

**TO: Executive Council**

**FROM: Joint Standing Committees on Advocacy & Networking for Mission and Local Ministry and Mission**

**SUBJECT: #BlackLivesMatter,Too**

**Resolved**, that the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church, meeting in Linthicum Heights, Maryland, October 24-27, 2014, affirm, in response to our baptismal covenant “*to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves, and to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being*”; yet, in light of the violent deaths of Black youth that have recently dominated the news media, we confess that we as a society have failed to respect the dignity of every human being, we remember and lament the shooting deaths of Jordan Davis, a 17-year old Black boy, killed in 2012 for playing loud music in a car at a gas station in Jacksonville; Trayvon Martin, a 17-year old African American boy, killed in 2012 while walking home after buying snacks in Sanford, Florida; Renisha McBride, a 19-year old African American girl, shot to death in 2013 while seeking help for car trouble on a front porch in Detroit; and Michael Brown, an 18-year old African American boy killed by a police officer this year, 2014, in the middle of the street in Ferguson, Missouri; and other such deaths; and in response to our church’s adoption of the Anglican Marks of Mission, specifically Mark 4, which says, “*to seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation,*” that **#BlackLivesMatter,Too**; and be it further

**Resolved**, that the Executive Council urges the church, its dioceses and congregations, clergy and lay leaders, and all Episcopalians to respond faithfully to the call to action that **#BlackLivesMatter,Too** requires, by responding with prayer, community dialogue and partnerships, Christian Formation education that teaches anti-racism principles and behavior, and sermons and homilies, and by standing in solidarity in valuing and protecting Black and other people of color who are discriminated against, harassed, bullied, profiled, or otherwise treated unfairly and harmed because of race or the color of their skin; and be it further

**Resolved**, that the Executive Council reaffirms the teachings contained in the House of Bishop’s Pastoral Letter on “the Sin of Racism,” March 1994, [found at [http://www.episcopalarchives.org/AfroAnglican\\_history/exhibit/pdf/awakening\\_pastoralletter.pdf](http://www.episcopalarchives.org/AfroAnglican_history/exhibit/pdf/awakening_pastoralletter.pdf)], that

*Racism perpetuates a basic untruth which claims the superiority of one group of people over others because of the color of their skin, their cultural history, their tribal affiliation, or their ethnic identity. This lie distorts the biblical understanding of God’s action in creation, wherein all human beings are made ‘in the image of God.’ It blasphemes the ministry of Christ who died for all people, ‘so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal*

*life.' It divides people from one another and gives false permission for oppression and exploitation.*

and be it further,

**Resolved**, that the Executive Council remind all members of the church to answer the call, in the words of the House of Bishops in their subsequent 2006 Pastoral Letter "A Call to Covenant," [found at [http://archive.episcopalchurch.org/3577\\_73047\\_ENG\\_HTML.htm](http://archive.episcopalchurch.org/3577_73047_ENG_HTML.htm)] that

*This House of Bishops, meeting in Hendersonville, North Carolina on 21 March 2006, which is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, commit ourselves as bishops to discern and confess our own prejudice and complicity in the pervasive sin of racism, to confront it, and make amends for it in intentional ways every time we gather as a House. We ask the Holy Spirit to empower the House to fully live into this covenant, and we invite the members of this Church to covenant with us, in the following actions personally, corporately, and globally. With God's help, we will:*

- *renew our commitment to the 1994 pastoral letter, "The Sin of Racism"; take responsibility to expose, dismantle and heal those situations of injustice based on racism;*
- *seek forgiveness for our lack of charity and consciousness in recognizing those situations which degrade the image of God in our neighbors;*
- *make amends for our undeserved position and benefit as a result of unjust situations both now and in the past;*
- *empower all members of God's human family, that they may live into the fullness of what God intends;*
- *encourage the larger church to continue and expand its work of education, spiritual formation, and anti-racism training, that all might discover the riches of God's diverse creation, especially in those who differ from us;*
- *advocate for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, our respective dioceses, the parishes which comprise them, and our governments, as well as our own households, that God's desire may become increasingly evident for all of humanity;*
- *recruit and empower people of all races and ethnic origins as leaders in our church, and as members of all boards, agencies, commissions, and committees;*
- *dedicate equitable resources for all races and national origins in the funding of theological education for all ministries, lay and ordained;*
- *advocate for continued response to the sinful legacy of slavery; expose situations of environmental racism and classism which poison and threaten the poorest among us, and seek justice for those communities; and*
- *advocate for compassionate care of the stranger in our midst, and demand just immigration policies.*

*Having entered into covenant with each other to root out the sin of racism in very specific personal and corporate ways, we, the bishops of the Episcopal Church, invite all members of our Church to join us in this mission of justice, reconciliation, and unity. This is an expression of our commitment to the fundamental covenant each of us entered into at the moment of our baptism.*

and be it further

**Resolved**, that the Executive Council direct the Office of the General Convention to convey to each diocesan and mission area bishop, Standing Committee and Diocesan Council, a copy of this resolution and the House of Bishops 1994 on “the Sin of Racism” and 2006 Pastoral Letters on “Call to Covenant” with the request that they be shared with their congregations.

### **EXPLANATION**

There have been numerous instances of racist acts perpetrated against Black youth and men based on their race and the color of their skin in recent news cycles. The deaths of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, FL, and Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, and the ensuing community protests point to serious issues of violence, abuse of power, distrust, anger, frustration, and injustice, which require community engagement to transform the racism at the root of the issues.

The church is called to lead God’s people and to respond to the world with the Gospel imperative of proclaiming God’s love and loving our neighbors as ourselves. This resolution is a reminder to the church’s members of the church’s anti-racism teachings and a call to renew by word and deed our covenant to join in the mission of justice, reconciliation and unity in our own communities.