

DECLARATION OF MORAL RESISTANCE

In light of the challenges facing our nation at the onset of a new administration, all people of moral conscience must stand up and defend our neighbors against unjust laws and systems that do not uplift our deepest moral values of love, justice and mercy. Because of our love of neighbor and country, we join together in moral resistance to Donald Trump.

Today we face a moral crisis. A misguided ruler, Mr. Trump has nominated Sen. Jeff Sessions for Attorney General of the United States. But Sessions' immoral record shows consistent support for ideological extremism, racist and classist policies, and the writing of discrimination into law.

The prophet Jeremiah's question is fitting when considering this nominee: "Can a leopard change his spots?" (Jeremiah 13:23). Let us consider the record:

Sen. Sessions has attacked voting rights, including his opposition to restoring and updating section 4 of the Voting Rights Act after the Shelby County vs Holder Supreme Court decision. He sat idly by as the Supreme Court and politicians dismantled and attacked voting rights. As a U.S. Attorney in Alabama, he unjustly prosecuted voting rights advocates who worked closely with Martin Luther King, Jr. This baseless, politically motivated case ended in unanimous acquittal of these defenders of civil rights. Sessions was also rejected from a federal judgeship during the Reagan administration because of his history of racist remarks and actions.

Sen. Sessions has alienated and persecuted our immigrant neighbors and their families. He has been one of Congress's most stalwart opponents of common-sense, compassionate reform of our unjust immigration laws-- including the bipartisan immigration reform that passed the Senate in 2013 and the DREAM Act, which sought to provide legal status to undocumented people who came to the U.S. as young children.

Sen. Sessions has promoted xenophobia and religious bigotry, including supporting Donald Trump's campaign proposal to ban Muslims from entering the U.S. He also defended the legitimacy of religious tests in immigration policy that could be used to ban immigration by Muslims.³

Sen. Sessions voted against crucial protections for the LGBTQ community, including the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crime Prevention Act, which expands protections for victims of crimes motivated by perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. He also voted against the Employment Nondiscrimination Act, which would have protected workers from being fired because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

As moral leaders, we maintain faith that all people are created in God's image and have potential to do good.

Sen. Sessions has voted against the equality and protection of women, including the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, which amended the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Sen. Session's record of doing and supporting evil cannot be ignored. As Matthew writes, "You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy, and faithfulness" (Matthew 23:23).

From Isaiah: "Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people..." (Isaiah 10:1-2).

From the Quran: "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just" (Sura 5).

Sen. Sessions has neither repented of his wrong doing nor committed to change. So we reject his nomination and the nomination of any candidate for Attorney General who poses a threat to justice and the freedoms we hold dear. When those who wield the power of the state deprive the people of these freedoms, they surrender their moral and political legitimacy. They must be resisted and held accountable, particularly by the U.S. Department of Justice.

The Scriptures tell us that God makes the rain fall on the just and unjust alike. Who are we, then, to decide which group or class of people deserves the greater part of justice. For all who are heirs of the faith-rooted freedom struggle in this nation, equal protection under the law is a sacred principle that must be protected.

As people of faith, we are called to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly. We are exhorted to welcome the stranger by the One who will judge the nations. We are called by the voice of God to love our neighbors as ourselves. We affirm the freedoms and dignity of all people who call our nation home.

We pledge today to resist by all nonviolent means those who threaten and harm our neighbors. We will show up. We will sit in. We will cry out. We will not stand down.

¹<http://www.naacpldf.org/press-release/what-you-need-know-about-sen-jeff-sessions>

²<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2016/11/18/black-belt-voter-fraud-case-alabama-shaped-sen-jeff-sessions-career/94088186/>

³<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/11/19/trump-attorney-general-pick-jeff-sessions-argued-for-a-religious-test-to-ban-muslims.html>