

Dear Colleagues,

The members of the Emory Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee (DISC) Hate Crimes Workgroup are writing to express our horror and deepest sympathies concerning the recent acts of hate and insult directed toward (1) members of the African American community worshipping in churches in Opelousas, Louisiana and (2) Christians at Easter Worship Services along with tourists in Sri Lanka. We recognize how frightening such deplorable crimes are, as well as the devastating impact they have on communities directly and indirectly touched by them. All of us must stand against hatred in all its forms, including religious and racial intolerance.

We grieve with the members of the congregations of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, St. Mary's Baptist Church, and Greater Union Baptist Church and the larger African American community. The burning of Black churches represents a form of domestic terrorism that at times goes unacknowledged. It is not only a form of hatred, but it also an act of intimidation designed to instigate fear in those communities. African American churches, as places of worship, have traditionally been a source of safety, support, hope, and survival from slavery to present day. To our members of the African American community impacted by this horrible crime, we recognize that these events occur all too frequently. In 2017, the most recent year for which there are data, the largest number of hate crimes in the US were committed against African Americans/Blacks.

Similarly, the horrific and deadly attacks by suicide bombers on the churches in Sri Lanka while individuals were celebrating Easter mass, as well as on tourists in nearby hotels, are an attack on all of humanity. Sri Lanka suffered decades of civil war but has been relatively peaceful since the war ended in 2009. At this season of Passover and Easter, which are devoted to family and love, we stand with the people of Sri Lanka as they tend to their victims of such cruel violence and grieve the devastating loss of their loved ones.

The DISC members support a culture of acceptance of and freedom for all religious viewpoints and perspectives. We encourage conversation and connection around our differences because we recognize violent acts of extremism lead to fear and isolation. We endeavor to strengthen a community culture in which values of empathy, unity and support for every member prevails.

For those of you impacted by one or both tragedies, we encourage you to utilize family, community, and faith resources, including those within our department and the broader Emory community. Together, we must strive toward a future in which everyone can worship in peace and safety.

In Support and Solidarity,

DISC Members



**DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**  
SUBCOMMITTEE