



DISCIPLES REFUGEE & IMMIGRATION MINISTRIES

Disciples Responses to Alleged Anti-Immigrant Comments Against Haitians, Salvadorans, and Africans

Questions? Contact Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Director, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries:
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Rev. Terri Hord Owens, General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S. and Canada.

Find comments at: <http://disciples.org/from-the-gmp/gmp-speaks-comments-re-haitian-african-immigrants/>:

“As a follower of Jesus Christ, as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, I must speak to repudiate the [comments](#) from the President of the United States on Jan. 11, 2018. As Christians, we believe that all humans are made in the image of God and therefore worth of dignity and respect. We are called to love, and Jesus tells us that we will be known as his disciples if we have love for one another. (John 13:35).

There are certain roads that love cannot take. Love cannot take the road of discrimination; love cannot take the road of hate; love cannot take the road of oppression; love cannot take the road of racism; love cannot take the road of gender bias; love cannot take the road of homophobia.

There is no justification for these hateful and racist comments. *None*. As the nation prepares to honor the birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., I remind all those who claimed to be followers of Christ of Dr. King’s admonition to speak up against injustice, to work for human dignity, for peace, and for equal justice for all. Dr. King was most disappointed that those who called themselves Christians were telling him to wait until a more judicious time for action.

Today it is clear that we still cannot wait. I call upon those who believe in the dignity of all persons to not only speak, but work together to rid our nation of systemic injustice, to register to vote, and hold those who are not in solidarity with basic human dignity and justice to account. Acts of charity and songs of unity will not be enough to dismantle the structural injustice that exists in our society. We cannot allow such hatred to stand unchallenged, and we cannot be silent or inactive in the face of words and actions that violate the Christian mandate to love all whom God has created.”

Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Director, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S. and Canada:

“Comments by the President allegedly spoken yesterday, in the context of bi-partisan efforts to seek ongoing security for the nearly 800,000 young adult “dreamers” who have worked, studied, and contributed without the benefit of status in this nation since arriving in the U.S. as immigrant children, were deeply offensive. Rather than agreeing upon a legislative fix to diminish the pain of family separations, the President’s messages instead piled pain upon pain for immigrants of Haitian, African, and Salvadoran descent who have contributed mightily to the strength of our nation and its communities and congregations. The further reality that such comments were made on the eve of the 8th anniversary of the 7.0 earthquake that inflicted devastation upon the island, killing 230,000 residents, displacing 3 million persons, and resulting in one of the world’s worst cholera epidemics, was particularly insensitive. (Continued)

Today we re-affirm the vitality of our Disciples Haitian congregations and the value of our long term denominational partnerships with Haitians in the U.S. and Haiti. TPS recipients within our congregations were deeply discouraged following the announced termination on Nov. 21st of TPS for 60,000 Haitians in the U.S. Since that time, affected communities have patiently endured the delayed posting of further guidance from DHS about re-registration requirements. We again strongly urge DHS to offer these guidelines immediately, as delays are already resulting in loss of jobs and family security among our congregations' families.

Likewise, in this week when nearly 200,000 Salvadorans have already suffered in hearing the announcement of loss of TPS for their population, further comments yesterday that degraded their value to the U.S. and disregarded the essential work they have provided to our communities for nearly two decades were damaging and inappropriate. Rather, we call upon the Administration to remember the assessment of our Creator that "God saw everything made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). We celebrate that, without exception, our God values persons of every background, every color, every heritage.

Therefore, we pray for continuing conversations to lead to a bi-partisan solution including ongoing protections for both dreamers and TPS recipients. We seek to replace exclusive statements, whether made in public or private, with messaging that demonstrates the shared and needed contributions of all humans to our societies; believing such goals are attainable because they are rooted in scripture that reminds us "the body does not consist of one member but of many" with "all members activated by the same Spirit." Therefore, we re-commit to our need to care for all; recognizing that "if one member suffers, all suffer together with it." (1 Cor. 12:14, 11, 26.)

Rev. Dr. Philius Nicolas, Disciples Evangelical Crusade Fishers of Men, Brooklyn, NY:

"Wherever Haitian communities are, both inside and outside the U.S., they are in malaise about the comments by the President. We have never heard such comments from high leaders that create hatred toward our community, promote white supremacy, and speak against people of color. We feel they are deeply inappropriate and unacceptable comments for a leader of the United States to make, and they are comments that threaten to place the U.S. into a deeply insecure situation.

Haitians fought side by side with American citizens in Savannah, Georgia to secure freedom for the United States. We urge U.S. leaders to remember our shared goals, and to speak about how many great doctors, business leaders, congregations, lawyers, and health professionals are here in the United States from Haiti. The United States does not become great by itself. All black persons, whether from Haiti or any African nation, contribute to the greatness of the United States. Therefore, all black persons from Haiti and African nations hope for an apology from the President and recognition of our long term partnerships."

Pastor Gabrielle Montillus, Pastor, Disciples Haitian Pentecostal Church, Salisbury, Md.

"Many of my community members felt sick to their stomachs from pain when they heard the comments said yesterday about our homeland. So many Haitians have helped the United States again and again, in the Revolutionary War in Savannah, Georgia nearly 240 years ago, and throughout the years since that time. I pray strongly for our leaders to take time to read the stories of our communities to learn about what we have contributed through the years. Members of my church are also suffering so much as they wait many weeks to receive guidance about what to do next, after having their TPS terminated on last November 21st. Many feel at risk to lose their jobs, because employers do not understand. We ask DHS to tell us in the Federal Register about what they should do next. I will continue to pray for our President and all of our leaders. I will keep on trying to comfort my community as they feel pain. And, my community will continue to strongly seek strength from our God."

For More Information, Programs, Preaching, and Guidance, Contact:

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<https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/refugee-immigration-ministries/>