

GALLEY

The following statement was published in the Bennington Banner April 9th:

We are white people.

It was our forefathers who came to this country in search of freedom and yet who made black people into slaves; it was our forefathers who carried black people from Africa to America in boats of New England timber.

We are white people.

It was our forefathers who signed the Declaration of Independence with its claim that all men are created equal and yet who also signed the Constitution of the United States of America whose original form treated black people as three-fifths of a human being.

We are white people.

It was our forefathers in the North who fought for the freedom of black people when they believed that race was a problem in the South.

We are white people.

It is our language which identifies whiteness with purity--the white bridal gown, the President's White House, the desirable white-collar job, the soap which makes our clothes clean and white. In actual fact, the color of our skin is pale pink.

We are white people.

It is our language which identifies blackness with evil--blackball and blackguard, black market and blacklist, blackmail, black magic, black sheep. We make it hard for "black people" to find dignity in their blackness.

We are white people.

We have been richly blessed with abundance, talent and energy. At best, we hold these gifts in trust from One who demands justice for all His children. At worst, when we claim these gifts as our right and our possession, we must be prepared to face the enemy of death with its judgment: "Fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

We are white people.

We, too, have a dream. We confess that too often our dream is a nightmare of fear and terror. We are afraid of the change which we know must come. We are afraid to redeem the injustices and inconsistencies of our forefathers. We are too proud to seek forgiveness from the grandsons of slaves. We resist the judgment that the virus of racial prejudice is in all of us, ready to break out into open sickness when our resistance is down. We are troubled, confused, upset, filled with a vague sense of guilt; we are anxious to do something, ignorant of what we can do, let alone what we should do.

We here offer ourselves in the service of truth. We pledge to follow truth into the fullness of the past; we here confess our fear of the pain in facing that past and our hope that this pain may lead to a new wholeness. We pledge to follow truth into the openness of the future with its threatening and yet liberating demand for change. We recognize the mistrust which exists today between races and hope that this recognition may be the first step in building a new and deeper trust for tomorrow. When the time is ripe for us and for black people to face each other within our common humanity, we will seek a new covenant with them, written in our hearts and acted out in our lives.

William B. Abernethy
Edward J. Bloustein
Donald R. Brown
Robert Condon
Francis B. Flanagan
Gloria Gil
Chaim Gross
Spencer C. Haynes
Lawrence F. Powers
Leonard Rowe
James M. Toolan

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S. H.