



Interfaith Coalition
Against Racism

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The Honorable Toni Preckwinkle
Cook County Board President
118 N. Clark Street – Rm. 537
Chicago, Illinois 60602

April 20, 2020

Dear President Preckwinkle:

The Interfaith Coalition Against Racism (ICAR), comprised of several Chicago-based congregations partnering to address systemic racism and injustice within our city and nation, is deeply concerned with the number of low-level and non-violent offenders being detained within Cook County Jail amid the COVID19 pandemic.

While the coronavirus continues to spread around the globe, detained low-level and non-violent offenders are becoming more and more susceptible to contracting the virus. This is of primary concern at Cook County Jail where we've learned at least one inmate died from the virus prior to having their day in court.

While we applaud the County for releasing the low-level and non-violent offenders that have been released, we implore the entire County Board of Commissioners and Sheriff Dart to do what's necessary to preserve the sanctity of life for those of identical caliber and those who remain otherwise. As faith leaders, all life is sacred regardless of intentional or unintentional misjudgments or poor decisions. Therefore, as a coalition, we strongly recommend that this governing body take all necessary actions to depopulate where feasible, provide PPE to inmates, guards and staff where needed and begin to honor the lives of those incarcerated in a just and humane fashion.

As this virus ravishes communities of color, The Interfaith Coalition Against Racism (ICAR) calls for an immediate end to the detention of those inmates who would be better protected within their own neighborhoods and homes as opposed to what some have described as the death trap at Cook County Jail. It is impossible to practice social distancing within the jail and likewise to sanitize and sustain sanitation throughout. Therefore, depopulation is the most meaningful manner in which to preserve life for all those currently detained at the Cook County Jail.

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Interfaith Coalition Against Racism (ICAR) works to dismantle racism within our city of Chicago, state of Illinois, and our nation. We accomplish this through interfaith collaboration, cross-cultural programming, relationship building, advocacy and activism. We seek to embody our faith and build the Beloved Community together. Learn more at ChicagoICAR.org.

Signatures can be found on the back of this page

Signatures

Rev. Randall K. Blakey, LaSalle Street Church

Rev. Vicky Curtiss, Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago

Rev. Peggy Lo, St. Chrysostom's Church

Rev. Myron F. McCoy, First United Methodist Church at The Chicago Temple

Rev. Dr. Aaron J. McLeod, Esq., Gorham United Methodist Church

Elder Anna Lloyd, Hope Presbyterian Church

Michael Rabbitt, St. Mary of the Woods

Min. Atty. Michelle Day, Nehemiah Trinity Rising

Jacqueline Lynn, Peace and Justice Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago