

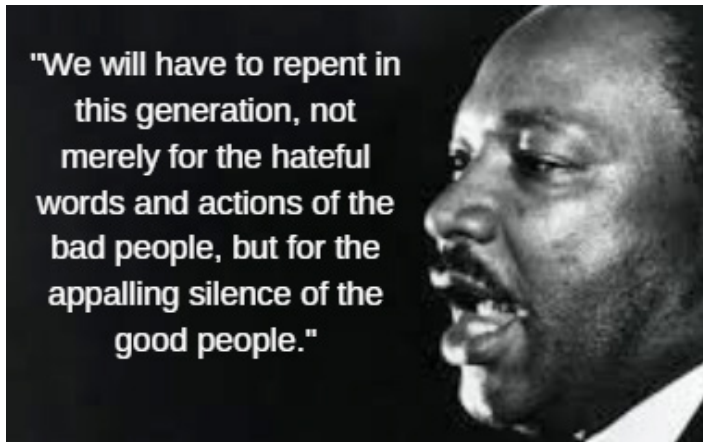


## JPIC Corner – August 2019

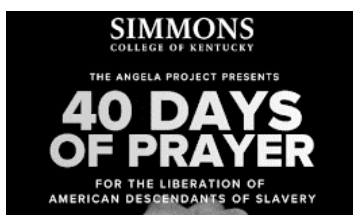
### The Angela Project - commemorating 400 years of slavery in America

2019 is the 400th Anniversary of the arrival of the first Africans to be sold into bondage in North America in 1619 in Virginia. Such a historic moment raises questions about what happened and how little we know about this. The significance of the 1619 date is an important historical moment. “The reason 1619 matters is because it marks the genesis of a black English-speaking community in the United States.” (*Darryl Scott, a professor of history at Howard University in Washington D.C.*)

So how did the recognition of this history come about. In January 2018, Congress enacted a new law to establish the “**400 Years of African-American History Commission Act.**” “The bill established the 400 Years of African-American History Commission to develop and carry out activities throughout the United States to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Africans in the English colonies at Point Comfort, Virginia, in 1619.” (*H.R. 1242 (115th): 400 Years of African-American History Commission Act*). One of the commissions duties was to “encourage civic, patriotic, historical, educational, artistic, religious, economic, and other organizations throughout the United States to organize and participate in anniversary activities to expand understanding and appreciation of the arrival of the African in the United States and the contributions of African Americans to the United States.” (*text of H.R. 1242*).



Vida Robertson, director of the Center for Critical Race Studies at the University of Houston, says the anniversary marks the beginning of a dark chapter in the history of the United States – **the first commission of the nation’s original sin.** “The African presence is engrained in our American consciousness from before the beginning of the nation,” Robertson said. “And so, therefore, it’s engrained in how we understand ourselves.” (Houston Matters, Houston Public Media). James Sidbury, Rice University history professor, says the arrival of the first African slaves marks a turning point because, from then, **slavery shifted from being comprised largely of European indentured servants – and even Native American slaves – working side by side to eventually becoming predominantly comprised of Africans across the American South.** (Houston Matters, Houston Public Media).



Many organizations have participated in presenting historical material and events in recognition and commemoration of this powerful anniversary. **The Angela Project** is a noteworthy one. It is a three-year comprehensive program, 2017 - 2019, to build awareness of individual and collective responsibility to advocate for reparative justice—leading up to the 400th anniversary of slavery in America with the bold goal of setting the nation’s agenda for the next 400 years.

It was founded by Simmons College of Kentucky and Simmons President, Dr. Kevin Cosby. One of the unique aspect of The Angela Project is the 40 days of prayer booklet it created. It offers the prayer community, the opportunity of 40 days of prayer for the liberation of American descendants of slavery. It’s a beautiful presentation of history accompanied by meaningful prayers. The 40 days started July 12 and ended August 20, 2019. (It’s worth reading as the initiative is in keeping with the SSpS mission to build community and stand against racism.) <https://www.simmonscollegeky.edu/1619-2019-commemorating-400-years-of-slavery-in-america/> Any community who would like to read this should contact Sr. Rose Therese in the JPIC office.

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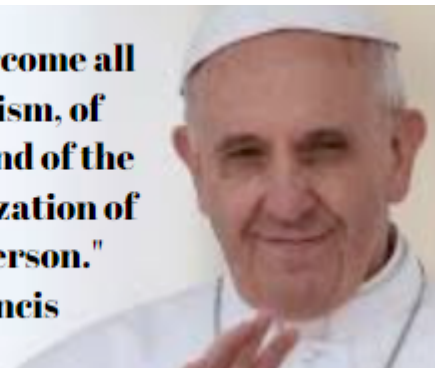
History is a looking glass to how things happened. It doesn't mean that history needs to repeat itself. So how do you maintain hope that attitudes will change? Not just in this example but for every cultural group that has experienced racism and injustice.

As SSpS, we need to commit to finding ways that our communities can be engaged together in efforts that advance racial justice. Here are a few biblical reminders that racism is offensive to God:

- » We are all made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27)
- » You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:39-40)
- » Love rejoices in what is true and looks for what is best (1 Cor. 13:4-7)

As SSpS, we need to pray, advocate and get involved in actions. We should embrace the need for change in our attitudes. We should continue and grow the beautiful SSpS ministry of Bible school in the South. Pray each day that we can work each day to make this world a better place for all, regardless of race, creed or color, nationality, social status or religious affiliation.

**"We must overcome all forms of racism, of intolerance, and of the instrumentalization of the human person."  
Pope Francis**



*"If you're walking down the right path and you're willing to keep walking, eventually you'll make progress."*

*Former President of the United States, Barack Obama*

God of justice, in your wisdom you create all people in your image, without exception. Through your goodness, open our eyes to see the dignity, beauty, and worth of every human being. Open our minds to understand that all your children are brothers and sisters in the same human family. Open our hearts to repent of racist attitudes, behaviors, and speech, which demean others. Open our ears to hear the cries of those wounded by racial discrimination, and their passionate appeals for change. Strengthen our resolve to make amends for past injustices and to right the wrongs of history. And fill us with courage that we might seek to heal wounds, build bridges, forgive and be forgiven, and establish peace and equality for all in our communities. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. (Catholic Charities)



**By Sr. Rose Therese, SSpS & Lori Brayer**