



## **WHAT WE SHOULD DO TO HEAL FROM MR. GEORGE FLOYD'S MURDER AND ITS AFTERMATH**

Dr. Warren H. Stewart, Sr.

June 2, 2020

The murder of Mr. George Floyd by Minneapolis police on Memorial Day ripped open the never-healed wound of racism in the USA. The widespread, pain-filled, angry protests that have ensued are a consequence of us being involuntarily invited to watch a real live execution, seeing Mr. Floyd beg to breathe, call for his deceased mother and go limp in death.

We are now suffering from PTSD as a nation. The horrific killing of Mr. Floyd occurred in the context of COVID-19, bitter, divisive partisan politics and no call for national unity from the White House.

Our communication about one another racially must change. Stop calling non-White people minorities, which means less than the majority. Identify African-Americans and other non-Whites as people of color. We are not less than White people and there is nothing minor about the way God created us. People of color are the majority of the human race and will soon be the majority in our country.

We must confess of America's originating sin of systemic racism. However, it requires humility, honesty and transparency to take this absolutely necessary action for us to begin to experience lasting racial healing.

From 1619 on, systemic racism has oppressed, abused, maligned, manhandled, mistreated and murdered people of color, especially African-Americans, both legally and illegally in this land. The White power structures in government, business and even religion have perpetrated and perpetuated the evil of systemic racism for over 400 years.

The U.S. Constitution with its promise to establish justice did not have women or people of color in mind when written in 1789. Although it has been amended to include justice for them, virtually every aspect of our lives continues to be infected with the malignant virus of racial prejudice. That's how we find ourselves in this ugly, deadly place even after having elected the first African-American president of the United States of America twice.

The informed knowledge of White privilege and "Black underprivilege" must become as common as the American dream. The former involves the acquired benefits of being White. The latter is the assigned punishments for being a person of African descent.

This brings us to a must for our healing—change. After realizing our context, rewording our communication about one another and confessing our national sin of racism, from the top to the bottom, we must repent of our perpetual transgression against people of color.

Repentance means going in the opposite direction. Those of us who have committed the sin of systemic racism, some, perhaps, unknowingly and unintentionally, must commit with our total beings to destroy racism in America. That will only be done when the mostly White power structures and people partner with African-Americans and other people of color as equals working towards equity for all in our lifetimes.

Context, communication, confession and change—that's what must be involved for us to heal from racism, Mr. George Floyd's murder and its aftermath.

*Dr. Warren H. Stewart, Sr. is senior pastor of the First Institutional Baptist Church, Phoenix, chairs the African-American Christian Clergy Coalition, led the Victory Together Campaign that won a Martin Luther King, Jr./Civil Rights Day in Arizona by a vote of the people in 1992, and is a husband, father of seven children and grandfather of 13.*

