

Abstract: The cry against systemic racism and police brutality sparked off by the untimely death of George Floyd has been mainstreamed by media due to the protest movements across the globe. This cry constitutes a sign of the times that warrants a theological reflection on marginality. Marginality is an oppressive condition of abject dehumanization and hideous violation of the dignity of the discriminated and segregated vulnerable communities who are minorities in their countries. God’s incarnation in the Son has assumed marginality and invested the margin with the “interstitial power” of God’s Kingdom that has subverted the imperial power in the Greco-Roman World and continues to dismantle the supremacist ideology through the promotion of the common good of the violated communities. Inspired by the principle that lives at the margin matters, this promotion of the common good hopes to ensure intergenerational flourishing of life for these vulnerable communities.

Keywords: Marginality, systemic racism, incarceration, chokehold, interstitial power, neo-Malthusianism, common good, intergenerational solidarity.

# **LIVES AT THE MARGIN MATTER**

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“The poison of racism still rages, and so the fight must still be waged.” Mrs. Amina Mohammed.

Marginality is a condition of dehumanization, interlocked with systemic racism, racial inequality, injustices, gang violence, exacerbated by segregation, police brutality and racial profiling. Vulnerable ethnic/racial minorities like the African Americans, the Oglala Sioux Nation, Latinos in the US, the Muslim minorities in Europe, the Rohingya in Myanmar, and the Aboriginal Peoples and the Torres Strait Islanders in Australia suffer the brunt of marginality. Marginality can be resisted when enough citizens march against such systemic evil, demonstrating the power of mass peaceful protest.<sup>1</sup> The color-coded systemic racism can be overcome, as borne out by the historical fact that just six years before George Floyd was born, interracial marriage in sixteen of the American states was still illegal.<sup>2</sup> Black Lives Matter has become a national and global movement of vociferous denunciation of the systemic racial injustice around the world. The global outrage has awakened the pandemic-ridden world to the reality that lives at the margin matter.

## 1. Wasting Black Lives in the US

Segregation, incarceration, poverty, systemic racism and inequality have wasted too many lives of Black, Latin and Native Americans. They must not die in vain. The struggle continues.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘The Power of Protest,’ *The Economist* June 13, 2020, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> ‘The Power of Protest,’ *The Economist* June 13, 2020, p. 7.

- 1.1. George Floyd's last words on May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis, when a police officer's knee was on his neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds:

"It's my face man. I didn't do nothing serious man. Please, please, please. I can't breathe. Please man. Please, somebody."

"Please man, I can't breathe. I can't breathe, please. Man, I can't breathe. My face. Just get up. I can't breathe, please. I can't breathe, shit. I can't move."

"Mama. Mama. I can't, my knee, my nuts. I'm through. I'm through. I'm claustrophobic. My stomach hurt. My neck hurts. Everything hurts."

"Some water or something, please. Please. I can't breathe, officer. Don't kill me. They're gonna kill me man. Come on man. I cannot breathe. I cannot breathe."

"They're gonna kill me, they're gonna kill me. I cannot breathe. I can't breathe. Please sir, please sir, please. I can't breathe."

Then his eyes shut and the pleas stop. George Floyd was pronounced dead shortly after.<sup>3</sup>

- 1.2. Philonise Floyd at the House Judiciary Committee hearing on Capitol Hill, June 10, 2020:

"I can't tell you the kind of pain you feel ... when you watch your big brother die whom you looked up to your whole life die, die begging for his mom ... I here to ask you to make it stop. Stop the pain. Stop us being tired. George called for help and he was ignored. Please listen to the call I am making to you now. To the call about families and the call ringing out the streets throughout the streets around the world. People of all backgrounds, genders and races have come together to demand change. Honor him. Honor George and make the necessary changes, that make law enforcement the solution, and not the problem. Hold them accountable when they do something wrong. Teach them what it means to treat people with empathy and respect. Teach them what necessary force is. Teach them that daily force should be rarely used and only when life is at risk. He didn't deserved to die over \$20. He should not die because of \$20. Is that what a Black man worth, \$20? This is 2020. Enough is enough. The people watching in the streets is telling you, "enough is enough." The world needs the right thing ... If his death ends up making the world for the better. And I think it will. Then he died as he lived... It is not for you to make his death is not in vain... Big brother. You change the world... I hope you found mama and you can rest in peace with power."<sup>4</sup>

- 1.3. Philonise Floyd issued an appeal by video conferencing at the U.N. Human Rights Council on June 17, 2020:

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<sup>3</sup>[https://www.google.com/search?q=Date+when+George+floyd+died+in+Mineapolis&rlz=1C5CHFA\\_enPH852PH854&oq=Date+when+George+floyd+died+in+Mineapolis+&aqs=chrome..69i57j33.17100j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=Date+when+George+floyd+died+in+Mineapolis&rlz=1C5CHFA_enPH852PH854&oq=Date+when+George+floyd+died+in+Mineapolis+&aqs=chrome..69i57j33.17100j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8), accessed June 16, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

“The way you saw my brother tortured and murdered on camera is the way black people are treated by police in America,” Philonise Floyd said in an emotional message delivered to the council by video link. He appealed to the Council to proceed with a high-level international investigation into the killing of black people in America.<sup>5</sup>

“‘I am my brother’s keeper’. You in the United Nations are your brothers’ and sisters’ keepers in America, and you have the power to help us get justice for my brother George Floyd. I am asking you to help him. I am asking you to help me. I am asking you to help us. Black people in America,” pleaded Philonise Floyd and further added, “Black lives matter. Indigenous lives matter. The lives of people of color matter. All human beings are born equal in dignity and rights and that is what this Council, like my Office, stands for.”<sup>6</sup>

## 1. Global Protests against Systemic Racism

The killing of George Floyd has touched a raw nerve that unleashed the accumulated angst among the black-colored communities worldwide.<sup>7</sup> When Shola Mos-Shogbamimu, a London-based lawyer and women’s rights activist first heard the news of George Floyd’s killing on May 25, 2020, her gut reaction was raw anger: “George Floyd was every black person in that video,” she says and “every one of us can identify with that knee on our necks, not letting up, with that pressure increasing until it suffocates us.”<sup>8</sup> In the UK, where Black people are 3% of the population of England and Wales but 12 % of prisoners, and Black men are stopped and searched at nine times the rate of white men. The protestors have chanted “hands up, don’t shoot” at (unarmed) police. Placards announced black victims of British police violence: Mark Duggan, Rashan Charles and Edson da Costa. “Historically it’s a different journey,” says British community activist Patrick Vernon, “but it’s still the same impact: structural racism, stop and search, poverty, exclusion.”<sup>9</sup>

In France, where young Arab and black men are 20 times as likely as white men to be stopped by police, thousands of people have taken to the streets of Paris, Marseilles, Lyon and Lille. Many are protesting in the name of Adama Traoré, a 24-year-old Malian-French man who died in police custody in 2016. While police say officers are not responsible for his death, an independent autopsy commissioned by Traoré’s family ruled on June 2, 2020, that he died of asphyxiation as a result of violent arrest. In Paris, his sister called for justice, telling crowds, “What is happening in the United States has today brought to light what is happening in

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<sup>5</sup> “George Floyd’s Brother Urges U.N. to Investigate Police Killings in U.S”, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/17/world/europe/george-floyd-uk-justice.html>, accessed June 20, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> “‘I am my brother’s keeper’, Philonise Floyd tells UN rights body, in impassioned plea for racial justice”, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1066542>, accessed June 20, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> For the names of those Blacks killed, see Alia Chughtai/Al Jazeera, *Know Their Names: Blacks killed by police in the US*, <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2020/know-their-names/index.html>, accessed May 27, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Suyin Haynes, “As Protesters Shine a Spotlight on Racial Injustice in America, the Reckoning Is Going Global”, <https://time.com/5851879/racial-injustice-protests-europe/>, accessed June 22, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

France.”<sup>10</sup> On June 8, 2020, as pressure mounted, France announced a ban on chokehold arrest tactics.

In Brazil, three out of four were black amongst the 6,220 people killed by Brazil’s police in 2018. In Rio de Janeiro with a population of 6.3 million, police killed 1,810 people in favelas controlled by criminals in 2019. More than ten cities took to the streets in Brazil on June 7, 2020 to mourn the slain and to protest against Jair Bosonaro’s government who said last year that a bill to give immunity to police who kill would cause criminals to “die in the streets like cockroaches”.<sup>11</sup> But watchdogs blamed the police for “extrajudicial killings, including massacres of more than ten people, fueled by warlike police operations, sometimes with snipers in helicopters” among them eight-year-old Agatha, killed by a stray bullet last September and 14-year old Joao Pedro in a slipshod police raid in May 2020.<sup>12</sup>

In Kenya, about 200 nationals marched against police atrocities on June 8, 2020, in Mathare, a poor part of Nairobi. Since the Covid-19 lockdown in Nairobi on March 27, 2020, the police have killed 15 people, as reported by the country’s Independent Police Oversight Authority. “The poor people of this country have come together to say no to police killings... and also stand in solidarity with global protest against police excesses,” Juliet Wanjera, a member of the Mathare Social Justice Centre, an NGO, has told journalists.<sup>13</sup>

In South Africa, there has been 40,000 complaints against the Police Service for alleged crimes including rape and murder since 2012, with just 531 convictions. Security forces have killed at least 11 people during South Africa’s lockdown enforced since March 27, 2020, and more than 200,000 have been arrested. The killing of Mr. Khosa, a 40-year-old man from Alexandra, a township in Johannesburg that sparked particular outrage, even though he was on his own property, though buying alcohol was illegal in April and May 2020, as per lockdown regulations, but drinking it was not.<sup>14</sup>

In Indonesia, #BlackLivesMatter has morphed into #PapuanLivesMatter. In Surabaya in eastern Java, a mob besieged a Papuan student dormitory for allegedly throwing the national flag into the gutter. The riot police stormed the dorm with tear-gas and arrested 43 Papuans. This incident and similar actions in other cities sparked off last summer huge demonstrations by young Indonesians in support of the Papuans. More recently more Indonesians have denounced the discrimination that the Papuans suffer.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly in Australia, aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders represent just over 3% of the population with 29% of them in jail. An indigenous female Australian is more likely to be behind

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> “So other people would also be free,” *The Economist* June 13, 2020, p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> “So other people would also be free,” *The Economist* June 13, 2020, p. 49.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

bars than a non-indigenous male. Indigenous Australians are poorer and less healthy with less access to housing, land, education and social workers than other Australians.<sup>16</sup>

According to *The Economist*, “what began as a protest against police violence against African-Americans has led to an examination of racism in all its forms”, “but most fundamentally, the protest reflects a rising rejection of racism itself.”<sup>17</sup> In the US alone, racism has polled a rise from 51% in January 2015 to 76% in 2020. In UK, a YOUGov poll in 2019 showed that 52% of Britons think UK is fairly or very racist. In France, 77% of the French stated in 2018 that France needed to fight racism. In fact, “Pew Research found last year that in most countries healthy majorities welcome racial diversity.”<sup>18</sup> Most EU countries have failed to address the often blatant discrimination against African migrants and widespread religious discrimination against Muslims. A recent international World Values Survey disclosed that “more Germans and Dutch say they would not want “people of another race” as neighbors than Americans.”<sup>19</sup>

For this reason, Martin Luther King Jr. remarked, as far back as 1967, “riots do not develop out of thin air. In a real sense our nation’s summers of riots are caused by our nation’s winters of delay. And as long as America postpones justice, we stand in the position of having these recurrences of violence and riots over and over again.”<sup>20</sup>

## 2. Root Causes of Systemic Racism & Police Brutality

Systemic racism and police brutality have deep-seated causes which need to be unmasked and exposed.

3.1. *Deep Disparity and Poverty.* Places with histories of segregation like Chicago witnessed the most unrest over the deaths of black men in police custody. According to Patrick Sharkey, a sociologist at Princeton, “the stark racial inequality in America’s neighborhoods that existed in the 1970s has been passed on, with little change, to the current generation”, especially with proliferation of restrictive single-family zoning rules in cities and enforced segregation through racial covenants by white homeowners in the urban north.<sup>21</sup> In 1970, the dissimilarity index to quantify segregation in terms of the percentage of blacks who would have to move to ensure equal dispersion across a city was 93%.

The medium household net wealth of African-Americans is \$18,000, a tenth of the wealth of white and this ratio has not changed since 1999, as many African-Americans “are stuck in the racially monolithic neighbourhoods where their grandparents were allowed to settle at a safe distance from whites.”<sup>22</sup> By 2010, the dissimilarity index had declined to 70%, but still 10

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> “The Power of Protest,” *The Economist* June 13, 2020, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> “So other people would also be free,” *The Economist* June 13, 2020, p. 50.

<sup>20</sup> “African-Americans: Slow progress,” *The Economist*, June 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020, p. 32.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> “The Power of Protest,” *The Economist* June 13, 2020, p. 7.

% from the intended 60% targeted by the civil-rights activists. In 1970, Scholars at Columbia University and Mathematica Policy Research, roughly 47% of Black Americans were poor. By 2014, though poverty rate has gone down to 27%, the Blacks in poverty nearly triple the level experienced by Whites.

In places of concentrated poverty which has increased by 57% since 2000, black children are seven times as likely as white children to experience this oppressive form of poverty, thus sinking them deeper into a complex interrelated web of health, education, employment, income, family life and risk of incarceration. In 1972, nearly 80% of black men above the age of 20 were in the labor force but in the ensuing decades, that dropped substantially to 67% on the eve of COVID-19, and then to 63% in June 2020. Due to covid-19, African Americans have died at a rate of 50.3 per 100,000 people, compared with 20.7 for whites, 22.9 for Latinos and 22.7 for Asian Americans during this pandemic in the US. In fact, more than 20,000 African Americans, about one in 2,000 of the entire black population in the US, have tragically died from COVID-19.<sup>23</sup>

Lamentably, as high as 70% of the marriages among the Blacks broke up after 5 years after the birth of the first born. Incarceration has risen to an all-time high, tripled from 1960 to 2010. Black boys born to families in the top 1% of the income distribution are as likely to go to prison as white boys born in the bottom 3%. In fact, “to live in segregated areas plagued with poverty and violence for generations is to experience continuous loss of opportunity. And it can corrode democratic cohesion as well, by creating separate spheres of race and class – one for “us” and one for “them”.”<sup>24</sup>

3.2. *Racial profiling.* This is an illegal practice in most countries, but commonly recourse to by police. Young men of ethnic minorities are routinely frisked and asked for identification when they are out in the public, as in the case of Dr. Armen Henderson of Atlanta.<sup>25</sup> In private, many police admit to taking account of race when deciding whom to frisk, noting that some groups like Blacks and Latinos, for a variety of reasons, are profiled to commit more crimes than others. A 2017 YouGov discovered that two-thirds of the population believe racial profiling is an acceptable practice of policing in Germany. However, Sony Kapoor, an Indian-born Briton now living in Norway, states, “The worst thing about it is the smugness of Europeans who think they don’t harbor the same sort of racism as Americans.”<sup>26</sup>

3.2. *Police Brutality.* In the US, 2,445 police died on duty between 2000 and 2014 compared to just 24 in UK. However, around 1000 civilians died each year. Black Americans are nearly

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<sup>23</sup>“Black Americans dying of Covid-19 at three times the rate of white people”, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/20/black-americans-death-rate-covid-19-coronavirus>, accessed June 20, 2020.

<sup>24</sup> “African-Americans: Slow progress,” *The Economist*, June 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020, p. 32.

<sup>25</sup> “Police handcuff black doctor who tests homeless for coronavirus”, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/14/us/armen-henderson-arrested-homeless-coronavirus-testing.html>; [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxebmN\\_t4M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxebmN_t4M), accessed June 17, 2020.

<sup>26</sup> “So other people would also be free,” *The Economist* June 13, 2020, p. 50.

three times likelier than Whites to be killed. Killing has become the sixth-leading cause of death for young black men, in addition to the fact that more Blacks are likely to be convicted, serve longer sentences. Blacks currently constitute 33% of the prison population in the US.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, police brutality is fueled by the “warrior-style training” by which they are militarized by Pentagon’s supply of surplus-weapons, including three grenade-launchers to the police department that serves Los Angeles ‘s public schools in 2014 which the district returned to the Pentagon.

Police militarization, according to Jonathan Mummolo, a political scientist at Princeton, “fails to enhance public safety while also eroding public trust in the police.”<sup>28</sup> Worst of all, few officers face any legal consequences for manslaughter as most prosecutors are reluctant to charge against police because the police will not aid prosecutors who go after the bad cops. There is “an elaborate culture,” according to Nicole Gonzalez Van Cleve, a sociologist at Brown University and Somil Trivedi, a lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union, “where police created cases for prosecutors who in turn were expected to defer to officers as a professional courtesy.”<sup>29</sup> Police become all the more brazen when they know they enjoy “qualified immunity” by which public officials have the power to dismiss lawsuits when the police did not violate the established statutory or constitutional rights. Unfortunately, the courts interpret the phrase “clearly established” with baffling vigor to the point that officers who stole thousands of dollars of cash while enforcing a search warrant have their case dismissed.<sup>30</sup>

3.2. *Company Policies and Racial Corporate Practices.* Though Black people make up over 13% of America’s population, only four current Fortune 500 CEOs are black (and none are female), and there have been only 17 in the past two decades. Less than 3 % of senior corporate jobs and under 8% of all white-collar jobs are held by African-Americans. They comprise just 3 % of Silicon Valley’s workforce. Black unemployment is persistently twice that of whites. And the back-white wage disparity, which extends from blue-collar workers to those holding advanced degrees, has grown over the past 20 years.”<sup>31</sup>

Most companies believe that racial inequality due to poor education, health care services and poverty has to be solved by the Federal and local government , since “it is the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow laws that impoverished generations of black Americans.”<sup>32</sup> Simon Freakley, chief executive of Alix-Partners, disagreed: “It’s utterly unrealistic for anybody to bifurcate a societal problem... it’s also a business issue because business exists in society, with

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<sup>27</sup> “Order above law,” *The Economist*, June 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020, p. 29-30.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>30</sup> “Order above law,” *The Economist*, June 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020, p. 31.

<sup>31</sup> “The Great Awakening?” *The Economist*, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020, p. 52; see also “So other people would also be free,” *The Economist* June 13, 2020, p. 52.

<sup>32</sup> “So other people would also be free,” *The Economist* June 13, 2020, p. 52.

employers, customers, suppliers and stakeholders” stating that such views are “naïve and in denial about the hold of racism on our culture, including our business culture.”<sup>33</sup>

Related to company practices, according to the Harvard Business Review, women and minorities are being penalized for pushing for more racial diversity in their respective companies even though “a poll published on June 9<sup>th</sup> by Edelman, a public relations firm, finds that nearly two-thirds of Americans, including 57% of whites, are “very” or “extremely” concerned about systemic racism.”<sup>34</sup> This means that business has to provide the leadership in ensuring that the races mix at workplaces since the black and white people in America are typically attend different churches, live in different neighborhoods, and attend different schools. This is all the more urgent as Nelson James Bridgespan pointed to a research that suggests that “three-quarters of whites have no black people in their social circle.”<sup>35</sup>

#### 4. Church’s Prophetic Denunciation

Marginality is a color and creed-coded condition, manipulated by supremacist ideology to perpetuate systemic racism, segregation, racial profiling, and bigotry. Marginality was the lot of the orphans and widows whom Yahweh favors (Ex 22:22; 23: 6, 11; Lev 23:22; 25:25, 35, 39; Deut 10:8; 14: 18-19, 28-29; Ps 68:5; Is 1:17; Matt 25: 32-46; 1 Tim 5:3-16). Marginality was assumed by God in the Incarnation of the Son and invested with “interstitial power” by Jesus in his ministry as he ate and drank with the least, last and lost in early Palestine. Marginality becomes the locus of God’s salvific actions, the site of the inbreaking of God’s reign of justice and peace, mediated through Jesus’s ministry, and later, through the early Jesus Movement succeeded by the Christian Missionary Movement in the Greco-Roman world. Marginality is the site of resistance against the imperialist power of the Temple State and the imperial power of Rome and will be the site of “insurrectionary power” of the civil activists against the supremacist ideology.

Perpetuated by the supremacist ideology, marginality is not unrelated to the virulent neo-Malthusianism and the throwaway culture that makes lives at the margin dispensable in a technocratic society.<sup>36</sup> Hence Pope Francis warned, “There are a large number of people who are on the margins. And we do not see them, because poverty is shy. They have become an integral part of the landscape; they are things.”<sup>37</sup> To see them like St. Teresa of Calcutta is

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> “The Great Awakening?” *The Economist*, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020, p. 51.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>36</sup> Austen Ivereigh, ‘Pope Francis says pandemic can be a ‘place of conversion’’, <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/features/2/17845/pope-francis-says-pandemic-can-be-a-place-of-conversion->, accessed 20 May, 2019.

<sup>37</sup> “Rethink: Pope Francis warns the poor have become an integral part of the landscape”, <https://www.fr24news.com/a/2020/06/rethink-pope-francis-warns-the-poor-have-become-an-integral-part-of-the-landscape.html>, accessed June 20, 2020.

“to embark on a journey of conversion” for to see the poor “means to restore their humanity” and “we can’t settle for a welfare policy such as we have for rescued animals.”<sup>38</sup>

The Vatican has long been vocal about racial injustice, and popes dating to Paul VI have voiced support for the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King Jr.’s message of nonviolent protest. Francis denounced the “sin of racism” and twice identified Floyd as the victim of a “tragic” killing. In a message read in Italian and English during his general audience, Francis expressed concerns about violence during the protests, saying it was self-destructive. Furthermore, Francis averred, “We cannot close our eyes to any form of racism or exclusion, while pretending to defend the sacredness of every human life.”<sup>39</sup>

Marginality has to be overcome through the promotion of “the common good, that is, the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment” for all the ethnic communities victimized by systemic racism and racial inequality.<sup>40</sup> The global phenomenon of systemic marginality reminds us that the promotion of the common good of the ethnic minorities “takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race” and “every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family.”<sup>41</sup>

Therefore the global outcry and the subsequent actions of the US House Judiciary Committee and the draft resolution by a group of African states for an international commission of inquiry into abuses resulting in deaths of black people in the United States is necessary to contribute to the understanding that “the common good is a reality in the cooperation for the creation and maintenance of national and international institutions” whose role on behalf of the disenfranchised communities are indispensable.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, *Laudato Si’* reminds us that the promotion of the common good “also extends to future generations” and “we can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity.”<sup>43</sup> The unmasking and dismantling of the structural

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<sup>38</sup> Austen Ivereigh, “Pope Francis on Living with COVID-19: ‘A Time of Great Uncertainty’, April 8, 2020, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/time-great-uncertainty>, accessed April 10, 2020.

<sup>39</sup> “Pope Francis Sends Strong Message to U.S. Catholics After George Floyd’s Death”, <https://time.com/5851155/pope-francis-george-floyd-black-lives-matter-protest/>, accessed July 20, 2020.

<sup>40</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* (“The Church in the Modern World”), Vatican II, 1965 #26, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html), accessed 20 May, 2018.

<sup>41</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* (“The Church in the Modern World”), Vatican II, 1965 #26.

<sup>42</sup> Patrick Riordan, *A Grammar of the Common Good: Speaking of Globalization* (London & New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 180.

<sup>43</sup> *Laudato Si’* (“Praise Be”), Pope Francis, 2015 #159, [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html), accessed 20 May, 2018.

evil of marginality suffered by the vulnerable communities through the power of protests and structural change ushers in the reign of God of justice, peace and inclusion in our midst.

## 5. Actions: Structural changes

The inbreaking of God's Kingdom calls for structural change that begins with the notion that every nation is a country and an idea and when there is a mismatch between the two, revolution and insurrection erupt to bring about the desired changes. Change is possible through the promotion of the common good of the disenfranchised communities that resists and neutralizes the systemic racism and racial inequality with the envisioned structural changes.

5.1. *Clear Legislation.* What is needed, in Barry Freidman's opinion, who runs the new York University's policing project is that the state and city legislators, with public input, pass laws to regulate the police, not the police themselves: "Everywhere else in government, we legislate. We set out rules and policies. We don't leave it up to the regulated entity to set up their own rules."<sup>44</sup> At the Federal level, under the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Obama Administration created the President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing in 2014, with recommendations on modernizing police practices. The federal government also increased funding for Community Oriented Policing Services to improve police-community relations. At the same time, the DOJ can investigate and prosecute departments for violating people's constitutional rights and arrive at enforceable consent decrees to avoid protracted litigations and agree on reforms to the police practices.

5.2. *Overcome the current inequality in schooling, policing and health.* The government has a role in reducing racial inequality. "Federal spending worth \$22.6 bn already goes on housing vouchers. Schemes to give poor Americans a choice over where they live have Republican and Democratic backing in Congress. With better schools and less crime, segregated districts become gentrified, leaving them more racially mixed."<sup>45</sup> Business have a role to play too. "The place where people mix most is at work. However, just four *Fortune* 500 firms have black chief executives and only 3 % of senior American managers are black."<sup>46</sup>

5.3. Specifically, in the US, some states and cities have already banned chokeholds. Some Democratic politicians seem ready to take on the police unions. On June 8, 2020, Democrats in the House of Representatives put forward a bill that would, among other things, make it easier to prosecute police and limit the transfer of armor and weapons from the Pentagon to police departments. Republicans will likewise put forward their own bill. "Defunding" risks a backlash, but the details of redirecting part of the police budget to housing or mental health, of the local government makes the attempt worthwhile. More urgently, public pressure be mounted to ensure that all officers involved in the killing of George Floyd face legal due

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<sup>44</sup> "Order above law," *The Economist*, June 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020, p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> "The Power of Protest", *The Economist* June 13, 2020, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

process. Measures must be put in place to expel and prosecute officers for even one instance of excessive force or the failure to intervene when excessive force is used. Finally, there is a need to ensure every police killing is independently and transparently investigated.

For the religious institutions and movements of the different faiths, the multipronged campaigns to bring about structural changes are necessary to rid society of systemic racism and inequality. But religious faith further insists on personal conversion from violence at all levels of society and this must be promoted as “conversion rends unjust social structures as well as human hearts.”<sup>47</sup>

## Conclusion

As the data and survey indicated, marginality is a dehumanizing condition, manipulated by supremacist ideology, to perpetuate structural inequality and injustices that the Black Lives Matter Movement has denounced as a systemic racism that police brutality and profiling have exacerbated. At the same time, in the light of *Laudato Si'*, marginality is the lot suffered by mother earth when humankind inflicts violence that becomes “evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she 'groans in travail' (Rom 8:22)” (*Laudato Si'*, 2).<sup>48</sup> Hence, the full flourishing of humankind and Mother Earth/creation must be promoted so that the violated vulnerable humans and planet earth enjoy the full flourishing of life as *imago Dei* and as *creatura Dei* in a just, humane and green society/world.

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<sup>47</sup> See Chapter 7 “Communion and Liberation: The Contribution of Liberation and Feminist Theologians to Understanding Communion,” in Catherine Nerney and Hal Tausig, *Re-Imaging Life Together in America: A New Gospel of Community* (Chicago: Sheed and Ward, 2002), p. 119.

<sup>48</sup> “Caring for Our Common Home: Pope Francis’ Prayer Intention and His Trip to Mexico”, <http://www.usccb.org/media/blogs-and-columns/entre-amigos/english/march-april.cfm>, accessed June 20, 2020.