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Black Lives Matter and the Costs of Calumny

By Chris Kellerman, S.J.

Voting is one of the most important duties of an engaged citizen.

Support the LOYNOPackVote Voter Registration Campaign by sharing this [link](#) with anyone interested in registering to vote in the November 3 elections.

JSRI Future Activities

October 2

Fr. Fred Kammer, SJ will keynote a webinar in St. Louis on "Voting: What's a Catholic to Do?" sponsored by the Seeds of Justice organization.

October 11

Fr. Kammer, SJ will provide a presentation on parish social ministry for parishioners of Holy Name of Jesus Parish here.

JSRI staff and associates—working from home—will continue monitoring local, state, and federal administrative, legislative, and judicial actions regarding our priority issues and the impact of Covid-19; participating in advocacy communications with authorities; recommending resources on our website and by social media; research and writing for our publications; and activating our advocacy network as appropriate.

JSRI Recent Activities

August 28

Dr. Sue Weishar spoke at an ecumenical [Prayer Service for Katrina Immigrant Workers](#), organized by JSRI, at First Grace United Methodist Church to remember and honor the important role that [immigrant workers](#) played in [rebuilding New Orleans](#) after Hurricane Katrina.

Fall 2020

Dr. Dennis Kalob is teaching two Loyola sociology courses (online) this fall. They are *Social/Political Inequality and Social Problems*.

September 4 and 17

Dr. Kalob participated in meetings of the *Laudato Si'* Work Group of the Catholic Climate Covenant.

September 9

Dr. Weishar participated in a planning meeting for the voter registration campaign, [LOYNOPackVote](#), of Student Life and Ministry and the SGA.

September 15

JSRI Advisory Board Chairperson Marcus Kondkar informed board members and the JSRI staff of the composition of the Executive Director Search Committee: he will co-chair the committee with the Jesuit Province Assistant for Social Ministry Mary Baudouin. Other Search Committee members are Ashley Howard, Beth Embry, and Brian Christopher, SJ. More information on the search will be forthcoming after preliminary deliberations of the committee.

September 22

Fr. Kammer, SJ was the (virtual) keynoter on Catholic Social Thought for the annual gathering of the Matthew 25 Giving Society of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe.

There's currently a strange debate occurring in the U.S. Catholic world: should Catholics support the official Black Lives Matter organization (BLM)?

Many Catholics already support BLM, of course. But [according](#) to some Church leaders, parts of BLM's vision [statement](#) are at odds with Church teaching. Most often cited as hostile to Christian values are BLM's views on the nuclear family, gender, and sexuality. Some clergy have said that Catholics should in no way support BLM, while others have suggested we can work for justice alongside BLM even while firmly rejecting some of its stances.



Photo from @chrishenry on instagram in Philadelphia, PA

Both of those responses are based on disinformation that has been spread about the organization.

Despite what some critics may say, BLM is not anti-family. Patrisse Cullors, who co-founded BLM along with Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi, describes in her memoir, co-authored with asha bandele, [When They Call You a Terrorist](#), how her father and brother were continually oppressed by the criminal justice system. Her father (whose Catholic family she writes about with warmth and admiration, noting their love of God) suffered from drug addiction, and her brother had a severe mental illness. Both were criminalized by the justice system for their diseases. Instead of "keeping it in the family" and not talking about her pain, Cullors reached out to other people in her life who became like family to her. They helped support her as she supported her father and brother.

This is the type of situation to which BLM's vision statement refers when it states the following: "We *disrupt* the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure *requirement* by supporting each other as *extended families* and 'villages' that collectively care for one another, especially our children, to the degree that mothers, parents, and children are comfortable" (emphasis added). BLM does not oppose having a spouse and children and caring for them. BLM instead encourages a more extensive care for one's family through building connections with one's neighbors, extended family, and wider community.

And when BLM talks about being queer-affirming and dismantling cisgender privilege, it is not trying to attack Christian values. It's trying to value Black LGBTQ people. BLM is aware of the tragically high suicide attempt [rates](#) among LGBTQ youth and that trans people of color are often victims of [violence](#). BLM is encouraging society to pay attention to the voices and experiences of some of the most vulnerable members of society. This is not anti-Christian; it is Christlike.

Due to the clamor of disinformation and confusing social media, many Catholics may not know that Cullors has firmly asserted that the organization is committed to non-violent direct action or that Tometi is a devout Christian who speaks frequently about her faith. BLM's critics seem intent on erasing the BLM's founders' voices and creating sensational distractions, adding injustice on top of injustice while systemic racism continues and more Black people are killed.

The Catholic Church in the United States has a [mixed](#) past when it comes to [racial justice](#). Let's have a stronger future. Let's all reject harmful doctrinal purity debates regarding BLM and instead use our energy to fight tenaciously for racial justice in our country. Rooted in Christ who came to announce freedom to the oppressed (cf. Luke 4:16-21), let us, with Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi, unceasingly proclaim that Black lives matter.

Monthly articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Loyola University New Orleans.

Please send feedback to jsri@loyno.edu

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