

Stand for hope, peace and freedom from racism at April rally

by Deb Vaughn

In August 2017 I joined hundreds of other ministers for the “Ministers March on Washington,” sponsored by the National Action Network. The march was billed as “The 1000 Ministers March” and was organized by the Rev. Al Sharpton to coincide with the 54th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

I was there with my clergy women’s affinity group, and marched with clergy from many faiths: Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Buddhists and Jews. We wore our stoles, kippahs, taqiyahs and robes. But, sadly, most of the marchers were persons of color. It was striking that the members of my clergy group were all Caucasian. We were some of the few white faces in a sea of color.

I have to tell you, it grieved me. Where were my white clergy brothers and sisters? Why did they not come? Is the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King’s “Dream” still viable? And how can I encourage other clergy to get involved in these public expressions calling for solidarity and change? I met men and women who were at the original march 50 years ago and stood at the Lincoln Memorial to hear King’s “I Have a Dream” speech.

Fast forward a few months. I found out about the ACT Now! Unite to End Racism rally (<http://www.rally2endracism.org>) April 3-5. I signed up!

ACT stands for:

AWAKEN oneself to the truth that racism is ever-present, deeply rooted in American culture and profoundly damaging to our communities.

CONFRONT racism, speak truth to power and stand up against injustice.

TRANSFORM the hearts, minds and behaviors of people and institutions.

This is the holy work we who are Jesus-followers are called to do, along with the interfaith community who has suffered because of the rise in racist and xenophobic actions in our nation. April 3-5 is just the start of a multi-year emphasis by the National Council of Churches and its partners, including the Alliance of Baptists, to address systemic racism. It is a beginning. A rallying point. A clarion call to change.

In the months since the Ministers March I have sought to learn how to change my own habits that are microaggressions or reflect ungodly attitudes. As I studied I was struck, over and over, by how as a woman of white privilege I do not “get” all the ways I have been hurting my neighbors with latent racist attitudes.

Now to you, my family of the Alliance of Baptists, I bring this call to action. **Join me** at the march on April 4th. The complete list of events is on the rally’s website (<http://www.rally2endracism.org>) and Facebook page. **Pray!!!** for the marchers, the

leaders, the speakers and even the weather! **Speak out** against racism wherever you see it. **Educate yourself** and accept that you, personally, need to change.

As a representative of the an Alliance of Baptists, I am chair for the Prayer and Spirituality Committee. We are a band of praying women, representing Jewish and Christian faith groups, covenanting to pray for one another and for our mutual desire to see an end to racism. It is a G-d-sized task!

A special plea from the Prayer and Spirituality Committee is that all of us join in prayer on Thursday mornings at 7 a.m. – wherever you are – for the march and all it represents. A special prayer devotional and focus is listed on the march's Facebook page and website every Thursday.

April is just a few weeks away, but I hope you will come to D.C., bring people from your congregations and join me as we stand for hope, peace and freedom from racism.

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1995399974062257/>

March website: <http://www.rally2endracism.org>

Weekly prayer emphasis: <http://www.rally2endracism.org/prayer/>

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