



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 23, 2015

Contact: Rep. David Bowen
(608) 266-7671

Statement from Rep. Bowen on the Attack on Emanuel AME Church

MILWAUKEE – Rep. David Bowen (D-Milwaukee) issued a statement today in response to the white supremacist terrorist attack on Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina:

“Like so many of my fellow Americans, I mourned those lost in last week’s terrorist attack on Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Rev. Clementa Pinckney, Rev. Sharonda Singleton, Rev. Daniel Simmons, Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor, Myra Thompson, Tywanza Sanders, Ethel Lee Lance, and Susie Thompson and their families and friends are in all of our hearts. But as we mourn, we cannot lose sight of the reason these men and women are no longer with us. We must address the atmosphere of hatred toward people of color in this country.

Unlike most of the perpetrators of mass violence in recent years, the killer behind last week’s shooting was very clear what his motivation was. He was quoted as saying to one of his victims, “You rape our women, and you’re taking over our country. And you have to go.” The manifesto he posted online contained similar thoughts, like “[African-Americans] are stupid and violent. At the same time they have the capacity to be very slick.” While we don’t often see such sentiments expressed so nakedly, the ideas behind them are all around us, while advocates against them have been ignored. Those ideas show up in rhetoric of mainstream conservative media, and they are reaffirmed by our elected officials.

For example, when conservatives in the media refer to our nation’s first black President, Barack Obama, as the "Food Stamp President" and politicians treat FoodShare recipients like they’re drug addicts trying to game the system, it reaffirms the idea that black people are lazy but slick. When unarmed black residents are treated differently than their white counterparts by law enforcement--and many times killed—and politicians seeking to be tough on crime are arresting protestors calling for change, it reaffirms the idea that black people are "lawless" and "thugs". When they tell stories of people being driven up from Chicago by the busload to vote in our elections in order to pass unnecessary voter ID legislation to make it harder to vote, it reaffirms the idea that black people are stealing the country away from law-abiding white people. And when the leaders of our state blame Milwaukee for Wisconsin’s budget problems and call it a drain on the rest of the state, it reaffirms the idea that black people are not just a burden to our state but to the larger narrative that black people are destroying this country.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DAVID BOWEN

WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY

10TH DISTRICT

Once we are honest about how much of the Charleston killer’s rhetoric is reflected in conservative policy and conservative Fox News talking points, then we can move forward to ensure we all are willing to stand up to hate that kills black people praying in a church. This request for accountability also includes liberals who fail to call out and act against racism at every chance they can. Gov. Walker did the right thing by donating \$3,500 of campaign funds from the leader of the racist hate group that inspired Dylann Roof’s manifesto. The Republican Governor of South Carolina did the right thing by finally proposing to take down the confederate flag. But they are short-sighted if they truly believe this is the end of their contribution to this discussion and action to reconcile this hate. The next steps must include taking a hard look at policies, lack of resources, and rhetoric that oppress black people and devalues the contributions of their ancestors to build this nation. Racist ideas and oppressive messaging don’t need to inspire a mad man with a gun to hurt people. They can do just as much damage in the long run by encouraging politicians to pass oppressive policy.”
