

Black Pastors Release Letter Defending Amy Coney Barrett

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BOSTON—An inter-faith group of more than 49 dozen Black pastors and Church leaders – all of them Democrats – has written an open letter demanding that Judge Amy Coney Barrett not be targeted for her faith.
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The letter, organized by the Seymour Institute for Black Church and Policy Studies states: "Today we stand with, and speak in defense of, Judge Amy Coney Barrett. As black Christians we will not stand by in silence as our sister in the faith is persecuted for the 'political crime' of her beliefs."

The letter also states: "As bishops, pastors, other clergy and intellectuals from the various Pentecostal-Charismatic and Full Gospel denominations we write to appeal to the sense of justice of every American, and to the American tradition of individual freedom." It continues by noting that "attacks on her Christian beliefs and her membership in a charismatic Christian community reflect rank religious bigotry that has no legitimate place in our political debates or public life. We condemn these vile attacks—which began three years ago during the process of her confirmation for the judicial post she currently holds. As the descendants of slaves we are particularly sensitive to acts of discrimination and we demand an end to this reprehensible conduct.

"The truth, however, is that the Constitution of the United States itself prohibits religious tests for public office. Those who say that Judge Barrett's charismatic Christian faith—or ours—is a threat to the Constitution are themselves enemies of the Constitution. They are enemies of the freedom of the individual. Such behavior cannot be tolerated. We must stand in defense of freedom of conscience in principle and defend Judge Barrett's right to practice her faith in particular."

Rev. Eugene F. Rivers, III, founder and director of the Seymour Institute for Black Church and Policy Studies – the organization that organized the letter – said that the group of pastors felt the need to speak out because they believe religious bigotry has no place in American public life, and because "her charismatic beliefs and those of America's Black Churches are very similar."

Rivers added that regardless of whether Barrett is the nominee, at some point in the future, he and the other signatories would welcome the opportunity to meet Barrett "to pray with her, and to discuss with her both civic and theological issues."

"Obviously, if she is the nominee, her days will be filled with official meetings, and we would not expect to meet with her until she had completed that grueling process, but at some point, it would be an honor for us to meet a sister in Christ, a fellow charismatic Christian, and a woman who has adopted not one, but two Black children from Haiti," Rivers said.

SOURCE Seymour Institute for Black Church and Policy Studies