

# NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

*A diverse community of 22 denominations & groups that serve their communities through 55,000 churches & 19.5 million congregants in Canada & the United States.*

President • Samuel Tolbert

General Secretary • Jeremy Bell

## **A Statement on Racial Injustices & Unrest in the United States**

*from the North American Baptist Fellowship & the Baptist World Alliance*

*June 3, 2020*

As more names are added to the cloud of witnesses to racial injustices in the United States — including Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd — we add our voices as Baptists inspired by the prophetic call to let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

The North American Baptist Fellowship brings together across racial and ethnic lines 19 million Baptists in 55,000 churches and 22 conventions and unions in Canada and the United States. The NABF is one of six regions of the Baptist World Alliance, a network of 240 Baptist conventions and unions in 125 countries and territories representing 47 million Baptists and 169,000 churches.

Driven by our faith in the Lord Jesus, we proclaim that:

We lament and decry the explicit and implicit racism that treats some Americans as second-class citizens merely because of the color of their skin. We affirm that all people are made in the image of God.

We lament and decry the death of any and all persons. We affirm that all deserve a chance for justice in the courts, not a lynching in the streets.

We lament and decry that unarmed blacks are three times more likely to be killed by police than unarmed whites. We affirm that black lives matter to God and should also matter to us.

We lament and decry a society where blacks are twice as likely as whites to be pulled over by police and four times more likely than whites to be searched once pulled over. We affirm that justice must be fair for all or it is not justice at all.

We lament and decry a judicial system where blacks are more likely to receive a harsher sentence for the same crime, and where a capital punishment verdict is most likely in cases with a black defendant and a white victim. We affirm the call for just mercy given by our Lord, who was executed by a corrupt system.

We lament and decry the militarization of police, which are particularly deployed to treat minority communities as an enemy. We affirm the teaching of the Prince of Peace that blessed are the peacemakers.

We lament and decry the use of tear gas and pepper spray — both of which are banned for use in warfare — on demonstrators. We affirm that the constitutional right to peaceably assemble should be respected.

We lament and decry the targeting of journalists by authorities for attack and arrest. We affirm the assessment of our Baptist brother Rep. John Lewis: “If it hadn’t been for the media — the print media and television — the civil rights movement would have been like a bird without wings, a choir without a song.”

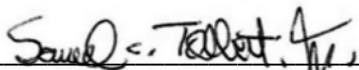
We lament and decry violence, including deliberate destruction or defacing of businesses, homes, and houses of worship. We affirm the biblical call to love thy neighbor as thyself, and we give thanks for public servants dedicated to protecting others.

We lament and decry the exploitation of Christian texts and sacred spaces to lend support to abuses of power. We affirm the witness of our Lord, who was born amid government persecution that stomped the breath out of the innocent.

We lament and decry the continuing consequences of slavery, Jim Crow, urban planning, redlining, and discrimination by financial institutions that still harm minority communities. We affirm that moving to our Baptist brother Martin Luther King Jr.’s vision of a “beloved community” will involve righting systemic wrongs.

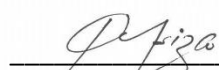
We lament and decry the racial gaps in wealth as well as access to education, healthcare, internet, etc., that have become even more obvious during the coronavirus pandemic as black Americans die at a rate of three times that of white Americans. We affirm that our nation must address structural inequalities, including the need to begin serious negotiations that will lead to addressing the ills of the past through acts of repentance and repair.

We lament and decry the times when our own Baptist communities have failed to act as the light of the world, instead joining the flames of hatred — and we humbly seek forgiveness from God and our neighbors we have failed. We affirm our commitment through word and deed to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly.



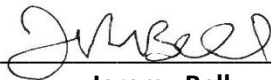
**Samuel Tolbert**

President, North American Baptist Fellowship  
President, National Baptist Convention of  
America



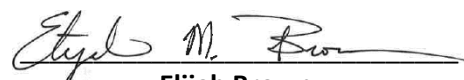
**Paul Msiza**

President, Baptist World Alliance



**Jeremy Bell**

General Secretary, North American Baptist  
Fellowship



**Elijah Brown**

General Secretary and CEO, Baptist World  
Alliance

*(lead drafting of statement by Brian Kaylor, Editor & President of Word&Way and Associate Director of Churchnet)*