



# **National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.**

## **President Jerry Young's Perspective on Social and Justice Reforms**

June 29, 2020

Our nation exploded in its response to the senseless killing of George Floyd. While the video of the last 8 minutes and 46 seconds of his life incensed the world, the ensuing protests were also founded on the backs of countless Black men and women who lost their lives at the hands of rogue policemen, those who took oaths to guard and protect the lives of those whom they serve. Mr. Floyd's heinous and merciless death served as the catalyst that spurred thousands, not only in Minneapolis, but across America and indeed the world to rise up and demand justice as their clarion call was "Enough is Enough!"

Our young people took to the streets and protested, expressing the anger and the hopelessness they felt as they, too, watched and remembered the untimely fate of Mr. Floyd and so many other black men and women. They took to the streets in a manner that relates to an altar call to America, where they laid out their hurt, their anger, their frustration and their feeling of helplessness. They released their pent-up emotions as they called for respect, for equal access, equal opportunity and the end of unfounded, senseless deaths of Black Americans, purely because they were Black. They protested for change, real change, for them, their future and their children's future.

I confess that I, too, felt their anger, their hurt, their concern for the future of their children and all of our children. As a black man in America, the father of two daughters and grandfather of three granddaughters and two grandsons, I cringe at the thought of such atrocities and the possibility that my grandsons and

granddaughters could face such violence. I, too, am disgusted, and I, too, declare that there must be change, substantive change in America in how she responds to the racial injustices that people of color experience on a daily basis.

I could write a discourse arguing that the actions of all of the policemen in this heinous act and those of the past are vehemently against the word of God by citing the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not murder." (Exodus 20:13 KJV) or by reminding us that all men are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28 KJV) and therefore have value, significance, dignity and purpose in life. Though significant and important, the aforementioned truths are engraved in the hearts and minds of Christians, and I posit further, in the minds and hearts of moral and decent people world-wide. I choose rather to share my thoughts and desires on how we should respond to the disregard of black lives across our country and what we must do to realize social justice reform in America.

As president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. I offer a clarion call to National Baptists in particular and Christians in general throughout our country, to respond to a Biblically-based call to ban together to fight for power that leads to effective, sustainable social justice changes in America.

That clarion call for social and justice reform is two-fold.

**First, we must pray without ceasing.** (I Thessalonians 5:17 NIV) That is our responsibility, that is what we do as Christians! The most powerful tool that we have to effectuate change of any kind is prayer, prayer followed by Spirit-led action. In the wake of slavery, one of the most horrific times in history, through the Jim Crow Era, the Civil Rights Movement and today, African Americans gathered to pray. The church, subsequently, has been the rallying center for people of color to come together, pray, plan, persevere and yes, organize protests. I support the peaceful protests, protests that are purposeful, ones that are focused and driven to resolve and create a positive change in our country. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Riot is the language of the unheard." Protesting has been an effective voice to garner attention and lead to reform as evidenced by the protests of the 60's.

Since its inception in 1896, the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. has withstood the test of time and has been on the frontline wielding leadership and influence on issues relating to the church and societal issues utilizing prayer as its

most powerful weapon. I call upon the NBC, USA, Inc. to continue to pray faithfully and fervently to our God who can and promises to heal our land if we pray as directed in 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (KJV)

## **We must PRAY**

- for the church universal, that she will no longer be the insipid salt of the world that has lost its savor, but will be the salt of the world that uses its Biblically-based, flavorful and powerful influence in the world according to Godly principles;
- for the church universal, that she will no longer hide her light under a bushel, but will be the light in darkness that illuminates the path of mankind to Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Light;
- for the family of George Floyd and all who have met untimely, horrific deaths at the hands of ruthless, uncaring, racially insensitive people; that our God will comfort them, sustain them and grant them the realization that justice and mercy will prevail.
- for the fortitude and strength of all people to remain vigilant and peaceful during this season of unrest;
- for the ills of all mankind, for all humanity;
- for the soul of America to return to and live out the founding principles of our country: "All men are created equal," and "In God We Trust;"
- for those leaders who lead our country, who make the decisions;
- for community as well as political leaders who will stand for justice; speak for those who are voiceless or unheard; and fight ultimately for the constitutional rights of all Americans;
- for hearts and minds of those who are not Christians, to surrender their hearts, their minds and their souls to Christ.

Medgar Evers, the martyr and civil rights icon, said (from the perspective of racial and political reform), "Our only hope is to vote." Therefore, **our second clarion call is to vote in numbers like never before.** We must be committed to ensuring that all persons of age are not only registered to vote, but are educated, have access to, and exercise that fought for and died for right to let our voices be heard through the power of the vote. We must be informed and involved in the political process

so that we make wise decisions and elect persons who have the interest and fortitude to be men and women of moral integrity, conviction and character.

### **We must VOTE**

- for moral, decent and competent leaders in all levels of government, national, state and local who will serve, not only in the White House, but as district attorneys, representatives, senators, governors, mayors, etc.;
- for leaders who will build a moral and political infrastructure that ensures equity, equality, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness promised in the Declaration of Independence for all Americans;
- for leaders who are steadfast in their resolve to improve the material conditions of the lives of all Americans, for we all are vulnerable, (it doesn't matter the color or the creed, it doesn't matter your stature in life, it doesn't matter your level of education, nor does it matter if you wear the cloth), not just the least amongst us in our communities but for all who are terrorized by the racially motivated harassment, abuse and disrespect enacted on them;
- for leaders who are making decisions about and for our community, who have the ability and the good conscious to make a decision for the good of all within our communities;
- for leaders who have a moral consciousness to uphold and abide by the vision of the preamble to the Constitution of the United States "to form a more perfect Union."

To that end, I call upon all of our constituent pastors and churches to prepare to participate in our effort to respond in a vary tangible way through ensuring that we all are registered, educated and assured of our access to voting. We must work diligently to increase the participating electorate within our community, and, we must show up at the polls in unprecedented numbers to elect persons who are competent, Christian, compassionate and committed to the principles and the precepts of the constitution that guarantees every American the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.