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CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER FORMS INTERFAITH GROUP TO BATTLE RACISM AHEAD OF CRUCIAL MID-TERM ELECTIONS

Spurred by racist comments by ex-president and racist video by Yuba City high school athletes, group seeks to turn out voters against the candidates of racism and anti-Semitism

SAN FRANCISCO, October 11, 2022 -- Faith leaders from Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other faith groups are joining to create an anti-racism movement in advance of the coming mid-term elections to fight an ever-growing tide of overt racism and hate in America – racism directed at Blacks, Asians and other groups that have tragically become everyday headlines.

Two such incidents of racism that became public this week have galvanized the group (which also include the committee of 100, a well-established Asian activist group). First, the most recent ex-president wrote a social media post that used a racial slur to refer to former Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao, who is married to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. The same day, a video surfaced in which several varsity football players at River Valley High School in Yuba City enacted acted out an “auction” of enslaved people.

These are only the latest terrible incidents in a country whose racial animus grows by the day and underscore the need for immediate, broad-scale action, said Rev. Amos C. Brown, pastor of Third Baptist Church in San Francisco and the president of the San Francisco branch of the NAACP. Brown is assembling a group of interfaith and civil rights leaders as the nucleus of the group, which will conduct its first meeting on Sunday, October 23 at 3:00 p.m. at Third Baptist Church. A subsequent meeting is scheduled for Sunday, October 30, at Allen Temple Baptist Church, 8501 International Blvd, Oakland, CA 94621. The host pastor for the Oakland contingency is Rev. Dr. Jacqueline A. Thompson.

“We must stop this relentless flood of racism that flows from the lips of our nation’s leaders to the playing fields of our nation’s neighborhoods,” Brown said. “Leaders and members of every faith and civic groups must come together in a powerful movement, one that will ensure our upcoming elections bring healing, not hatred and division, to the country.”

The former president’s hateful words against an Asian woman who served in his cabinet were shocking, as has been the reluctance by many other leading members of his political party to condemn them. That continues to perpetuate racism and signals to the nation that it is acceptable behavior, and enables candidates with racist views and policies to run for office

without shame, and for voters to send them to city halls, state houses and the halls of Congress.

“The mid-term elections are a referendum on racism in America, from immigration policies to voting and gay rights, to education and healthcare,” Brown said. “At a time when the Supreme Court is busy dismantling fundamental protections for people of color, and local school boards are banning books and whitewashing history, we must use the vote to stop this racism and division in its tracks.”

As the country’s leaders become more racist, it inevitably leads to incidents like the slave auction video. Labelled “disgraceful” by the school district superintendent, it led to the removal of several players from the team, forcing the team to forfeit the remainder of its season. Yet, despite the action, Rev. Brown said more action needs to be taken to enlighten young people and stop racism from penetrating more deeply into the next generation of leaders.

In an effort to address the situation head-on, Rev. Brown and the local NAACP branch will offer to bring the dismissed team members and their families to Africa next year during the annual Amos C. Brown Fellowship to Ghana. There, they will be able to see the remnants of the slave trade that flourished for nearly 400 years, where millions of human beings were enslaved, sold and shipped to the Americas.

“This is the opportunity for a powerful learning experience for these young people and the adults who are rearing them to see and experience ground zero of the evil that was slavery,” Brown said. “This invitation is not about punishing these young people but opening their eyes, minds, and hearts. With the understanding that comes from knowledge, and right thinking we can begin to fight back in a humane, peaceful and strategic way.”