

**The 152<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Kentucky Annual Conference**  
**Louisville, Bluegrass, Commonwealth Districts**  
**St. Paul A.M.E. Church Lexington, Ky**

**State of the Country**

*To Bishop Jeffrey N. Leath, Presiding Prelate of the Thirteenth Episcopal District; Presiding Elders' William R.T. Hale, Kenneth J. Golphin, and William W. Easley, Jr. Members of this 152nd Session of the Kentucky Annual Conference: We, the Social Action Committee present the following report on the State of the Country:*

The greatest threat facing the American people is the 45<sup>th</sup> president of these United yet clearly divided states. Many of the multiple crisis that we have found our nation in are the result of racist and self-serving policies that have been signed into by action the president and the Republican party. Below are several of the most pressing critical situations that we are facing as a nation:

1. The deaths of undocumented persons at American Detention centers that resemble German Concentration Camps along the border.
2. Rich white men who continue to amass wealth via the school to prison pipeline, have developed new streams of income funded by our tax dollars such as the “border to detention center pipeline” as well as the “border to illegal adoption pipeline”. Some children that were separated from their parents at the border have been placed in the American foster care system and are being adopted by white families without court objection or family consent. This is a form of human trafficking.
3. Human trafficking and sexual slavery are billion-dollar industries with an endless supply of potential victims. Young girls from broken homes are especially vulnerable to becoming victims sex trafficking.
4. Surge in anti-abortion laws. We are dangerously close to overturning Roe vs. Wade and denying women the right to make decisions about their own bodies without the fear of being thrown in prison.
5. Gun deaths continue to escalate at alarming rates yet the president continues to roll back gun laws making it easier for the white supremacists to legally obtain guns thus contributing the national epidemic of mass shootings in public places like Walmart, schools and malls. As of September 12, 2019, nearly 300 mass shootings have occurred with each one threatening to be greater than the last mass shooting.
6. And then there is the opioid epidemic that is overwhelmingly a problem in white communities, but we don't have to worry about that because judges and juries are finding fault with pharmaceutical companies and doctors absolving the white community of any kind of personal responsibility and intentionally overlooking the fact that many of these persons engaged in “doctor shopping.”

On a micro level we are a community in crisis due to following reasons:

1. Too many of our children are dying prematurely due to senseless acts of violence. Violence that is typically the result of poverty, lack of education, lack of clergy and community involvement and lack of after school resources.
2. Sexual harassment and sex crimes in black churches continue to be a problem that is constantly ignored or forgiven without justice or restitution for the victims.
3. In 1994 it was known that R&B pedophile Robert Kelly, illegally married Aaliyah Houghton, a marriage that her parents had annulled. However, after this Kelly would go on to molest countless poor, black girls and would even be acquitted of sex charges against a minor. After these series of events the black community continued to rally around the pedophile while making him a best-selling artist. During this time Kelly would win a Black Entertainment Television award and multiple N.A.A.C.P. awards. The black community rewarded Kelly because talking about sexual abuse in many black households is still taboo. It would not be until the Lifetime series “Surviving R Kelly” that the black community would be required to finally take a stand. During the airing of the series rape and sexual abuse crisis lines became overwhelmed with calls from victims of sex crimes.
4. Lack of intentional social justice engagement. Media attention seems to be the best way to get out attention. In June, Netflix premiered the docudrama “When They See Us” detailing the story of the Central Park Five victims. Although this story has been in the news for nearly two decades and the transcripts available upon request it was not until it hit the tv screen that we, as a community, became concerned with justice in mass numbers.

5. Violence and discrimination against members of the LGBTQ+ communities continue to need to be addressed especially within communities of colors due to interconnectedness of oppressive miss interpretations of scriptures.
6. And lastly, even with body cameras police violence is still a health risk for people of color and police face little to no consequences for turning off their body cameras when engaging civilians.

We the Social Action Committee propose the following solutions:

The 2020 presidential election will be one of the most important elections of our life time because the lives of many people hang in the balance. The 45<sup>th</sup> president of the United States has proven that he does not care about black and brown and bodies from Mexico to the Bahamas, to Puerto Rico.

First, we have to be intentional in 2020 and the 4 most important things that need to be done are:

- Voter education
- Voter registration
- Voter transportation
- And As we face the 2020 elections the fate of black and brown communities should not rest solely upon the shoulders of women. We need black men to vote in solidarity with black women.
  - We learned that in 2016
    - 89% of Black people voted for Hillary Clinton
    - 95% of Black women voted for Hillary Clinton
    - 80% of Black Men voted for Hillary Clinton

Next:

- We need to make every effort to ensure that the Parkland Survivors and *March for Our Lives Gun Proposal* is passed and that every presidential candidate makes this a priority!
- Pastors need to learn how to create dialogues around sexual abuse that is non-victim blaming and non-victim shaming. Pastors also need to examine the ways in which their sermons contribute to the silencing of victims.
- The church also needs to start holding those in power accountable for the way they handle clergy sex crimes and sexual assaults. Any time a criminal law is broken, it must be handled by the proper authorities to ensure that the victim is afforded a fair shot at justice.
- We need to be intentional about supporting black female victims of sex crimes because statistically we have a significantly lower reporting rate when it comes to these issues.
- We need to get involved with human rights agencies that assisting undocumented people along the border and in our communities. We need to make sure that anyone we vote for understands that those are God's children no matter where they hail from.
- And lastly, we as a community need to stop waiting for a tragedies and injustices within our communities to become Lifetime and Netflix specials before we decide to get involved and demand justice. Robert Kelly was allowed to victimize young black girls for 25+ years before our community finally decided to "Mute R-Kelly" rather than stepping in the name of love.

As we approach the 2020 church and presidential elections let us be mindful that we must not only look out for our own self-interest but also the interest of those who have no voice and remember that our greatest call as human beings is to ensure that all of God's children are afforded the opportunity to live the abundant life that Christ promised us. We need to be intentional in making sure that all of our actions lead to the greatest amount of good!

Respectfully Submitted:

The Reverends: Babydoll Kennedy, Louis Haynes, Erika Taylor, Revonda Bright, Tony Gooch, Sherry Miller Antonio Q. Stuckey. Sisters: Shirley Bunton, Tonya Clay, Angela Farrow, Robin Harris, Anna Johnson, Angela H. Jones, Diane Woods. Brothers: Lemuel Coffey, William Sam Green, Darnell Hipsher.