

*SAN FRANCISCO BRANCH*

# NAACP

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Locking arms: What the NAACP and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are doing about race in America

We met for the first time two years ago. The occasion was a simple conversation between leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That unlikely meeting was a first. But it sparked insights about ways to work together to improve self-reliance and upward mobility for inner-city and minority families.

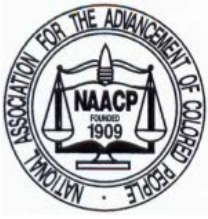
During our collaborations, we quickly felt deep respect for one another, even referring to ourselves as “brothers from another mother.” Our common bond as followers of Jesus Christ and as religious leaders—as pastor of the historic Third Baptist Church of San Francisco and NAACP chair of religious affairs, and as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—gave us a natural foundation from which to build a friendship as well as an opportunity to better appreciate each other’s unique perspective and experience.

Some might think us unlikely collaborators, but our respective organizations have connected in a significant way. Not as black or white, not as Baptists or members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but as children of God who are working to bring hope, happiness, and love to all of God’s children.

Our joint efforts have shown that we have far more in common than issues that, at first glance, might appear to divide us. Both of our organizations have learned lessons from the past. Both of us have been willing to listen to and learn from each other. Respect and cooperation have yielded the sweet fruit of reconciliation, admiration, service, and genuine love.

Unitedly we declare that the answers to racism, prejudice, discrimination and hate will not come from government or law enforcement alone. Solutions will come as we open our hearts to those whose lives are different than our own, as we work to build bonds of genuine friendship, and as we see each other as the brothers and sisters we are—for we are all children of a loving God.

We share deep sorrow for the senseless, heinous act of violence that needlessly took the life of George Floyd. We mourn with his family, friends and community. We likewise look on with sadness at the anger, hate, contempt and violence spilling onto America’s streets, devastating cities across the nation, and creating fear and anxiety in citizens across this great land.



The wheels of justice should move fairly for all. Jesus of Nazareth came that we might have life, and have it “more abundantly.” We should follow His example and seek for an abundant life for all God’s children. This includes protecting our brothers and sisters who have been wronged and bringing to justice those who have taken life or broken the law, thus robbing others of an abundant life.

What is the solution? Whether you are a believer or not, Jesus Christ taught an inspired model that leads to peace and harmony—to love God first, and then to love our neighbor as ourselves. We don’t pretend that either of these pursuits is easy, but we do declare that they yield the fruits the Lord promised.

We agree with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s statement, that “hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that.” It is this kind of love that inspires us to do the rigorous work of building bridges of cooperation rather than walls of segregation and alienation.

We call on people everywhere to join us in a journey of understanding and overcoming. As de Tocqueville said, America is great because she is good. It is paramount that we rediscover the goodness in each and every human heart. In this spirit, there are things every one of us can do.

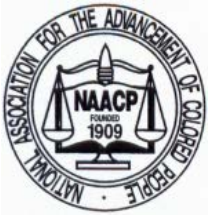
We invite all to pray to God that the people of this land will heed the Divine call to abandon attitudes of prejudice against any group of God’s children.

We also invite people of goodwill everywhere to look for ways to reach out and serve someone of a different background or race. Everyone can do something.

Prejudice, hate and discrimination are learned. Thus, we call on parents, family members, and teachers to be the first line of defense. Teaching children to love all, and find the good in others, is more crucial than ever. Oneness is not sameness in America. We must all learn to value the differences.

We likewise call on government, business, and educational leaders at every level to review processes, laws, and organizational attitudes regarding racism and root them out once and for all. It is past time for every one of us to elevate our conversations above divisive and polarizing rhetoric. Treating others with respect matters. Treating each other as sons and daughters of God matters. It is time for each of us to find ways to become part of the solution rather than the problem.

We likewise remind everyone that we must renounce illegal acts such as looting, destruction, and defacement of public or private property. Never has one wrong been corrected by a second wrong. Evil has never been resolved by more evil.



Arm in arm and shoulder to shoulder, may we strive to lift our brothers and sisters everywhere, in every way we can.

The two of us have lived 174 years between us. We first linked arms as friends and have now locked arms in love and brotherhood. The people of America can do the same.

By:

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