

# APPENDIX E

## buddhists for racial justice

may all beings be free from harm

### An Open Letter

To Buddhist Teachers, Monastics, Priests,  
Leaders, Ministers, Practitioners, and  
Clergy

*(you are invited to endorse this letter, below  
(<http://buddhistsforracialjustice.org/an-open-letter/#endorse>))*

As Buddhist teachers and leaders we are deeply shaken and saddened by the intentional and premeditated murder of nine worshippers at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina on June 17, 2015. We send our heart-filled condolences to the families, loved ones, church, and communities, who have experienced this grievous loss.

While this terrorist act was apparently perpetrated by a single individual consumed by racial hatred and a desire to ignite a race war, the soil in which this massacre took root is the legacy of slavery, white supremacy, Jim Crow laws, lynchings, and the resulting racial inequalities and injustices that persist in our individual and collective consciousness and institutions. The

daily experience of violence against people of color has become more recently visible through highlighted media coverage of the ongoing brutal treatment and killings of unarmed African-Americans by law enforcement agents across the country.

As Buddhists we realize the interdependence of all of our experiences—and that violence towards one community is violence perpetrated upon us all. As spiritual leaders, we must be committed to healing the wounds of racism that are such a primary and toxic part of the landscape of our country. This calls on those of dominant white communities to inquire deeply into and transform patterns of exclusion to power, inequity in resources, unseen bias, and unexamined disparities in privilege. There is an urgency to affirm that Black Lives Matter and work with religious and secular communities to respond to racial injustice.

In this time of grieving and cultural trauma continuing from the mass killings in Charleston and the systemic violence by law enforcement groups against African Americans, other people of color and indigenous peoples, we call on teachers and leaders of Buddhist communities to respond definitively by connecting spiritual intentions of non-harm with meaningful and tangible action, including: turn towards the collective suffering of race/hate violence and white dominance that our society is experiencing, rather than ignore it.

We advocate our Buddhist spiritual leadership (in all its diverse lineages and traditions) to address the current events in our teachings, dharma talks, our meditations, our community meetings, our dharma classes, our practice sessions, and to ask our individual Buddhist sanghas to join in the greater spiritual communities of faith in solidarity with the families of Emanuel AME Church and the broader African American community. We also encourage your active call for changes in gun laws to help prevent further loss of life, and destruction of our families and communities.

We believe it is especially important that as Buddhist teachers and leaders, we encourage the white members of our community to continue to awaken to the history and dynamics of white privilege and the impact of unconscious collective racial bias. In a parallel way, it is essential that people of color continue to

investigate their own unconscious patterning that perpetuates the suffering of racism. As support for these processes, and more broadly for activism dedicated to racial justice, we are offering two versions of a “Call to Engage.” One, available [here](http://buddhistsforracialjustice.org/call-to-white-buddhists/) (<http://buddhistsforracialjustice.org/call-to-white-buddhists/>), is for white members of our community, and the second, for members of color, is forthcoming (you can sign up [here](http://buddhistsforracialjustice.org/call-to-poc-buddhists/) (<http://buddhistsforracialjustice.org/call-to-poc-buddhists/>) to be notified of its arrival).

Together may we help serve the creation of Beloved Community—a society that is just, equitable, grounded in respect and love.

With prayers for peace, healing and awakening,

Open Letter : Signatures

*William Aiken, Buddhist writer and organizer*  
*Ayya Anandabodhi, Aloka Vihara Forest Monastery*  
*Acharya Dale Asrael, Shambhala International*  
*James Baraz, Insight Meditation Community of Berkeley and S*  
*Santussika Bhikkhuni, Karuna Buddhist Vihara and Buddhist C*  
*Amma Thanasanti Bhikkhuni, Shakti Vihara , Awakening Trut*  
*Bhikkhu Bodhi, Buddhist Association of the United States*  
*Sylvia Boorstein, Spirit Rock*  
*Emily Bower, Shambhala*  
*Tara Brach, Insight Meditation Community of Washington*  
*Hugh Byrne, Insight Meditation Community of Washington*  
*Acharya Christie Cashman, Shambhala*  
*Acharya Susan Chapman, Shambhala*  
*Lama Surua Das. Dzoachen Center*

Signatures

**Name \***

(please put your whole name, first and last, here)

**Email Address \***

**Location \***

(City, State)

**Are you a Buddhist Dharma teacher? \***

- Yes
- No

**Sangha or Affiliation**

**How do you identify racially? \***

This information will help us keep future communication relevant. Thank you!

- Person of Color
- White
- Prefer not to state
- Other:

**Submit**

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