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This version of Christianity distorts faith and destroys democracy | Opinion

Milwaukee interfaith group will rally Sunday ahead of the Republican National Convention.

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We are blessed to live in a country where democracy is treasured and celebrated, and “liberty and justice” are promised to all. But now these sacred rights are under threat. Some conservative Christian groups are working to impose their version of Christianity on our nation, controlling how we live, what we learn and what we believe. They would forfeit 250 years of democracy in their quest for political power and societal control, under what's often described as white Christian nationalism.

The goal of this movement is to rule our country according to their conservative religious beliefs. Our founding fathers understood the danger of allowing government to control or be controlled by religion and made the separation of church and state a cornerstone of our democracy. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated, the church must never be “the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool.”

Our democracy envisions a government of the people, by the people and for the people – all the people. The First and Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution establish freedom of religion, speech, assembly and representation - for all the people. This melding of different religious, political and social beliefs, ideas and ways of life is a core strength of our democracy. By contrast, white Christian nationalists view it is a threat.

White Christian nationalists see themselves as the only true Americans

White Christian nationalism is a political ideology that elevates certain politically conservative white Christians over everyone else. They consider themselves the only true Americans and seek to control every aspect of our society, including family, education, government, business, and media, and to restrict, intimidate and otherwise disenfranchise people who are different from them.

This ideology seeks power and privilege out of a sense of entitlement and superiority. It is fueled by a fear of and anger at minorities and others who they believe will take away or destroy what they consider to be theirs. It leads to restrictive policies, oppressive laws, hate crimes and violence, all designed to deny power to these ‘others’ and keep it for themselves. White Christian nationalism would reverse decades of progress on the civil rights of Black and brown people, women, children, religious minorities and LGBTQ.

This is frighteningly real. For example, consider the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025, an ambitious document that sets forth a blueprint for how a conservative administration can usher in this new dystopian white Christian nationalist America beginning next year.

This movement claims to be Christian, but it is far outside the Gospel

White Christian nationalism claims to be Christian but it is not – it is the opposite of the Gospel of Jesus. Where Jesus preached love, joy, hope and peace, white Christian nationalism relies on fear, anger, oppression and hate. He said what we do for the least of them we do for him. He judged others by their actions, not by their ethnicity, gender or station in life and rejected political power when it was offered and preached against the use of power to oppress others. Jesus sought to create a 'kingdom on earth' where all would be accepted and love would drive out fear – a Beloved Community.

We believe people of faith are called to build this "Beloved Community" as was envisioned by King. This is a community that welcomes and loves everyone as people of inherent value and worth. It cares for and about others. Diversity is considered a strength and an opportunity to learn and grow.

When there is conflict, those in community speak the truth in love and seek to understand rather than judge. They believe that two well-meaning people can see an issue differently without becoming enemies. They work for resolution with respectful and honest dialogue instead of anger and violence.

We've been political foes. Why we're uniting to build trust in Wisconsin elections.

It was in this spirit that the "We All Belong" campaign was launched last year with three goals: to protect democracy, reject white Christian nationalism and build the Beloved Community. It is part of MICA (Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope), a multi-racial, multi-faith organization that has been organizing and advocating for social justice in Milwaukee for over 35 years.

We believe the choice between Beloved Community and white Christian nationalism is a battle for the soul of our nation. We stand for a nation where 'We All Belong' and urge you to stand with us.

The "We All Belong" campaign will hold a "Rally for Democracy" on Sunday, July 14, from 2 to 6 p.m. at the Helene Zelazo Center on the UW-Milwaukee campus. Kathy Schluter is part of the executive leadership team at MICA.

