

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

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Our Mission

The Chronicle is dedicated to serving the residents of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County by giving voice to the voiceless, speaking truth to power, standing for integrity and encouraging open communication and lively debate throughout the community.

It's time for a new fight against hate

A white man enters a black church during prayer and Bible study, spends an hour with parishioners then executes nine of them. This horrific episode at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, on June 17 has aroused black church members and leaders, and people of all races nationwide, including in Winston-Salem. How could this happen in 2015?

The Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, president of the N.C. NAACP, gives a brief history of the black church in which the nine people died – including its pastor and state lawmaker, Sen. Clementa Pinckney – and others were injured.

“Emanuel A.M.E. Church's congregation was formed in 1791 by free and enslaved African-Americans. Denmark Vesey, one of the founders of the congregation, orchestrated a slave rebellion uncovered in 1822. Thirty-five slaves were executed and white mobs burned the church in retaliation for the revolt plot. The congregation rebuilt the church and met until 1834, when the state legislature of South Carolina banned black churches. They met secretly until Emancipation in 1865.”

16th Street Baptist Church was bombed on a Sunday morning in Birmingham in 1963. Four little girls died and others were hurt. There was an atmosphere of hate in Birmingham, all the way to the government.

The Charleston, S.C., area has a history of hate-mongering, too. Black people have been targeted for a long time there. Before the church members were killed, a North Charleston police officer fatally shot an unarmed African-American man in the back as he fled from the officer.

Black people have weathered all kinds of evil over 400 years in America. From lynchings, to bombings, to decapitations, to rapes and other forms of torture, to church burnings, African-Americans have been subjected to inhumane treatment because of race.

The Black Church is one of the stalwarts of African-American society. Of course it will be targeted by the hatemongers who want to destroy the black race. All kinds of people are appalled that something like this could happen today. But the elements that fueled the hatred over the centuries exist today, so the evil persists.

A 21-year-old white man has been arrested as the killer in the Charleston massacre. White supremacy material has been found in his possession. His manifesto has surfaced. He has embraced the Confederate flag. This means that this young man was taught hate or was introduced to hate at a young age. Evil is being passed on from generation to generation.

Elements such as the Internet and social media have made it easier to fuel the education of hate. Information is available at the click of a mouse. People feel freer to let their vile and hatred be known.

History is repeating itself. From voting rights to economic rights to civil rights, African-Americans are targets.

Just as African-American leaders of the past, Barber issues a plea.

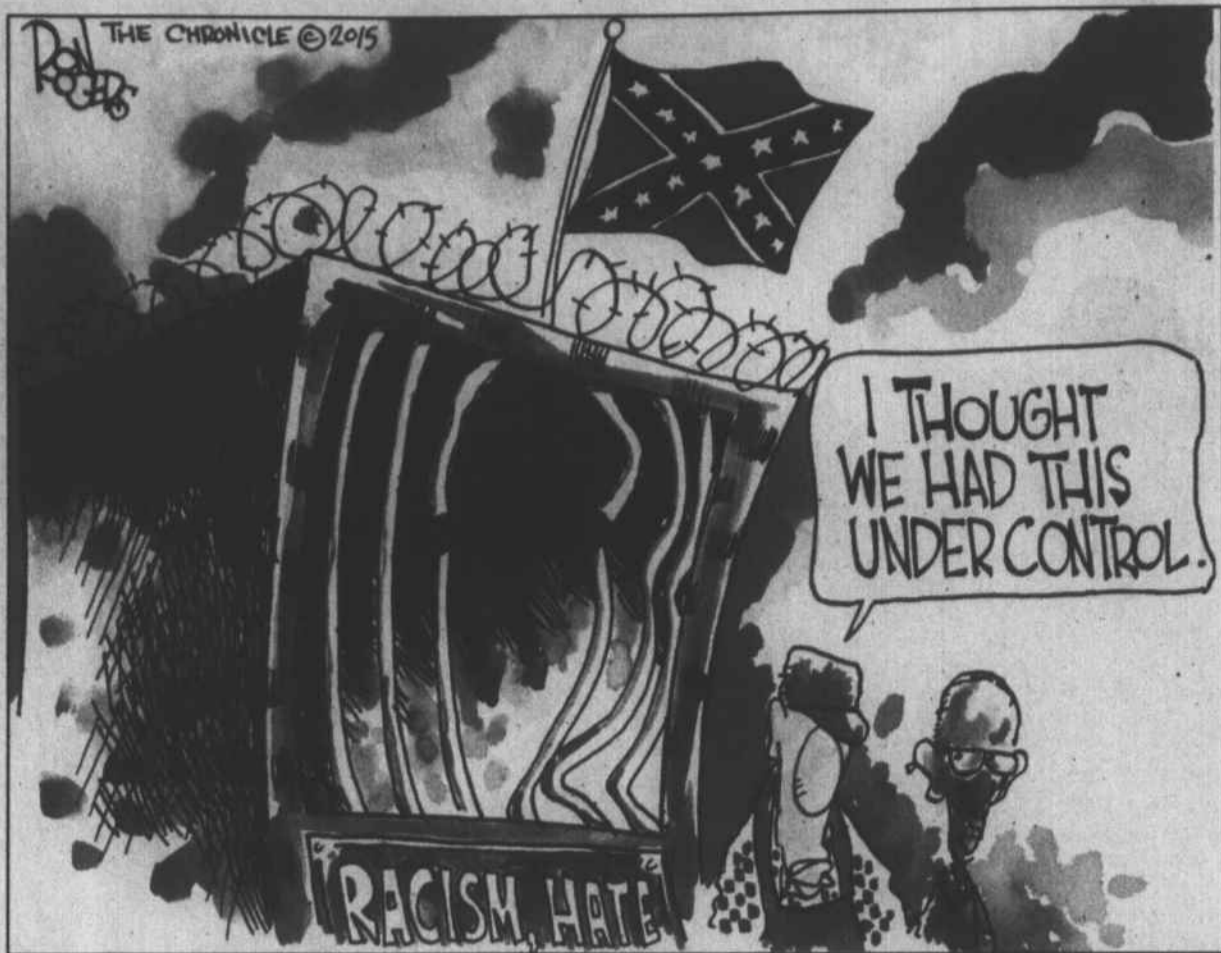
“We must rededicate ourselves, black and white, to the battle against white supremacy.”

In the aftermath of the Birmingham bombing in 1963, civil rights and justice communities took not a single step backward. People of all races stepped forward together. Let us do so again.”

This time, the movement forward will involve an African-American society that is different from the one in 1963. African-Americans have made many gains since then. The movement forward will need to unite a Black America that has resources yet might have forgotten about the past struggles. The Black America today has become comfortable in its new status.

However, as the recent killings of unarmed African-Americans show, racial hate still exists. Therefore, a new fight must gain momentum.

“The Charleston, S.C., area has a history of hatemongering, too. Black people have been targeted for a long time there.”



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stand against evil acts of violence and hate

To the Editor:

I was sickened to learn nine parishioners [of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church] were murdered in Charleston [S.C.], in a disgusting act of violence. The pastor of the church, Reverend Clementa C. Pinckney, who was also a South Carolina State Senator, as well as North Carolina State Senator Malcolm Graham's sister, were among the nine.



Adams

These senseless murders are incredibly heart-breaking. I will be keeping the family and friends of all of the victims, as well as the entire Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church and surrounding community in my prayers.

Today we must join together to stand against evil acts of violence and hate. I hope to see justice prevail in this case.

U.S. Rep. Alma S. Adams (NC-12)
Washington, D.C.

Unite to seek end to violence, hatred in U.S.

To the Editor:

Dylann Storm Roof, 21, admits that on Wednesday evening [June 17], he killed nine men and women during a prayer meeting at Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, a Black congregation in Charleston, S.C., in an attack that has been labeled a hate crime. The family of Rev. Depayne Middleton, 49, who was killed in the attack, released the following statement:

The very thing many of us fight against – a deeply masked and far reaching culture of violence in our society – has devastated our family. This past Wednesday night during Bible study and prayer service, a gunman filled with a racist heart entered the historical Mother Emanuel A.M.E. Church of Charleston, South Carolina, and opened fire on the 12 persons gathered there. Only three people survived the attack.

Our loved one, Rev. Depayne Middleton, was among those killed. Ever since her death was confirmed, our family has been met with unspeakable pain and grief. Our hearts are troubled, but our faith remains steadfast, trusting and believing in God's power to mend our broken hearts.

At this time of grave personal loss, we ask you for two things. First, please keep our family and our church community at Mother Emanuel A.M.E. in your prayers.

Next, please move away from the sidelines and unite together – regardless of your faith or religious practice – to seek an end to hatred and violence.

What happened to our family is part of a larger attack on Black and Brown bodies. To impact change, we must recognize the connection between racism, hate crimes and racialized policing. While the focus for this specific attack was on African-Americans, we all have a responsibility to seek not only justice for the victims, but an end to racial injustice.

We should put our faith to action, making a conscious decision to be more than empty drums that have long lost their melodies. In South Carolina the Confederate flag – an unequivocal symbol of hate – remains on statehouse grounds. We must demand the flag be removed immediately – we cannot let icons of racism fly free within our society.

We call on all people, public officials, faith leaders and Americans from all walks of life to help address the festering sores of racism as it spurs an unforgiving culture of violence. This is a big task but may become more manageable if we work together and if all people see the attack in Charleston as an attack on their own families and loved ones.

Family of Rev. Depayne Middleton, killed while at prayer service and Bible study
CHARLESTON, S.C.

Pray for justice, love and against forces of racism

To the Editor:

In response to the act of racial terror last night [June 17] at the historic Emanuel A.M.E. Church – a beacon of light and a force for liberation and justice for nine score years in our nation's history – the NC NAACP and Forward Together Moral Movement call on all North Carolinians to action in prayer and fasting.

We call on people of conscience and of all faiths to pray for justice and love and against the demonizing forces of racism.

We extend our prayers to Emanuel A.M.E. Church, to the families of those who were shot and killed.

We ask for prayers of faith for all people to not only challenge overt expressions and actions of racism, but to challenge, as this church has done throughout its history, policies that have a disparate impact on African-Americans and other minorities like the denial of Medicaid expansion, voter suppression, cutting funding of public education, denying living wages and labor rights. All of these are issues that Emanuel A.M.E.'s late minister, Rev. Clementa Pinckney, cared about.

Let us join Rev. Pinckney's family and the millions who have been traumatized by this gun violence in

reminding ourselves to hate the evil, but to somehow find the grace to forgive the perpetrator, while never relinquishing our commitment to the cause of justice. We know that hate cannot drive out hate; evil cannot drive out evil; and violence cannot drive out violence. Only love and justice can overcome them.

Emanuel A.M.E. Church's congregation was formed in 1791 by free and enslaved African-Americans. Denmark Vesey, one of the founders of the congregation, orchestrated a slave rebellion uncovered in 1822. Thirty-five slaves were executed and white mobs burned the church in retaliation for the revolt plot. The congregation rebuilt the church and met until 1834, when the state legislature of South Carolina banned black churches. They met secretly until Emancipation in 1865. That a congregation so rooted in the battle against white supremacy should suffer such violence at the hands of a twisted white supremacist is a bitter irony, but we must rededicate ourselves, black and white, to the battle against white supremacy.

In the aftermath of the Birmingham bombing in 1963, civil rights and justice communities took not a single step backward. People of all races stepped forward together. Let us do so again. Let us honor the deaths of these wonderful human beings. Let us continue their quest for righteousness and justice and equality. Not just with cute platitudes and post-mortem words, but with courageous actions and deeds.

- *Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, President, NC NAACP and Architect, Forward Together Moral Movement
- *Rev. Michelle Laws, Executive Director, NC NAACP
- *Ms. Carolyn Q. Coleman, 1st Vice President, NC NAACP
- *Ms. Carolyn McDougal, 2nd Vice President, NC NAACP
- *Rev. Dr. T. Anthony Spearman, 3rd Vice President, NC NAACP
- *Mr. Courtney Patterson, 4th Vice President, NC NAACP
- *Rev. Curtis E. Gatewood, HKonJ Coalition Coordinator
From Raleigh, N.C.

The nine who were killed have been identified. They are:

- *Rev. Clementa Pinckney
- *Rev. Sharonda Singleton
- *Myra Thompson
- *Tywanza Sanders
- *Ethel Lee Lance
- *Cynthia Hurd
- *Rev. Daniel L. Simmons
- *Rev. Depayne Middleton-Doctor
- *Susie Jackson