

JustSouth Monthly

JSRI Perspectives on FAITH DOING JUSTICE

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY NEW ORLEANS



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Number 98

August 2019

Bigots, Bullets and Blood:

400 years of white terrorism from Jamestown to El Paso

By Nik Mitchell, Ph.D.

It is ghoulish coincidence that, as of the writing of this essay, another act of domestic terrorism has happened in the same month that marks the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in the English colony of Jamestown. These men and women were not the first enslaved Africans in the Western Hemisphere, but it does mark the introduction of an ideology into the foundation of American civilization that stretches across the centuries from slave ports of Africa and the Caribbean to the auction blocks of Jackson Square, the burning of Rosewood, the detonating of a truck bomb outside the Federal building in Oklahoma City, a race riot in Charlottesville, and to a Walmart in El Paso in 2019 — white supremacy. In America, we often ignore the fact that white supremacy is one of the most consequential political ideologies in human history.

JSRI Future Activities

September 9

Fr. Fred Kammer will address the Jesuit Parish Justice Summit sponsored by the Ignatian Solidarity Network in Morristown, NJ.

September 23

Fr. Kammer will participate in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps board meeting in NYC.

JSRI Recent Activities

July 28

Dr. Sue Weishar was [quoted](#) in a front-page article of *The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate* about immigration issues in the Louisiana governor's race.

July 31

Dr. Dennis Kalob attended the monthly membership meeting of the activist group, Step Up Louisiana.

August 1

Dr. Weishar participated in a meeting of the LA Stop Solitary Coalition in Mid-City New Orleans.

August 7

JSRI Associate Mary Baudouin and Dr. Weishar attended a meeting in San Antonio that addressed human rights violations in private prisons.

August 10

Dr. Weishar participated in a planning meeting of the Gillespie-Senter Memorial Breakfast at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of New Orleans.

August 16

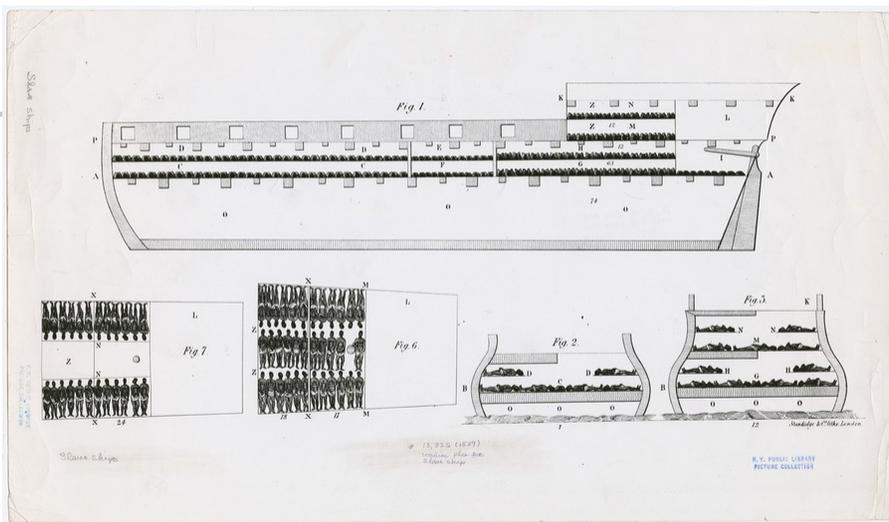
Dr. Kalob attended the Invest in Louisiana Policy Conference held in Baton Rouge and organized by the Louisiana Budget Project.

August 19

Classes begin at Loyola University. Dr. Kalob is teaching Social/Political Inequality for the Sociology Department this fall semester.

August 19

Fr. Kammer participated in the Jesuit Province Commission on Ministries meeting in St. Louis.



Schematic drawing of an English slave ship, possibly the Brookes, showing the layout of the cargo hold areas for transporting African slaves. From The New York Public Library.

First, I feel it is necessary to state the obvious—being a racist is not a mental health issue. People choose to be racist. The classic retort of “it’s the way I was raised” is a cop-out that screams, “I am not a self-actualized adult, and I have surrendered my ability to think.” Racism is, and the same is true for all forms of bigotry, an enabler that allows a racist to ignore the screams of their victims while they destroy their humanity, physically and spiritually. White supremacy is this brutality elevated to a political ideology, and its chief historical and contemporary currency is terrorism. This begs two questions. First, “What do the white supremacists want?” White supremacists want what their name suggests, a return to a society where they could oppress with impunity. Second, “What do white supremacists fear?” They fear churches next to synagogues next to mosques. They fear interracial and multilingual families. They fear being locked out of cities, suburbs, small towns, and rural villages. They fear a better way of being.

It is not the job of the targets of white supremacist terrorism to cure a virus that incubates in white society, because they, the targets, have no access to the spaces where this form of bigotry germinates. This is not merely a matter of educating the ignorant. Contrary to the widely taught maxim, racism is not an act of ignorance. It is a willful decision that requires a racist to deny all evidence, which is robust, that disproves their assertions. The demand from sections of white society that the marginalized attempt to convince the willfully racist of their humanness is grotesque. To be clear:

- Political correctness is not the problem.
- Bilingual communities are not the problem.
- Immigration is not the problem.
- Feminism is not the problem.
- LGBTQ visibility and rights are not the problem.
- The coming population shift is not the problem.

White supremacy is the problem.

White supremacy is a foundational idea in American culture, but so is the resistance, including white resistance, to white supremacy. I do not hold every white person walking the street as responsible for white supremacist terrorism, but I will lay the task of eradicating it at their feet because, in the end, only white people can truly banish this ideology to the dustbin of history. They must refuse to tolerate it in their midst, regardless of whether it is a view held by family member, a friend, or even a lover. In this case, silence is a form of complicity.

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Published by the Jesuit Social Research Institute
Office Phone: 504- 864-7746 | E-mail: jsri@loyno.edu | Website: www.loyno.edu/jsri
Mailing Address: 6363 St. Charles Avenue, Campus Box 94, New Orleans, LA 70118

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