

OPINION / FORUM

No sanctuary: why black churches are still under attack



**Matthew Drayton**  
Guest Columnist

Like most Americans, I woke up this morning [June 18] to the news of another attack on a Black church. Nine people were shot to death during Bible study in Charleston, South Carolina. This time, the alleged shooter is a 21-year-old white male who looks like he wouldn't harm a fly.

While the motives for the attacks are still unclear, and under investigation, early reports indicate that this was another hate crime. FBI statistics from 2013 show that of 3,407 single-biased hate crime incidents, 66 percent were motivated by anti-black or African-American bias.

Black churches have been under attack for hundreds of years, dating back to slavery. Be it bombings during the civil rights movement, or Black churches being set on fire,

the Black church has been under perpetual attack since its inception. Why is a place that is supposed to be a sanctuary constantly under attack by people who want to exercise their racial hatred? How can people be that evil to go to a house of worship to murder and vandalize?

Do those who attack and vandalize churches do it because they feel churchgoers are peaceful, non-violent, and weak, or do they do it because of the symbolism, and to break their victim's spirit? Since as early as 1758, the Black Church has played a major role in the Black community, at times being the only place where Black people could get a break from oppression and express themselves.

What would make a 21-year-old shoot and kill nine people in a Black church in 2015? Trained hatred is likely the cause of this attack. A person born in 1994 cannot possibly hate persons of another race enough to murder them in cold blood, unless they were taught that hatred from the time they were a child. Babies don't come



Mother Emanuel A.M.E. Church, Charleston, S.C.

into this world hating anyone!

It's clear the Black Church is still viewed as the foundation of the Black community. It's also still a prime target for those who want to hurt the Black

Movement. Intimidation didn't work then, and it won't work now.

The time has come for Black churches to implement security measures to protect themselves. I realize locked doors, metal detectors and armed security don't look good at a house of worship, but Black churches have been victimized too long. I truly believe no one would think twice if security measures were put in place at Black churches. Churchgoers should be allowed to worship without the fear of being attacked.

How many senseless hate crimes must we witness before we realize we are all in this together? I have spent the majority of my adult life working with people of all races and ethnicities and have learned that, if you invest a little time in getting to know and understand those who are different, you become more tolerant. Unless we stop teaching hate to our children, there will always be hatred in America.

If the alleged shooter in the Charleston murders is found guilty, his life and his family's lives will

change forever. The people who are responsible for his views and behavior will have to live with that. The nine victims of this tragedy have already paid the ultimate price, and their families lives will never be the same.

My heart goes out to the victims, their families, and the people of Charleston. The time has come for Black church leaders to protect their parishioners, and adapt to the times we live in. That is the only way the Black Church will become the sanctuary it is intended to be.

*Retired Army Sergeant Major Matthew R. Drayton is a corporate speaker, life coach, consultant, leadership expert and author of Succeeding While Black. He has also been mentoring youth for over a decade and is currently the Executive Director of Great Oak Youth Development Center, a Fayetteville, N.C.-based non-profit organization that mentors at risk youth. For more information, visit [www.MattDrayton.com](http://www.MattDrayton.com).*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We must move in new direction to end intolerance

To the Editor:

I offer my sincere condolences to the families of the nine members of Charleston's Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church who were murdered as they worshipped.

For those of us who lived through segregation and its violent aftermath, the pain and hurt re-emerge at times like this.

On the same day and in the morning, we watched America's first African-American woman be sworn in as the Attorney General of the United States of America; and later on the same day in the evening, we watched the news accounts regarding nine African American worshippers being gunned down in their church as they studied their Bible. From joy and

progress, we returned to unimaginable pain and suffering.

We can only hope that together, we can all recognize how far we have come, yet also realize how far we have NOT come.

These are the times that we as a nation, a state and a community must strongly move in a new direction of a sustained and determined effort to end racial intolerance and not let the hand of a tainted past pull us back or tarnish our future.

Our future is truly in all of our hands.



Spaulding

Ken Spaulding, Democrat N.C. gubernatorial candidate Durham

Community groups unite to increase diabetes awareness

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Diabetes is one of the leading causes of death in Forsyth County, and is linked to adult blindness, kidney disease and leg amputations, among many other health problems.

African-Americans are more than twice as likely to develop diabetes compared to whites. To try to increase awareness of diabetes in the community, Next Level Productions, Gramercy Research Group, DRL Toons and the Maya Angelou Center for Health Equity are partnering to host the Busta Brown's Summer Music Festival Diabetes Awareness and Health Fair on Saturday, June 27 from 12 to 4 p.m. at the Liberty Street Market, 1591 N. Liberty St.

The event is part of the Irene Wharton Lecture Series supported by funds from Wharton Gladden. The lecture series is named after Ms. Irene Wharton, a former resident of east Winston-Salem who died from complications of diabetes. The event is free to the public and will be co-hosted by local media personalities Busta Brown and Debra Terry. Musical artists will be on hand, including Adrian Durell, Michael Goldsmith, Karon Click and the Hotlicks, Genre, Dalton Village and Morning Glory. A fitness dance will be led by Praize Craze. Health screenings will also be available.

"This is a very important event for our community," said Dr. Ronny Bell, director of the Maya Angelou Center for Health Equity at Wake Forest Baptist Health.

Mayor urges Winston-Salem residents to support Charleston victims' families

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Mayor Allen Joines is urging city residents to support the family and friends of the victims of the shooting at Emanuel A.M.E. Church.

"I encourage every citizen of Winston-Salem to support those here who have been personally affected by the loss of family and friends," Joines said, "and to keep them, the victims, their families and the citizens of Charleston in their thoughts and prayers."

On behalf of the City Council and the citizens of Winston-Salem, Joines expressed his condolences in a letter sent June 18 to Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley.

Joines is also urging city residents to donate to two funds that have been established in the wake of the tragedy.

These funds are:

**\*The Mother Emanuel Hope Fund.** This fund, established by the city of Charleston, will provide direct financial support for the funeral and burial



Joines

expenses of the nine victims. Any funds remaining after the funeral and burial expenses are paid will be donated directly to the Emanuel A.M.E. Church for use as determined by its governance board. Donations to this fund are not tax-deductible.

These donations can be made:

--By sending a check to **Mother Emanuel Hope Fund, c/o City of Charleston, Post Office Box 304, Charleston, SC 29402**

--By stopping by any **Wells Fargo Bank** nationwide and making a donation to the fund.

--By going to [www.bidr.co/prayfor-charleston](http://www.bidr.co/prayfor-charleston) or texting "prayforcharleston" to 843-606-5995. Bidr is a company based in Charleston that helps raise funds for organizations and events.

**\*Lowcountry Ministries - Reverend Pinckney Fund.** This fund will be administered by the Palmetto Project (a South Carolina nonprofit dedicated to improving the lives of South Carolinians). All donations to this fund will support initiatives that Pinckney was passionate about, including his home church, vulnerable populations and youth projects. Decisions on the use of these funds will be made by a committee comprising members of Pinckney's family, colleagues, representatives from Emanuel A.M.E. Church, and other members of the community selected for their specific expertise. These donations will be tax deductible. Donations can be made:

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