News



People take part in a protest against police brutality and in support of Black Lives Matter during a march in New York City on July 9, 2016. (Reuters/Eduardo Munoz)

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Organizers of the March for Racial Justice, slated for the National Mall in late September, have apologized for scheduling the event on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year for Jews.

"The organizers of the March for Racial Justice did not realize that September 30 was Yom Kippur," they said in a statement released Wednesday (Aug. 16). "Choosing this date, we now know, was a grave and hurtful oversight on our part. It was unintentional and we are sorry for this pain as well as for the time it has taken for us to respond. Our mistake highlights the need for our communities to form stronger relationships."

They said recent events in Charlottesville, Virginia, in which three were left dead after neo-Nazi sympathizers and counterprotesters converged, as well as President Trump's suggestions that "both sides" were at fault, demonstrate a need for unity.

"We have learned from our Jewish friends that Yom Kippur is a day of making amends and of asking and receiving forgiveness," they said. "We hope that our sincere apology will be received with compassion, and that we will build a stronger relationship among all our communities as a result."

The march is a response to the June 16 verdict acquitting a Minnesota police officer in the death of Philando Castile, whose girlfriend made a viral video of the traffic stop. The Sept. 30 date was chosen because a National Mall permit was available and it marked the anniversary of the 1919 Elaine Massacre, in which hundreds of black people were killed by a white mob in Arkansas.

March officials said they are working on ways to include the Jewish community after sundown on Sept. 30 — when the holiday ends — or the following day. They are seeking a permit for a "sister march" in New York on Oct. 1 and are planning other related marches that day.

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On Sunday, Jewish actress Mayim Bialik, who stars on CBS' "The Big Bang Theory," was among the critics of the march being held on Yom Kippur, saying "it automatically excludes a distinct portion of people who historically have stood up for racial equality in enormous ways."

After march organizers issued their plans for additional events, Steven Goldstein, executive director of the Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect, thanked them for "coming up with a beautiful way to allow Americans from all faiths and of all parts of the magnificent mosaic of our nation to march for racial justice this fall."

March organizers also said they will provide "racial justice resources and prayers" for observances of Yom Kippur.

"This is a long-term struggle and our relationship to each other transcends one day and one march," they said.