

Black Lives Matter: A Litany

A Litany by Bishop Adam J. Richardson, Jr.

Leader: Today we're wearing black – a reminder of our common roots designed and lifted by the Creator from the soil of Africa, a *Genesis* from which all humanity evolved. Thus, we affirm the value, worth and dignity of all human beings and logically declare that

People: Black lives matter!

Leader: Today we're wearing black – an almost universal symbol of mourning. It is a simple gesture of uniformly standing in sympathy and solidarity with grieving families in every region of the country where young men died at the hands of police whose purpose it is to “serve and protect.” Under these circumstances, it is the one thing we can do to demonstrate that

People: Black lives matter!

Leader: Today we're wearing black – serious dress for serious thought. We have memorized the narrative: Impugn the character of the newly deceased; he deserved what he got; then seduce the public through the media – “It was just an unfortunate tragedy.” “There is no intentional assault on black life;” “There is no conspiracy to destroy Black boys.” “It was an isolated incident,” they say, but not to the grieving families. The frequency of seeing rolling hearses in our neighborhoods seems epidemic. The apparent epidemic is the reason we must announce that

People: Black lives matter!

Leader: Today we're wearing black – a visual witness in the tradition of the prophets. The officials say, “It is only coincidental that the young men *happen* to be Black,” but Black families are still marching behind funeral biers to the cemetery. Grand Juries keep disappointing fathers and mothers anticipating justice for their sons, but keep getting “No True Bills.” Young men are getting the death penalty for minor offenses. They were all unarmed. Do you actually expect our silence when we really need to say that

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Leader: Today we're wearing black – as a solemn act of protest. The shooting, the chokehold was caught on camera. We saw it. The coroner said it was a homicide. The badge-wearing gunman exacted an extrajudicial death penalty. With a history of racism, we are certain that you understand why we protest. You can understand why we are “fed up;” why we join our voices around the country and around the world to say “Enough is Enough!” Pardon us if we scream

People: Black lives matter!

Leader: Today we're wearing black – So, what gives? Is it our look? Is it our manner of speech? Is it our neighborhood? Are we a threat to you? Pardon us if we protest in defense of our own humanity that

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Leader: And at this Advent Season, it is the Gospel writer Matthew who remembered the words of the prophet Jeremiah, saying: “A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more.” Today, Rachel is joined by Sisters Sybrina Fulton (mother of Trayvon Martin, 17, Sanford, FL); Lucia McBath (mother of Jordan Davis, 17, Jacksonville, FL); Lesley McSpadden (mother of Michael Brown, 18, Ferguson, MO); Samaria Rice (mother of 12 year old Tamir Rice, Cleveland, OH); Tressa Sharrod (mother of John Crawford, III, 22, Beavercreek, OH); Syreeta Myers (mother of VonDerritt Myers, 18, St. Louis, MO); Gwen Carr (mother of Eric Garner, 43, Staten Island, NY); Tritobia Ford (mother of Ezell Ford, 25, Los Angeles, CA); Sylvia Palmer (mother of Akai Gurley, 26, New York); Maria Hamilton (mother of Dontre Hamilton, 31, Milwaukee, WI); and the mothers of Rekia Boyd, 22, Chicago, IL; Dante Parker, 36, Victorville, CA; Romain Brisbon, 34, Phoenix, AZ; and Timothy Stansbury, Sean Bell, Oscar Grant, Aaron Campbell, Alonzo Ashley, Wendell Allen, and Jonathan Ferrell. A young man carries a sign in protest, asking an important question, “Am I Next?”

People: At this defining moment in our history, we join with families and foot soldiers to lift our voices – with other sacred communions – to shout in the direction of every police department, every office of judicial authority that *Black lives matter!*