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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Official Press Statement: Tragedy in South Carolina**

**DETROIT** – Today our hearts and prayers and most earnest condolences are extended to the families and the friends of those who have tragically lost their lives in the shooting of innocent people at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston South Carolina.

This most recent shooting tears at the very spirit and the most tender fiber of our humanity. The church is a place, as are all institutions of faith, for the down trodden to be lifted up, the lost to be found, and the blind to be able to see. This tragedy is bigger than just a mere shooting at a local church.

The history of the Civil Rights movement in America cannot be separated from the history of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. It is the oldest African Methodist Church in the Southern United States. Founded in 1816, this church led by Morris Brown and later Denmark Vesey, who helped to plan a slave revolt in 1822, is rooted in the quest for liberation and sanctuary for the African American community. It is a church that has been burned down by fire because of its open door policy for all black churches to worship there when it was legally forbidden by the laws of South Carolina, tumbled by earthquakes, and has weathered every storm that has attempted to shake its very foundation.

Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne installed preachers there. Booker T. Washington spoke of liberating the masses there. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. advocated for civil rights there. Coretta Scott King led a march in support of striking hospital workers from there. State Senator and Pastor, Rev. Dr. Clementa Pinckney, had continued this tradition of faith, social justice, and spiritual inspiration during his tenure as leader of this historic congregation. It was due to the opening of the doors of the church that a young man, now accused of this heinous crime by the name of Dylann Roof, age 21, has left the nation to deal with this horrific act of terror.

It is reported that after spending one hour in the church attending bible class with its members, the suspect then turned his weapon on the church and its members, which has now resulted in the murder of nine innocent people. America must be better than this!

Today our nation mourns. Our citizens are all called to prayer and to action. Let us use this time not only to pray, but to continue to work towards a de-escalation of violence, securing our institutions of faith, working to implement appropriate laws involving guns, and respecting the dignity and lives of all of God's children. We have been here before. Unless we take appropriate steps to act now, we shall inevitably be here again. Let us all remember that peace comes through justice. In the words of the prophet Micah who asked the question:

*"What does the Lord require of us, but to do justice, to love mercy,  
and to walk humbly with our God." Micah 6:8*

*The Detroit Branch NAACP is the largest branch in the Association. For more information please call (313) 871-2087.*

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