

Pentecostal Church of God General Bishop: Please Don't Call Me Racist Because I Voted for Trump

On Thursday evening, Sept. 12, I enjoyed watching the Democratic Debate, which hosted 10 presidential candidates set on expressing their views concerning America's future. As the evening progressed, the healthy debate provided a quality viewing experience—that is, until I was confronted by some confusing comments that somehow felt directed toward me (even though none of the candidates really know me).

At a critical juncture in the debate, Linsey Davis, an ABC News correspondent, introduced the topic of racism to the candidates, saying, "Now, we know that the racial divide started long, far before President Trump and President Obama, but each of you on this stage has said that President Trump has made that divide worse. ... Why are you the most qualified candidate to address this divide?"

Senator Cory Booker from New Jersey responded by identifying Donald Trump as a racist, even though he qualified his statement by saying that "there is no red badge of courage for calling him that."

Former U.S. Congressman Beto O'Rourke expressed, "We will also call out the facts that we have a white supremacist in the White House, and he poses a mortal threat to people of color all across this country."

Finally, in an effort to continue directing the discussion, Davis quoted Mayor Pete Buttigieg from South Bend, Indiana, who had previously stated that anyone who votes for Donald Trump is "at best, looking the other way on racism." Herein

lies the issue.

In certain sectors of American society, there seems to be an implied and even sometimes stated belief that anyone who may vote for President Trump has an intentional bent toward racism. Is this perspective not reminiscent of the fallacy of composition—that something must be true of the whole when, in fact, it may only be true of some small part?

After hearing the implication from Mayor Buttigieg, I wanted to humbly and yet courageously say, “Please don’t call me a racist,” especially when you don’t know anything about me. Please don’t call me a racist when I have a blended family with an Ethiopian-American daughter and an African-American daughter-in-law. Please don’t call me racist when I, despite being a white American male, attend a church where I am in the minority. Please don’t call me a racist when I enjoy the privilege of developing relationships with many multi-ethnic leaders around the world.

In other words, if I choose to vote for a candidate accused of racism, my vote doesn’t mean that I overlook racism. Like many passionate Americans across our great nation, perhaps I am voting on the basis of a platform rather than a personality.

Candidly, I do not support mudslinging or egregious early-morning tweets from one who serves in the highest office of the land, but I do possess a strong value system that reflects the/a:

- Preservation of human life in every trimester of pregnancy.
- Sacred nature of sexuality in marriage.
- Freedom of choice in health care and education.
- Freedom of choice to defend yourself and your family.
- Freedom of choice to combat climate change.

- Compassionate path toward legal immigration and citizenship.
- Compassionate solution for the impoverished and homeless among us.
- Reformation of the criminal justice system.

Sometimes we are confronted with core-value decisions that create crises of conscience. One such crisis is represented in the exemplary life of Corrie ten Boom, who helped many Jews escape the Nazi Holocaust during World War II, even hiding them in her own home on occasion. By her own admission, Boom valued honesty and the preservation of human life. However, with the Gestapo on the scene and her Jewish friends tucked behind false walls, she was confronted by a seemingly impossible decision: honesty, which would enable the capture and death of innocents; or the preservation of human life, which would require a blatant lie. In her crisis of conscience, Boom ultimately chose the preservation of human life.

It seems a value-war is taking place in America today, and it seeks to possess the ground of our culture. Unfortunately, two extremes—each wrought with belligerent name-calling—tend to dominate the news feeds, and political lines are drawn in the sand regarding whatever issue-front invasion is taking place at the time. The screams from the political carnage above the surface receive all the attention while the existential battle that should be waged below the surface is lost in the white noise.

Consider, for example, the mass shooting that left 22 dead in the border city of El Paso, Texas, which represents a most horrific glimpse into the way unchecked racism can alter the story of American life at any moment in time. For a 21-year-old young man to unleash his hatred against the Mexican community with such a blatant disregard for the dignity of human life remains unconscionable.

However, in the wake of this tragedy, let us not overlook the fact that some have politicized the event for personal or economic gain. This only escalates the tension.

Certain political candidates and their entourages flocked to the scene to wave their signs advocating gun control, while certain businesses, like Walmart, quickly announced a politically correct reaction by removing ammunition from the shelves of their stores. On the surface, Walmart's response seemed appropriate and was even lauded by certain media outlets, but, again, perhaps we should dig beneath the surface. When the dust clears, Walmart's decision will only minimally impact the incessant gun violence taking place throughout the inner cities of America. If Walmart was genuinely concerned about addressing the dehumanization of innocents, then what is being done to address their continued investments in China, one of the largest human rights violators of our generation?

The fight for the advancement of democracy is not the problem here—debate is necessary and dialogue essential because it affords all Americans the opportunity to thoughtfully consider the American dream and its daring destination. Yet when the political beast of democracy rages with vitriolic racism and proceeds to hastily generalize racist tendencies based on one's vote, then the beast is dangerously close to devouring the decency of democracy itself.

So, in the end, if I or anyone else choose to vote a certain way, could it be possible that my actions simply reflect a propensity toward a platform based on my personal values rather than a personality with certain behaviors? *Please don't call me a racist.* To suggest as much would certainly be news to my family and definitely an offense to me. {eo2}

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