

Catholic Sentinel



News ▾ Parish/School Life ▾ Faith ▾ Viewpoints ▾ Obituaries ▾

Search GO

Black Catholic leader calls for 'a new era of authentic love and justice'



Protesters speak out against racism. (CNA)

Catholic News Agency
9/22/2020 7:26 AM

A Black Catholic leader said Friday that the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation is the wrong organization to lead an important movement against racism in the U.S., because, he said, it asserts a relativistic agenda that will cause harm to Black families.

"While it is important to affirm the truth that black lives matter, unfortunately, the Black Lives Matter organization (BLM) itself is ill-equipped to lead," Louis Brown wrote in an essay published Friday in First Things.

"Black lives do matter—the phrase is correct that all God's people deserve love, dignity, truth, and freedom. Our brothers and sisters who peacefully protest for justice with signs of 'black lives matter' march justly. However, there is a difference between asserting 'black lives matter' and the BLM organization itself, which is seriously flawed."

Brown, executive director of the Christ Medicus Foundation, is an attorney who worked for the Democratic National Committee, before his pro-life views led him to leave the position. Brown has worked for both Democratic and Republican lawmakers, and in a senior position in the civil rights office of the federal department of Health and Human Services.

The phrase "#BlackLivesMatter" began to trend online following the death of Trayvon Martin in 2012, and a movement grew amid protests and riots in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 after a young black man, Michael Brown, was shot in an altercation with a police officer.

Discover
JESUIT
HIGH SCHOOL

VIRTUAL
OPEN HOUSE

OCTOBER 11
1-4 PM

PRE-REGISTER NOW

LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE!

CORNELL ESTATES
Retirement & Assisted Living

Click or call 503-640-2884

Follow us on Twitter

The incident garnered additional attention because of a protest that took place later that evening outside St. Francis Medical Center, where the officers had been transported for surgery.

A video posted by a local journalist on the scene shows several men shouting at a group of police officers outside the hospital, and one can be heard shouting "I hope they [expletive] die."

Police arrested two people in connection to the protest, including the journalist who filmed the scene; the journalist was released later that night with a citation for obstructing a police officer.

Protestors blocked the path of the ambulance carrying officers to the hospital, and the LA County Sheriff's office said via Twitter: "DO NOT BLOCK EMERGENCY ENTRIES & EXITS TO THE HOSPITAL. People's lives are at stake when ambulances can't get through,"

News reports have not confirmed whether the protest at the hospital was an officially organized event convened by Black Lives Matter.

Protestors identifying themselves as being affiliated with Black Lives Matter have staged protests at police precincts across the country in recent months, with mobs destroying police precincts in Minneapolis and Portland in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd in May.

Black Lives Matter Los Angeles, a local affiliate of the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, did not respond to CNA's request for comment.

Pentecostal minister Eugene Rivers, director of the Seymour Institute for Black Church and Policy Studies, told CNA he considers it "a moral disgrace that the BLM organization did not condemn the shooting of the police officers in Compton, California. Under no circumstances could the moral and political failure to speak up be justified."

Rivers, who is Black, called the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation "a scam that exploits the suffering of Black people to promote gender ideology."

The minister said the organization "is peddling morally, tactically, and intrinsically stupid ideas," reminiscent of "the Black Panther Party, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, and Revolutionary Action Movement and others who laid out an assortment of dystopian visions for the Black community and the country in general."

Rivers said the group has "repudiate[d] Dr. Martin Luther King's legacy," replacing it with "irrational ideas that have so quickly led to violence in its name rather than maintaining the non-violent high ground MLK staked out from his Christian perspective."

Leaders of Black Lives Matter Los Angeles have said their efforts are more than a movement for racial justice, but are a "spiritual movement," which have incorporated spiritual rituals into protests, drawing from animistic religions by calling forth deceased ancestors and pouring out libations for them.

Brown wrote last week that an authentic movement for racial justice needs to be rooted in love, and, ultimately, in Christ.

"Racial injustice is part of the culture of death. To build a culture of life in America, we need a revival of God's love and a new era of civil rights," he wrote.

"True justice is based on the foundational principle of civil rights: each person's God-given natural rights as embodied in the natural law. Thanks to the natural law, abolitionists knew slavery was wrong even though civil law said it was right, and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. knew segregation was wrong even though the voting majority in many states likely supported it."

"A new era of authentic love and justice is needed and will begin with a Christian revival of love for God and neighbor. This love is the only force powerful enough to bring lasting healing."

"The Christian faithful must rededicate themselves to love through spiritual and corporal works of mercy that serve communities of color and the vulnerable. We must give the best of the Church, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to those on the peripheries."

"God calls us to do justice in bringing about the Kingdom of God and building up the culture of life," Brown concluded.

"Agendas opposed to human dignity strengthen the culture of death, and can never lead us toward justice. As Christians, we must charge ahead in the love of Christ to lead a revival of God's love and bring about a new era of Christian humanism in America."

Submit a comment

* indicates a required field

Please fill out the form below to submit a comment.

Comment *

"Black Lives Matter" has become the rallying cry for a broad social movement. But there are also specific organizations which take the name "Black Lives Matter." The largest and best-funded of those groups is the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, which has a network of local chapters around the U.S. and in other countries.

Brown said that organization "asserts a worldview of moral relativism that recognizes no objective truth, 'disrupts' the natural family, and undermines the natural law foundation of civil rights. Its agenda divides people in an arbitrary manner that will, ironically, lead to greater strife especially for black families."

"By advocating for gender ideology, BLM rejects the basic truths of human dignity in the natural law. Gender ideology replaces the scientific and biological reality of maleness and femaleness with the false belief that one's sex can be changed. However, as both Pope Francis and the African Cardinal Robert Sarah have asserted, gender ideology is a false construct with no basis in scientific reality. Gender ideology is destructive because it rejects the truths of male and female existence. There can be no dignity or freedom without truth," he added.

The website of the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation recently altered a page outlining controversial beliefs of the organization on the family and sexuality.

As recently as Sept. 17, the organization's "about" page said the group was a "a queer-affirming network" that works toward "freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking, or rather, the belief that all in the world are heterosexual," to "dismantle cisgender privilege," and to 'disrupt' the 'nuclear family.'

New text on the group's website reaffirms its positions on gender ideology, saying that "Black liberation movements in this country have created room, space, and leadership mostly for Black heterosexual, cisgender men — leaving women, queer and transgender people, and others either out of the movement or in the background to move the work forward with little or no recognition."

Brown is not the only Black Catholic leader to criticize the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, and distinguish it from important calls for racial justice.

"It's time to state honestly what BLM really stands for - destroying the traditional Family AND what it actually does - destroying property including religious building and objects!" tweeted Cardinal Wilfred Napier of Durban, South Africa, who himself is Black, on Aug. 28, in reference to the organization. Napier was a part of the Church in South Africa's struggle against apartheid.

Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers, a Black Catholic deacon of the Diocese of Portland, Oregon, author, and co-host of EWTN's Morning Glory radio show told Catholic World Report in August that, like Brown, he draws a distinction between a movement and an organization.

"When you put those three words together—black lives matter—as a social movement, it's a statement of truth, which is a good thing."

"But the term 'black lives matter' has been conflated with the national organization, Black Lives Matter. In a lot of people's minds, when you say 'black lives matter,' people automatically think of the national organization," he lamented.

Noting that the organization's values "raise some red flags" for him, he mentioned especially that the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation does not address the importance of fatherhood.

"Look at all that, plus the violence that is being perpetrated, the rioting, the looting, the tearing down statues, all of these things," the deacon said. "No Catholic in good conscience can have anything to do with a group like that. Period."

Brown's essay said that the U.S. needs to address "racial discrimination and unjust inequality," but called for a Christian approach to those issues.

He pointed to "police misconduct and racial discrimination in our criminal justice system, and to the disproportionate suffering that COVID-19 has wrought in many communities of color."

"As a black man, I am pained to learn of police officers killing unarmed black people."

"As an attorney who has also worked as a staffer in Congress and the executive branch, I have seen that the majority of law enforcement officials are good people seeking to protect and serve," Brown wrote, but "racial discrimination in the criminal justice system continues in the form of racial profiling, police misconduct, and discriminatory criminal sentencing."

Pointing to healthcare inequality, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, Brown noted that "Even once this health crisis ends, many African American communities will still not have the medical care they deserve. Historical patterns of racial exclusion have exacerbated negative health care outcomes. Ensuring that the vulnerable have access to proper medical care is necessary to restoring a culture of life."

Brown's essay came as polling shows declining support for the Black Lives Matter movement, and after the destruction of police stations and other public buildings amid protests in some cities, and the shooting of two Los Angeles sheriff's deputies Sept. 12.

On that date, a gunman approached a parked police car near the light rail station in Compton, California, opening fire with a pistol at the two police officers inside. Both survived despite multiple gunshot wounds, and the shooter fled on foot.

The officers, a 31-year-old mother and a 24-year-old male, had been on the job less than a year, Sheriff Alex Villanueva said after the shooting.

