

Open Letter
To President-elect Donald J. Trump
By a Group Of African American Clergy Leaders
Opposing the Appointment of Stephen Bannon
As White House Chief Strategist

November 17, 2016

Dear President-elect Donald Trump,

As a group of African American clergy leaders deeply engaged in public policy and the needs of our communities, we write to express our serious concern about the recent announcement that Mr. Stephen Bannon will be appointed as your chief strategist. We urge you to reconsider this appointment especially as you step into your role as President in a nation struggling to move past a deeply divisive campaign.

If the promise from your acceptance speech --"I pledge to every citizen of our land that I will be president for all Americans, and this is so important to me" -- should ring true, it is essential for White House staff to not become a barrier to that reconciliation process. The publicly reported information about Mr. Bannon makes reconciliation and unity extremely difficult. Many of us were actively involved in the response to the massacre at Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, where the pastor and eight church members were gunned down. However, two weeks after the massacre, Mr. Bannon's website, *Breitbart News*, published an article about the confederate flag calling people to "hoist it high and proud" at that very moment, a deeply insensitive and untimely statement.

Additionally, we are concerned that Mr. Bannon has acknowledged *Breitbart News* is a home for the 'alt-right.' "Are there racist people involved in the alt-right? Absolutely," [he told Mother Jones](#) at this year's Republican National Convention. He continued, "Look, are there some people that are white nationalists that are attracted to some of the philosophies of the alt-right? Maybe." It is alarming that a man who provides a home to a movement that in turn is a home to white supremacists will have a senior position in the White House.

Mr. Bannon's website, *Breitbart*, also has a section on "black violence" where there are [quotes](#) such as "Again, white supremacy is not to blame for this carnage. Nor is it over-policing or a lack of gun laws. Hello! It's the black-on-black violence, stupid!" We are troubled by this deeply misguided, unnuanced and divisive perspective and believe this a difficult starting point for conversations on race with a Trump White House.

Finally, we stand with our Jewish brothers and sisters and against anti-Semitism. While we know that court proceedings can be disputed, it gives us pause that in Mr. Bannon's divorce proceedings his wife stated that he didn't want his daughters going to school with "whiny brat Jews." Even as a charge, this is deeply troubling to say the least.

As leaders in the faith community we urge you to reconsider this appointment, and

all other appointments that continue to divide our nation, 'rather than make us whole, and healed, as you so passionately avowed. We will be sharing additional recommendations on public policy and other matters soon and hope to engage with you on issues of deep concern to our communities and to the country.

Sincerely yours,

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***Endorsers of this letter are representing their personal views and not those of their organizations, which are listed for identification purposes only.**