

# We Shall Overcome

Today is Juneteenth (more on that later), and America is engaged in a war on two fronts: the coronavirus pandemic and the reality of racism that has bubbled up in the nation's consciousness with the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25.

Daily news of events pertaining to both dominate the news cycle in newspapers, radio and television and in conversations in homes, the workplace and churches. Feelings of fear, uncertainty and anxiety are rampant throughout society.

This week, the government reported 2.2 million cases of COVID-19 causing 119,000 deaths. Gratefully, 680,000 affected by it have recovered. For our company, Life Care Center of Kirkland found itself in the spotlight as the first widely known facility to be infected by the virus, and subsequently, as many as 115 of our buildings have had patients and/or associates infected with it. The good news is that we are turning the tide, thanks to the bravery of our associates, true champions of care and compassion.

Our country is not done with COVID-19, and we won't begin to see life as we knew it return to some semblance of normalcy until there is a vaccine, which scientists are pushing hard to develop.

Protests erupted all over the United States following the death of Floyd, a black man, at the hands of a white policeman. On Wednesday, President Trump announced an executive order on law enforcement reform, and bills are pending in Congress. Americans are wrestling with systemic racism and what to do about it.

*Merriam-Webster* dictionary defines racism as "a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities, and that the racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race." Such conviction must be rejected and replaced by understanding and compassion. The answer, of course, lies in the heart with the commandments from our Lord to love God and to love our neighbors.

A powerful song that is applicable to both the pandemic and racism is *We Shall Overcome*, a gospel song that became the anthem of the civil rights movement. Recently, I was provided a video with a performance of the song by The Aeolians of Oakwood University, a group that was named Choir of the World Champions during the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Llangollen, Wales, in 2017. Oakwood University is a private, historically black Seventh-day Adventist school in Huntsville, Alabama.

(more)

The video (which includes a clip from Kirkland) and the song focus on faith and hope in dealing with COVID-19, but it is particularly appropriate for today, since this is Juneteenth, which is also known as Freedom Day or Jubilee Day, commemorating June 19, 1865, when Union Gen. Gordon Granger read federal orders in Galveston, Texas, that all previously enslaved people in Texas were free. Although the *Emancipation Proclamation* had formally freed them almost 2½ years earlier, Texas was the most remote of the slave states, with a low presence of Union troops, so enforcement of the proclamation had been slow and inconsistent.

As the song declares, we shall overcome COVID-19 *and* systemic racism – with trust in a loving and merciful God who remains in control – and a determination to see every person as a brother and sister in our Lord’s great family.

To see the video and hear the song, click on this link: [\*\*We Shall Overcome.\*\*](#)

– Beecher Hunter