. Education and moral formation are the keys to delivering communities from racial oppression.

2.5 “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.” (John 18:36) We reject the false doctrine, as though the work of the Nation-State should be confused with the Peaceable Kingdom of God. No government official or arm of the State sits on Heaven’s throne, for only Christ reigns supreme. The Black Church calls on all religious bodies, governments and corporations here and abroad to practice the utmost humility in the quest for a Beloved Community.

Amen.

The authors and signatories of The Ferguson Declaration: A Black Lives Matter Creed declare the revealed truth that God is a God of the Oppressed for the salvation of the entire World. Black Churches and Christians worldwide affirm the statement that [#BlackLivesMatter](#). We invite all who are working peaceably for justice to participate in the [Black Lives Matter](#) movement and other likeminded organizations.

For the latest updates on The Ferguson Declaration: A Black Lives Matter Creed, follow us on Twitter at [@BLMCreed](https://twitter.com/BLMCreed)

We invite you to affirm the [Black Lives Matter Creed by signing here](#).