

**ITEM B.103  
FOR ACTION**

<i>FOR PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE USE ONLY</i>			
	A. Finance		E. Corporate Property, Legal, Finance
X	B. Justice		F. PC(USA), A Corporation
	C. Leadership		G. Audit
	D. Worshiping Communities		H. Executive Committee
			J. Board Nominating & Governance Subcommittee
			P. Plenary

**Subject: Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community**

**Recommendations:**

**That the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board on behalf of the Churchwide Antiracism Policy Team recommends that the 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly (2016) approve the revisions to the Churchwide Antiracism Policy and approve the following recommendations:**

- 1. Direct the Stated Clerk to challenge the church through a direct communication to do a personal self-examination of its participation in structures that support and maintain racism regardless of the good intentions of individual Presbyterians.**
- 2. Direct the Office of the General Assembly to make the revised policy and accompanying study guides available to congregations for study and discussion.**
- 3. Urge mid-councils to provide an annual one-day event dedicated to antiracism, similar to sexual harassment, abuse prevention, and officer trainings.**
- 4. Direct the Office of Mid-Council Ministries to identify best practices for antiracism or cultural humility trainings for Committees on Ministry and Committees on Preparation for Ministry (or their local equivalents) and disseminate resources.**
- 5. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency's Office of Communications to collect and disseminate stories of congregations and mid-councils and other organizations dismantling racism.**
- 6. Direct the national church agencies to jointly formulate a communications plan to share antiracism resources, and create an electronic campaign to send information on antiracism resources and trainings to mid-councils, congregations, and Presbyterian-affiliated institutions.**
- 7. Encourage existing leadership development initiatives of the six agencies to include antiracism training.**
- 8. Commend the principles and objectives of the Report on Creating a Climate for Change Within the Presbyterian Church and encourage the agencies to adhere to the employment practices and hiring objectives sought by the Climate for Change report.**

**9. Commend the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns for its ongoing commitment to holding up antiracism to the church and holding us accountable for our deficiencies.**

**10. Urge the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities to encourage its member institutions to provide regular antiracism trainings for students, faculty, and staff, to integrate racially and culturally diverse voices in the curriculum, and to revisit hiring policies to ensure the faculty and staff are racially diverse.**

**11. Urge the Committee on Theological Education to encourage its affiliated seminaries to provide regular antiracism trainings for students, faculty, and staff, to integrate racially and culturally diverse voices in the curriculum, and to revisit hiring policies to ensure the faculty and staff are racially diverse.**

**12. Encourage congregations to offer at least one annual adult education series on an article or book written by a person of color (suggestions are in the accompanying study guide).**

**13. Commend the various mission program areas that made antiracism a consistent part of their programming and encourage them to continue their efforts as a model to the church.**

## **FACING RACISM: A VISION OF THE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNITY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Churchwide Antiracism Policy Team began its work by carefully reviewing the 1999 antiracism policy. While some of its references are dated, it is lamentably current in its content and analysis, as the realities of racism in the United States have not improved significantly since 1999. However, in the intervening years, there has been opportunity to observe what was and was not effective in the policy statement and recommendations. The team agreed that the most useful form of updating and revising the policy itself would be to make the ideas more accessible to the whole church. A short vision statement, in simple and compelling language, conserves the analysis and commitment of this policy (see page 2). This vision statement can be used alone when brevity and clarity are needed, yet it also summarizes, introduces, and invites readers into the policy.

The team also aspired to boldness. This is not a time for timidity. The current struggles over racial justice in the United States mark a *kairos* moment. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has long held strong convictions regarding the sinfulness of racism and the need to struggle against it. Speaking our own convictions now, with clarity and power, could make a tangible difference in the current struggle. Furthermore, it is required of us, as the church is called to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. Neglecting to speak powerfully in this moment would also be regrettable.

In keeping with the desire to make this policy accessible to the whole church, the team created a series of six study guides. Each guide is appropriate for an hour-long conversation among adults or teens. Together, they provide a pedagogical tool for empowering church communities to have important conversations about race and racism in relation to Christian faith.

The study guides are based on topics and concepts covered in the policy. They are also integral to language and ideas from the new vision statement. The topics of the six guides are: Biblical Imperatives to Antiracism, Envisioning a New Way of Life Together, PC (USA) and Racial Reconciliation, Racism

101, Enduring Legacy of Racism in the U.S., and Responding as a Community of Faith. This training tool includes a list of antiracism resources for congregations or presbyteries desiring further information. The study guides are available at <http://www.pcusa.org/racialjustice> (Presbyterian Mission Agency's Racial Justice web site).

Finally, the team has developed new policy recommendations. The PC (USA) has undergone many changes in the past sixteen years. New strategies are needed to be faithful to our antiracist commitments in new circumstances. Therefore, the team puts forth a number of recommendations to put our theological convictions into practice in the denomination as a whole.

## VISION STATEMENT

The Bible insistently reveals that God loves diversity and justice. This is seen in the wide variety of creation in which God delights. It is heard in the words of the prophets, who reject oppression and commend justice as true worship. It is embodied in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, who resists the power of empire and values all persons, regardless of status, as children of God. Jesus gathered a community of people around him that crossed over every social and cultural boundary. Those who had been set apart were brought together: poor and rich, male and female, gentile and Jew, centurion and tax collector, Canaanite, Galilean, and Syro-Phoenician. Jesus called this community together in anticipation of, and participation in, the coming of the new creation.

Presbyterian theologian Letty Russell says that in Jesus we see what God intends for all humanity. The compassion, hospitality, justice, and love of others that we see in Jesus indicate what God wills for us. Russell says that Jesus is "a memory of the future" (Russell, 1979, 157). While redemption and salvation are the work of God, we are invited to participate in moving toward this eschatological vision of a new creation. As our *Brief Statement of Faith* proclaims, "In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives, even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth, praying, 'Come, Lord Jesus!'" (*Book of Confessions*, 10.4, Lines 72–76). We are blessed to be drawn into the very movement of God. Therefore, discipleship requires our efforts to act in accordance with God's love of justice and diversity.

Racism is the opposite of what God intends for humanity. It is the rejection of the other, which is entirely contrary to the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. It is a form of idolatry that elevates human-made hierarchies of value over divinely-given free grace. Through colonization and slavery, the United States of America helped to create and embrace a system of valuing and devaluing people based on skin color and ethnic identity. The name for this system is White supremacy. This system deliberately subjugated groups of people for the purpose of material, political, and social advantage. Racism is the continuing legacy of White supremacy. Racism is a lie about our fellow human beings, for it says that some are less than others. It is also a lie about God, for it falsely claims that God favors parts of creation over the entirety of creation.

Because of our biblical understanding of who God is and what God intends for humanity, the PC (USA) must stand against, speak against, and work against racism. Antiracist effort is not optional for Christians. It is an essential aspect of Christian discipleship, without which we fail to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Since the invasion of the Americas by Europeans, indigenous peoples have borne the brutal consequences of White supremacy. Racism against Native Americans has led to lower health, income, and education indicators, as well as higher rates of suicide and other forms of violence. Although they are

the most legislated racial group in the U.S., Native Americans are often rendered invisible in national conversations about race, erasing their struggles, perseverance, and contributions.

Antiblack racism has been a structural component of the United States from the beginning. The Constitution defined an African American as three-fifths of a person, denying their full humanity. The economic foundations of the United States were built on slave labor. The legal system of the United States has consistently perpetuated the subjugation of African Americans throughout the history of the nation.

Hispanics/Latinos-as have been a vital part of the fabric of the United States, particularly since the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, when a large part of Mexico became what is now the southwestern United States and when the U.S. invaded Puerto Rico in 1898. Yet Hispanics/Latinos-as are often presumed to be undocumented and difficult to assimilate.

Asian Pacific Americans experience racism as perpetual foreigners, whether they and their ancestors have been in the United States for seven generations or one generation. Vastly different Asian American populations, such as Chinese Americans and Cambodian Americans, are grouped together, erasing cultural differences and unique contributions. Immigrants from all over the world continue to experience oppression, exploitation, and inequality due to racism in America. Furthermore, a persistent focus on race as a Black-White binary has been used as a tool of White supremacy to prevent coalition-building among different groups. For example, the representation of Asian Americans as model minorities has relegated them to a “wedge” position between White and Black, in service of White supremacy.

While recognizing that racism victimizes many different racial ethnic groups, we acknowledge its unique impact on the African American community. Given the particular forms that antiblack racism has taken in the United States of America both historically (including slavery and Jim Crow) and today (including mass incarceration, disproportionate policing, economic inequality, and continuing acts of racially oriented violence and hate), we state clearly: GOD LOVES BLACKNESS. Too many have denied this basic truth for too long. Our choice to align ourselves with love and not hate requires both a rejection of racism and a positive proclamation that God delights in black lives.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we stand against racism in all its myriad forms. As Presbyterians, we have specific resources in our tradition that can be useful in turning away from racism and towards the diversity and justice that God desires. In particular, we have received wisdom regarding sin, confession and repentance.

Reformed theology offers a nuanced understanding of sin. Calvin did not understand sin to be simply an individual belief, action, or moral failing (Calvin, 1960). Rather, he viewed sin as the corporate state of all humanity. It is an infection that taints each of us and all of us. No part of us—not our perception, intelligence, nor conscience—is unclouded by sin. This does not mean that human beings are awful. Rather, it means that we must have humility about our own righteousness, and that we must cling to the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Nineteenth century theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher reiterates the corporate and communal nature of sin. He writes that sin is “in each the work of all and in all the work of each” (Schleiermacher, 288). He uses the terms “original sin” and “actual sin” to explain. The sinful actions and beliefs of each person (actual sin) contribute to communal ways of being that are in opposition to God (original sin). As people are born and raised in the context of original sin, they begin to commit actual sin, and the cycle continues. These old-fashioned terms can be helpful in understanding contemporary problems, including racism. Bigoted beliefs, hate crimes, prejudice, and intentional discrimination are all actual sin. They stem from,

and contribute to, the original sin of systemic racism that permeates our culture and society. The actual sins of past generations—such as slavery, the Indian Removal Act, the Chinese Exclusion Act, the colonization of Hawaii and Guam, the Immigration Act of 1924, and so on—become the original sin in which we live.

This is manifested in severe inequality in education, wealth, income, and opportunity. For example, consider a White man returning from Army service in 1945. The G.I. Bill offered him college tuition and a low-interest mortgage, potentially on land taken from Native Americans by force or coercion. A black man returning from an equal length of Army service did not receive the same benefits due to racism in the administration of the G.I. Bill and widespread discrimination in housing. In 2015, the White man's descendants have the benefits of inherited wealth (home equity) and increased education, while the black man's grandchildren do not. No one today needs to commit an actual sin for this inequality to continue. Original sin does not need our intentional consent to thrive. Silence and inaction are enough.

This nuanced concept of sin can be particularly useful in understanding how people of goodwill who do not harbor prejudice or intend bigotry are still participants in original sin. White people in the United States of America continue collectively to reap the benefits of White supremacy, even when they individually believe in the equality of all people. Our theological heritage regarding sin makes it possible for Presbyterians to acknowledge the complex realities of racism instead of moving to defend an illusion of individual innocence.

The second valuable resource from our tradition is the importance of confession and repentance. Acknowledging our sinfulness ought not to produce self-hatred or paralyzing guilt. Rather, the appropriate response is to confess our sin before God and one another, confident in the grace and love of God. The grace that enables us to confess also empowers us to repent, that is, to turn and walk the other way, towards the eschatological vision of God's new creation. By grace we are forgiven, and we respond to this grace with gratitude, humility, and renewed zeal for the Gospel.

Finally, as Presbyterians we know something about work. While aspects of the Protestant work ethic may be problematic, to the degree that it signifies our determination, persistence, and stubborn strength, we embrace it in this regard: we commit ourselves to DO THE WORK of countering racism in our witness to the Gospel. In our affirmation that God loves difference, we will honor diversity as a good in which God delights. In our conviction that God desires justice, we will learn from others to broaden our understanding of equality. In our humility as sinful people, we will listen openly to diverse voices regarding how racism functions in our society. In our gratitude for God's grace, we will turn again and again towards the vision of whole community found in the Word of God. In our joyous response to God's love, we will love one another.

## References

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960.

*The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part 1: Book of Confessions*. Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2014.

Russell, Letty M. *The Future of Partnership*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1979.

Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *The Christian Faith*, edited by H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, year unknown.

**BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION***God's Purpose for Us: The Intercultural Community*

The Christian response to the contemporary problem of racism must be developed in light of a clear biblical and theological understanding of what it means to be human. The Reformed perspective on the meaning of humanness is informed by John Calvin's assertion that proper knowledge of ourselves as humans is achievable only through a knowledge of God and God's will for human community.<sup>1</sup> Calvin's reading of the biblical events of Genesis 1 and 2 provides demonstrable evidence that God, at creation, endowed humans with qualities and characteristics that originate from God's own divine being: imagination, intellectual capacity, spirit, emotions, a will with which to engage in acts of deliberation and decision-making, and a moral conscience with which to discern or distinguish between right and wrong and good and evil.

Calvin used the notion of the image of God to capture the essence of the biblical understanding of what it means to be human: human beings were made by God, in the image of God. For the Reformers, this understanding serves not only to highlight God's positive estimation of humanity, but also to establish God's purpose for human community. As beings who bear the indelible stamp of God's nature, humans are to be accorded special, sacred status in the creation as God's crowning achievement. Thus, in Scripture God is portrayed as one who recognizes the value and worth of human life, and affirms the inherent dignity of human beings.<sup>2</sup>

Understanding the image of God is crucial. God's original purpose for human community is a basis for making important assertions about human relationships. In consonance with God's perspective, humans must appreciate the sacredness and sanctity of all human life; establish relationships based on the rule of love, respect, and dignity; assume moral responsibility for nurturing the bonds of mutual affection; render supportive aid to those in need; avoid hurtful attitudes and harmful actions; and make justice the basis of one's treatment of others.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Calvin and other Reformers established a critical linkage between the image of God in humans and the divine mandate to make justice, love, and peace the fundamental basis of human relationships. The biblical narrative offers incontestable proof that God not only requires and expects love, justice, and peace to guide human relationships, it also demonstrates that God acts decisively in history to establish human community based on these moral precepts. In the Old Testament, God's deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt is illustrative of the importance God places on justice in human community. God works to establish justice and peace in community through laws that establish right relationships in the human family.<sup>4</sup> God's restorative activity in the exodus is followed by the giving of covenantal law, which is aimed at establishing the rule of love and justice in the community. The essence of law is commitment to a covenantal relationship that establishes the proper relationship with God, and that derivatively establishes right relationships between and among humans. The covenant was established as a bond of fidelity between God and God's people; and as such involves moral responsibility on the part of corporate society and its individual members to deal fairly with one another; and provide for the basic

---

<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John T. McNeill, ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), Book I, Chapter I, pp. 35–39.

<sup>2</sup> “What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor” (Psalms 8:4–5); “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8), NRSV.

<sup>3</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, pp. 375–76; 404–5.

<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, John T. McNeill, ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), Book III, pp. 348–423.

needs of all as an expression of faithfulness to God.<sup>5</sup> When relationships in the community wander off the path of love and justice, God sends prophets to point out the fracturing elements in the community, announces divine judgment, calls the people back to a proper sense of God, and pleads for a return to right relationality.<sup>6</sup>

The New Testament embraces and expands the viewpoint of God's commitment to love and justice. The divine reinforcement of moral law undergirding right relationships is proclaimed and witnessed through the person, work, and gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus stands firmly in the tradition of Amos, Isaiah, and Hosea when he chastises those who neglect the weightier matters of justice and mercy, and when he announces that nations will be judged by the way they treat those who are less fortunate. Jesus' explanation of the essence of the law as covenantal integrity between neighbors who express relationships marked by love and justice reveals that love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable. In Jesus' discussion of the kingdom of God and in his injunctions in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus unequivocally proclaims that God's will for the human community is to live as a family of mutually supportive, caring siblings (Matt. 5:1–12, NRSV).

The early church of the New Testament further advances the notion of Divine commitment to justice in its explication of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. In Acts the workings of the Holy Spirit to create community among the faithful reveal the celebration of diversity and inclusiveness as God's purpose for the human family as mediated through the church. Moreover, it is the Holy Spirit that empowers and inspires Peter's proclamation of the priesthood of all believers—accentuating the egalitarian nature of the Christian community and its implications for all creation (Acts 2; 1 Peter 2:9–10, NRSV).

Martin Luther King Jr.'s understanding of "The Beloved Community" provides an example of an antiracism vision that is rooted in the biblical vision of God's will for human relationships. This vision is grounded in our common origin as children of God from which we derive our inalienable worth, dignity, and sanctity. The vision affirms that every person's right to be free, to be treated as persons not things, and to be valued as full members of the human community are gifts from God. The solidarity of the human family and the social character of all human life indicate that no person can develop fully apart from interaction with others. All persons are mutually linked and meant to live and grow in relationship with each other as we share a common destiny. Therefore, differences of ethnicity and culture are to be viewed as God-given gifts to be celebrated, rather than obstacles to be overcome.<sup>7</sup> The Beloved Community or more contemporarily, the Intercultural Community, symbolizes that network of human relationships where diversity is embraced; where the content of one's character is more important than skin color; where love, justice, and peace emerge as the preeminent norms for all relationships; and where institutional power is humanized by moral values so that it serves the interest of justice.<sup>8</sup>

### *What We Are: The Broken Community*

The church affirms the pervasive, intransigent, and virulent nature of sin as an operative reality. The biblical narrative of the Fall in Genesis illuminates the radical consequences of human disobedience relative to God's mandate for relationships in the created order.<sup>9</sup> Human action decisively ruptures the

<sup>5</sup> "Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream" (Amos 5:22–24, NRSV).

<sup>6</sup> Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets*, Volumes I & II, (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1961–62).

<sup>7</sup> See James M. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco: Harper, 1986), pp. 117–25.

<sup>8</sup> James M. Washington, *A Testament of Hope*, pp. 43–53; 217–20.

<sup>9</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book Two, Chapter I, pp. 39–241.

covenant established by God with humankind and the whole of creation. The Fall points to the nature and reality of sin. Sin is understood as estrangement or separation from God. This estranged state results in the defacement of the image of God in humanity. Consequently, the capacity to properly value ourselves and others as persons of worth and dignity is corrupted. The results of sin are empirically verifiable in human relationships.<sup>10</sup>

Hence, the capacity of the human will, intellect, and emotions to build and maintain a community of loving, just, and peaceable relationships is also greatly diminished. While we each bear the indelible stamp of God's image, we recognize ourselves as fallen creatures who relate to others personally, socially, and institutionally in ways that deny that image in each other, and thereby violate the sacred bonds of community established by God. Sin and its effects continue to have consequences for relationships in the in the human community. The Reformed Tradition affirms that sin, resulting in distorted relationships and broken covenantal agreements, operates in corporate structures as well as interpersonal relationships.<sup>11</sup> The empirical validation of the broken communal covenant in church and society is subsequently witnessed as racism, personal prejudice, xenophobia, as well as the creation and maintenance of institutional structures that perpetuate racism and other forms of injustice. Further, the misdistribution of economic, social, and political goods essential for survival; discriminatory employment and housing practices; and the persistence of segregated churches represent other concrete, visible manifestations of sinful communal brokenness.

The concept of covenant was especially important to the early Reformers as they worked to reestablish right order and governance in church and society. The Reformers affirmed that the defaced image of God in fallen humanity remained in seed form, capable of being resurrected and restored by God through the redemptive power and presence of Jesus Christ.<sup>12</sup> In light of this, Reformed doctrine throughout history has affirmed that in Jesus Christ and through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, the possibility now exists to establish newly constructed relationships marked by love, justice, and peace through responsible human action in the world.<sup>13</sup> As a community of faith, it is imperative that the PC (USA) take responsible action against the forces that distort, fracture, and destroy just and right relationships in church and society. One such force is racism.

*Challenge to the Church:  
What Is God Calling Us to Be and Do?*

What is the moral-ethical imperative for the PC (USA)? As a covenant community seeking to be faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ and the movement of the Holy Spirit in our midst, is there a word from God that speaks loudly in and to the present sinful conditions of racism and racial violence? Are there grounds for hope that can inform us about what can and ought to be done despite the serious levels of brokenness? While we each bear the indelible stamp of God's image, we recognize ourselves as fallen creatures who relate to others personally, socially, and institutionally in ways that deny that image in experience in both church and society.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book Two, Chapter I–III, pp. 239–309.

<sup>11</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man, Volume I*, (New York: Scribners, 1964), pp. 178–264.

<sup>12</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book Two, Chapter XV, pp. 189–92.

<sup>13</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, Book IV, Doctrine of Reconciliation*; Hughes Old, *Reformed Worship*.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Carter, in a recent book, *Integrity*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), p. 7, offers a threefold criteria for assessing the integrity of individuals: discerning what is right or wrong; acting on what you have discerned, even at personal cost; saying openly that you are acting on your understanding of right from wrong. Carter's trilogy is applicable and highly relevant on the corporate-institutional level as well. Corporate integrity may then be applied to any community that consistently demonstrates the capacity to meet the threefold criteria.



We are reminded that it is the corporate church that must strain to hear God's word and discern how to respond to individual and institutional judgments and behaviors that operate at cross-purposes with God's will for the human family.<sup>15</sup> The corporate church exists in a covenantal relationship with God: a covenant offered by God, sealed in Jesus Christ and mediated through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Our call to a covenantal relationship with God is both descriptive and prescriptive. The call is descriptive in that it defines who we are and whose we are. It is prescriptive in that it informs what we must do. Our call to stand against racism and for justice emerges out of our identity as faithful servants of God. Our identity compels us to oppose the forces of injustice. Antiracism, therefore, is prescriptive for what a faithful community must do in the quest to let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. The church must actively oppose the forces of racism in concrete and strategic ways. Justice cannot be determined or achieved in the abstract. If racism is to be eliminated, it must be defined contextually and concretely so that its personal, institutional expressions and structures can be seen, understood, and countered. An antiracism church is one whose institutional behavior and commitment are informed by God's covenant to establish justice, love, and peace in relationships, and whose identity is visibly expressed in the context of active, antiracism engagement.

The PC (USA), operating today in a culture of brokenness, must speak clearly about what it means to embrace antiracism as a major part of its corporate identity. A word from the Lord about racism and racial violence may come to us as an entirely new prophetic utterance. It may also be heard anew through a historic voice. The Confession of 1967, forged in the midst of the trauma and tragedy of racial strife in the 1950's and 1960's, is a clear and unequivocal mandate for the church to take decisive action against all forms of individual prejudice, xenophobia, institutional, systematic, and structural racism.<sup>16</sup> The *Kairos Document*, offered in the 1980s, spoke prophetic words of judgment and hope in the context of South African apartheid. It may prove to be relevant to the antiracism agenda of the United States. Indeed, the Year of Jubilee narrative explicated in Old Testament Israel might be heard anew with its themes of messianic deliverance, radical transformation of relationships of wealth and power, debt forgiveness, peace, and nonviolence. It may provide important clues on how to empower the church to covenant together for an uncompromising assault on racism and racial violence.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, the confessional standards of the church, Minutes of the General Assembly, policy documents, and theological statements may all speak a fresh new word to the church about our responsibility to be corporate resisters of racism and racial violence in church and society.<sup>18</sup>

The possibility now exists for the PC(USA), in light of its tradition, heritage, theology, ethics, and spiritual commitment, to become open to self-critical analysis with regard to racism both within its midst and in our society. The PC (USA) can challenge public policy, actions, and structures that promote and perpetuate racism. We can honor the divine will for human relationships by demonstrating a serious commitment to God's covenant of love, justice, and peace in human community and undertake radical transformation of its identity and behavior as it becomes an antiracism church in its thinking, judgments, and actions.

---

<sup>15</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Book IV, The Doctrine of Reconciliation (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1958).

<sup>16</sup> *The Book of Confessions*, PC(USA), Section 9.44.

<sup>17</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Living Toward a Vision: Biblical Reflections on Shaloom* (N.Y.: United Church Press, 1982); James DeOtis Roberts, *Reconciliation and Liberation: A Black Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971; Revised Edition, Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 1984).

<sup>18</sup> See *The Book of Confessions*; *Book of Order*; Hughes Old, *Reformed Worship* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984); John Leith, *Creeeds of the Church*, Third Edition (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982).

## CONTINUING PROBLEM OF RACISM

Dr. W. E. B. DuBois observed that the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of race.<sup>19</sup> As we face the dawn of a new century, it is quite apparent that racism will be a continuing legacy. Civil rights are increasingly at risk as hate and intolerance become a part of both public and political discourse. As the nation backs away from the goal of eliminating segregation in public schools, court-ordered desegregation plans are being successfully challenged; and federal courts are dismissing record numbers of cases of racial discrimination.<sup>20</sup> Affirmative action, which has been the cornerstone of progress in the past, is under attack nationwide.<sup>21</sup> An alarming number of churches, primarily African American, have been burned. The number of hate groups has increased; and web sites advocating hate and violence are proliferating on the Internet. Several professional sports teams still use caricatures of Native Americans as mascots. The Atlanta Braves, Cleveland Indians, and Washington Redskins are cases in point. The judiciary, which provided the leverage for dismantling legal segregation in the fifties and sixties, is paradoxically providing the legal mortar that is reinforcing racial injustice as we enter the next century.

### *Historic Summary*

In January 1963, national leaders representing Catholics, Protestants, and Jews met in Chicago and called upon the nation to put an end to racism. Later, the National Council of Churches organized a commission on religion and race and joined the civil rights struggle led by Martin Luther King, Jr. and urged its members to do the same. In May 1963, Edler Hawkins persuaded the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America “. . . to create a Commission on Religion and Race with unusual power to act in behalf of the denomination.” He was a consummate church politician and this was his greatest achievement, although one must concede that it could not have been done without the agreement and strong support of Eugene Carson Blake, Ken Neigh, Bill Morrison, and John Coventry Smith, the most powerful men in the church.<sup>22</sup> The assembly appropriated \$500,000 for the commission. Renamed the Council on Church and Race, it gave birth to most of the racial justice programs now existing in the PC (USA).<sup>23</sup>

Racism is deeply embedded in the life and history of the nation. All people of color have suffered the consequences. From the genocide of Native Americans, the enslavement of Africans, The Chinese Exclusion Act, and the mass imprisonment of Japanese Americans to discrimination against Hispanic Americans runs a common thread of historic oppression. There is also a long history of resistance to oppression by people of color. However, it was Black resistance in the 60s that pushed the issue of racism on the agenda of mainline churches. Eventually, the heroic struggle of African Americans, combined with the strong advocacy of mainline churches, brought an end to legal segregation. Mainline churches pursued a vision of eradicating the color line from the church and nation by extending civil rights to all people

---

<sup>19</sup> W. E. B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1961), p. ix.

<sup>20</sup> Herbert Hill & James E. Jones Jr., eds., *Race in America* (Madison Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), pp. 83–96.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of affirmative action see: Barbara R. Bergmann, *In Defense of Affirmative Action* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996); George Curry, ed., *Affirmative Action Debate* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997), pp. 241–58; Orlando Patterson, *The Ordeal of Integration* (Washington, D.C. Civitas, 1997), pp. 147–69.

<sup>22</sup> See Gayraud S. Wilmore, “COCAR: The First Five Years,” *Church & Society*, (New York: PC(USA), November/December, 1987), p. 61.

<sup>23</sup> See Gayraud S. Wilmore, “COCAR: The First Five Years,” *Church & Society*, (New York: PC(USA), November/December, 1987), pp. 60-67

under the rubric of integration. The fundamental principle that informed the churches' advocacy was the belief that racism was a consequence of personal prejudice and ethnic pride. Therefore, the programmatic thrust of churches focused on changing personal attitudes and overcoming bigotry.

During the 1960s, the National Council of Churches functioned as an organizing center for mainline denominations, especially for their public policy advocacy and, to a significant degree, for activism in support of civil rights marches and protest activities. Mainline churches made significant contribution to the passage of civil-rights legislation in the 1960s, bringing a greater sense of fairness to a broader segment of society. However, the pronouncements of mainline churches on the issue of race have been stronger than their social action. This is due to the difficulty of the struggle and to a lack of understanding of the depth and nature of racism.

The brutal resistance to the civil-rights struggle engendered a new level of awareness among mainline Christians. Many became aware of the depth, source, and pervasiveness of racism. There emerged the realization that racism was deeply rooted in our culture and maintained in patterns of domination. This awareness led to a growing emphasis on brotherhood, sisterhood, reconciliation and equal opportunity.<sup>24</sup> The emergence of the Black Power Movement and cogent Black Theologies of Liberation, such as that of James Cone, raised significant questions about the assumptions of mainline churches who claimed readiness to confront racism in church and society.<sup>25</sup> The emphasis on nonviolence preached by Martin Luther King Jr., which resonated with the views of mainline churches, was challenged by a Black militancy that emphasized liberation, freedom, and justice as values to be achieved by any means necessary. The militant critique of nonviolence was disturbing to mainline churches. Few White people understood the driving force behind it. On the other hand, people of color who were exposed to and experienced the brutality of racism appreciated the practical value of using nonviolence as a way of effecting change; but they also understood that the problem of racism was far more complex and pervasive than Whites were willing or able to admit, and, therefore, were open to considering other more militant tactics.

As changing housing patterns led to White flight and re-segregation, questions were raised about the efficacy of integration as a solution to the race problem. Laws were changed and institutions opened to allow the presence and participation of people of color. However, the control and power remained in the hands of White people, demonstrating that integration and racism are quite compatible.<sup>26</sup>

During the 1970s and 1980s, affirmative action and equal opportunity became central themes of mainline churches in the search for racial justice. Their social policy statements provided support for these ideas. However, there remained a certain level of naiveté about the fundamental character of racism. The 193rd General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America said:

*In many ways the church's failures have been due to a lack of understanding, or perhaps naiveté, as to the nature and depth of racism. Whereas it was once assumed that racial justice was merely a function of overcoming individual attitudes and bigotry, it is now clear that racism also exists in complex and subtle institutional ways. Despite the well-intentioned and nonracist attitudes of individuals, our religious and social institutions,*

<sup>24</sup> Ester Stine and Gaspar Langella, "Social Teachings of the Presbyterian Church," *Church & Society* (New York: PC(USA), 1984, Volume LXXV, No. 2), p. 28.

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of Black Power and Black Liberation Theologies see: Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967); James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1970); Gayraud S. Wilmore and James Cone, *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*, (New York: Orbis, 1979).

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of racism and integration see: Otis Turner, "The Web of Institutional Racism," *Church & Society*, (Louisville, KY: PC(USA), September/October, 1991), pp. 22-23.

*structures, and systems can and do perpetuate racial injustice.*<sup>27</sup>

Patterns of segregation continue in many aspects of American life.<sup>28</sup> Ironically it is a pattern from which churches have not managed to emerge. Eleven o'clock on Sunday morning, the time when many churches gather to engage in the sacred act of worship, remains the most segregated hour of the week in our nation.

There is a growing awareness among Presbyterians and others that the problem of racism must be faced. The Moderator of the 208<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1996) of the PC (USA), John Buchanan, made racial healing and reconciliation an emphasis. The Moderator of the 209<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1997), Patricia Brown, continued this theme with an emphasis on easing racial tensions. In 2012, the Moderator of the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012), Neal Presa, appointed a National Racial Ethnic Ministries Task Force. Among the issues the task force addressed is the pressing need for language access and culture-specific conversations, including translating PC (USA) documents into Spanish, Korean and expanding resources into other languages. The Moderator of the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2014), Heath Rada, appointed a team to plan a Churchwide Conversation on Race, Ethnicity, Racism and Ethnocentricity. Among their recommendations is expanding anti-bias and antiracism trainings throughout the church.

The Clinton Administration emphasized racial reconciliation and appointed a commission to study race relations in the nation. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights recommended that a world conference on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerances be held.<sup>29</sup> President Obama has said that organizers of the "Black Lives Matter" social media movement value life and that concerns about policing and profiling in communities of people of color are real and valid.

The PC (USA), and indeed the Christian community, must recommit to the struggle for racial justice. Churches must provide a moral compass for the nation by getting involved in shaping public policies that will move the nation towards justice, peace, and reconciliation.

As we stand on the verge of a new century, racism remains resilient and resurgent. While the social policies and pronouncements of denominations continue to emphasize inclusiveness and justice, these do not translate in the hearts and minds of Christians who participate in the electoral and political process. Christians are passive in the face of attacks on affirmative action and the adoption of regressive social policies at the local, state, and national levels. There is a growing awareness that a new understanding of racism is needed that takes into consideration the centrality of power in the institutionalization and perpetuation of racism. There is also an awareness that the methodologies that brought us to where we are will not take us where we need to go in the next century. If we are to build on past accomplishments, we must do a new analysis of racism within the current context of the nation. This will inform the direction we must take in the next century and provide guidance as to how we might get there.

### *Understanding Contemporary Racism*

A starting point for understanding racism is clarifying the distinction between racism and prejudice, a common and costly point of misunderstanding two distinct phenomena. This will help the church better understand what action steps are necessary to eliminate racism. Prejudice is understood to be judgments made in the absence of due examination and consideration of facts; and these judgments are held even

---

<sup>27</sup> *Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1981, Part I, p. 201.

<sup>28</sup> See Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992); *The Kerner Report: The 1968 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968).

<sup>29</sup> *UN Chronicle*, No. 2, 1997, p. 58.

when contradicted by facts. In the absence of a factual basis, prejudices are driven primarily by emotional responses such as fear. When prejudice is based on racial consideration it is race prejudice. However, race prejudice alone is not racism. When prejudice is combined with power it becomes racism. Power is the capacity to command, control, and dominate social reality for the purpose of achieving a desired outcome. Those who control power have the capacity to transform prejudice into racism by establishing and maintaining institutions and structures that embody group biases. Thus, it is the combination of power and prejudice that is so destructive. Racism is, therefore, the marriage of power and prejudice. Simply stated, racial prejudice plus power equals racism. Power transforms prejudice into racism. Racism gives direction to the use of power.

An understanding of racism must include these facts: no one is born a racist; no one is born oppressed. Racism is a consequence of learned values and behaviors. It is possible, therefore, to learn values and behaviors that do not result in racism. Some people benefit from racism while others are victimized by it. As we learn different values, we must unlearn and undo existing racist values and structures. That process is twofold and involves legally dismantling racism as well as rooting racism out of our personal lives and communities. It is a long-term struggle that is achievable through commitment, prayer, and persistence.

With a clearer understanding of the depth and complexity of racism, the church can be empowered to lead the nation beyond the legal process of dismantling racism to the interpersonal process of rooting it out of our personal lives and communities. In the process of engagement the church itself will be transformed as it becomes an effective model and catalyst for change by living out a vision of a church that is truly one in Christ.

### *Systemic Racism*

Racism is nurtured and sustained by systemic power. Power must be understood in social not individual terms. "There are, for example, no solitary racists of consequence. For racism to flourish with the vigor it enjoys in America, there must be an extensive climate of acceptance and participation by large numbers of people who constitute its power base. For all his [or her] ugliness and bombast, the isolated racist is a toothless tiger, for, to be effective, racism must have responsible approval and reliable nurture. The power of racism is the power conceded by those respectable citizens who by their action or inaction communicate the consensus that directs and empowers the overt bigot to act on their behalf."<sup>30</sup>

An institution is an organized way of meeting basic needs or social desires such as education, health care, and food distribution. Institutions do not function as isolated entities. They are integrally related and interconnected. A group of related institutions constitutes a system such as an educational, health care, transportation, or economic system. Social power resides in the institutions and systems we create.

Societies establish and structure their common lives by exercising power to create and perpetuate institutions that reflect common values to meet their basic needs as well as determine their goals and aspirations. The power to access and participate in the institutional life of a community is essential to affirming our humanity. Those who control power have the capacity to limit the rights of others to participate. To deny others such rights is to deny their humanity.

Historically, institutions have tended to be preferential to some group or groups in comparison to others.<sup>31</sup> Racist institutions are not accidents of history. They are created and maintained by intentional

---

<sup>30</sup> C. Eric Lincoln, *Race, Religion, and the Continuing American Dilemma* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), pp. 11–12.

<sup>31</sup> Max L. Stackhouse, "Institutions/Institutionalization," *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, James F. Childress and John Macquarrie, eds. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), p. 304.

human actions.<sup>32</sup> For the most part, they serve the needs of those who control power and access. In the context of the United States, racist institutions preserve power and privilege for White society. Rewards are based on group membership, not personal attitude. Consequently, all Whites benefit from racism “whether or not they have ever committed a racist act, uttered a racist word, or had a racist thought (as unlikely as that is).”<sup>33</sup> While people of color bear the burden of racism, it is a problem created by White people that diminishes both victims and victimizers, though in radically different ways. This is a painful reality that we must name and claim as people of goodwill before we can heal our communities and nation.

### *Racism as a Spiritual Problem*

Perhaps the most visible achievement of the civil rights movement was that of dismantling the legal apparatus of segregation. Many people of goodwill believed that such an achievement would be the end of racism, although that was not the case. Thus, the question of why racism persists in our society despite sincere efforts to eliminate it remains unanswered. It is clear that we failed to understand the true nature of racism and, in our efforts to dismantle legal segregation, we also failed to see that racism is far more complex than its institutional or systemic expressions. *Sojourners Magazine* suggests that:

*Racism is a spiritual issue. Neither its causes nor solutions will be found [solely] through government programs, social ministries, or our own best intentions. . . . The forces that perpetuate racism through our society are rooted in spiritual realities that require us to call out to God for spiritual solutions.*<sup>34</sup>

This does not mean that there is no role for government and social programs. However, it does require us to recognize that there is a spiritual dimension to institutional structures that must be taken seriously. Martin Luther King Jr. sought to illuminate this dimension in his distinction between enforceable and unenforceable obligations. Enforceable obligations are regulated by the legal codes of society. Unenforceable demands are beyond the reach of legal codes. Such obligations are expressed in terms of our commitment to an inner spiritual law that is written on the heart: the law of God's love from which our moral obligations derive.<sup>35</sup> The spiritual dimension of racism requires a spiritual solution.

### *Internalized Oppression*

Part of the spiritual dimension of racism is expressed as internalized oppression. Oppressed people inevitably participate in their own oppression. Even as the oppressed struggle against oppression, they must also struggle against the oppressor within. People survive oppression by accommodating themselves to it even as they resist it. What must be done to achieve liberation is opposed by the necessity to accommodate. As Paulo Freire sees it, oppressed people must choose:

*between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting and having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and recreate, in their power to transform the world. This is the tragic dilemma of the*

<sup>32</sup> Max L. Stackhouse, “Institutions/Institutionalization,” *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, James F. Childress and John Macquarrie, eds. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), p. 304.

<sup>33</sup> Jim Wallis, “The Legacy of White Racism,” *Sojourner's Magazine* (1988), p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> *Sojourners*, “Crossing the Racial Divide: America's Struggle for Justice and Reconciliation,” 1998, p. 5. 37

<sup>35</sup> See James M. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco: Harper, 1986), pp. 123–24.

*oppressed which their education must take into account.*<sup>36</sup>

One of the tragic consequences of internalized oppression is that it inhibits the ability to perceive contradictions in personal and social reality. The distinction between what people do to oppress themselves and what others do to oppress them is blurred; it becomes easy to blame others for one's own problems and woes.<sup>37</sup> Overcoming internalized oppression is one of the most critical and challenging spiritual undertakings for oppressed people. Christians of goodwill must understand that it is as painful for oppressed people to name and claim internalized oppression as it is for oppressors to name and claim racism. While internalized oppression is engendered, nurtured, and reinforced by racism, once established, it can survive on its own.<sup>38</sup> Thus, healing will require mutual understanding and support.

### *Addiction and Privilege*

A spiritual dimension of racism that we are just beginning to understand is the degree to which power and privilege becomes addictive. Addiction means to be gripped by a compulsion, a craving, or a dependency that is strong and deeply embedded in the subconscious; and it is difficult to stop doing even though you realize that what you are doing is wrong. Addiction to power and privilege is a problem for oppressors, the most difficult spiritual challenge they will face. It is expressed on two levels: intellectual and emotional. It is possible to know intellectually that racism is morally wrong, but emotionally hang on to the power and privileges that derive from it. This causes oppressors to rationalize and psychologically manipulate the benefits they derive from racism in ways that make the benefits seem to outweigh the negative impact of racism on the oppressed. Denial is one of the more common expressions. Hence, the negative consequences of racism tend not to be perceived by Whites and people of color with the same sense of urgency.

Dealing with the addiction to privilege and power will be a difficult spiritual journey for White Christians. Contrary to popular opinion, this addiction is more of a barrier to building a racially diverse community than are racial and cultural differences. Catherine Meeks makes this point in talking about the relationship between Blacks and Whites in the church:

*... The inability of whites and blacks to come together as a unified worshiping community has far less to do with diversity in worship styles than has been accepted in the past. The problem lies in the unwillingness of blacks to be treated as children and whites to share their power.*<sup>39</sup>

Reliance upon God is key to recovery from an addiction to power and privilege. This is why prayer and worship are central to the task of overcoming racism. Hence, Christians must understand both the challenge and the opportunity this presents. The church is the central venue where issues of race can be addressed in ways that lead to healing and reconciliation rather than polarization.

## **DISMANTLING RACISM**

<sup>36</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation, 1985), pp. 32–33.

<sup>37</sup> For a discussion of internalized oppression see: Otis Turner, "The Web of Institutional Racism," *Church & Society*, (Louisville: PC(USA), September/October, 1991), pp. 20–22; Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation, 1985), Chapter I; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967); Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-education of the Negro* (Trenton, N.J., Africa World Press, Inc., 1990), Chapters I–VI.

<sup>38</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 32–33.

<sup>39</sup> Catherine Meeks, "At the Door of the Church," in *America's Original Sin: A Study Guide on White Racism*, *Sojourners Magazine* (Washington, D.C.: 1988), p. 15.

Racism negatively impacts everybody, oppressors and the oppressed. White people are not born racist; nor do they choose to be racists; institutional racism does that for them long before they are old enough to discern right from wrong for themselves. People of color do not choose to be oppressed; institutional racism imposes this on them by predetermined categories of social valuation that narrowly define and limit their prospects in life based on racial differences. Though racism impacts oppressors and the oppressed differently, recognizing the negative impact of racism upon all of us is a common starting point for building mutuality in the struggle to live into a new future.<sup>40</sup>

There is hope despite the persistence and legacy of racism. The truth will make us free if we have the courage to face it. Both oppressors and the oppressed can choose to change their current realities and can be taught to dismantle racism. We must be clear and truthful about the centrality of power in perpetuating and sustaining systemic racism. If we are to build a future with justice for all, and it can be done, both personal intervention and institutional transformation are essential for the mission of the church. The Racial Ethnic Church Growth Strategy Report approved by the 210th General Assembly (1998) stated the following:

*Given the well-documented racial problems that dominate our culture, it is difficult for us to truly serve the interests of a multicultural society without some form of social intervention. Enhanced efforts to achieve racial ethnic church growth must employ intervention methods such as antiracism training to effect necessary reform of institutional behavior that historically has prevented the church from including people of color. Systemic racism, discrimination, prejudice, disempowerment, and cultural depreciation all serve to inhibit racial ethnic church growth. Racial ethnic church growth is inextricably linked to the struggle for racial justice. Thus, as the church invests resources in racial ethnic church growth strategies, it must also invest in the struggle against racism and other social injustice. To do one without the other is a prescription for failure.<sup>41</sup>*

Since the impact of racism is pervasive, learning how to dismantle it will be challenging for the church. Antiracism training will play a key role as the church seeks to develop an antiracism identity.<sup>42</sup> Those trained in antiracism can change the systemic influences that negatively impact people. They can teach future generations how to dismantle systemic racism and build institutions that heal not hurt, that include not exclude.

The Holy Spirit is moving in and among Presbyterians on both a personal and institutional level. We are witnessing a growing commitment among Presbyterians to address the issue of racism. Presbyteries and congregations in increasing numbers are seeking help in dealing with racism. Several synods and presbyteries have established antiracism teams. Some have done initial antiracism training and have teams working. Some are organizing teams and preparing for training. Some are in the initial planning stage. Some congregations are planning introductory antiracism events.

In 1997, the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program sponsored two conferences on racism. Approximately 1,500 people attended. The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program has been confronting racism as an

---

<sup>40</sup> This does not imply parity in the psychosocial impact of racism upon oppressors and the oppressed. The destructive consequences for oppressors pale in comparison to those for the oppressed. The point of commonality stems from the fact that racism establishes fixed patterns of relationships that cannot be changed unless it is dismantled. In this sense, racism controls both oppressors and the oppressed.

<sup>41</sup> Racial Ethnic Church Growth Strategy Report, *Minutes*, 1998, Part I, pp. 89; 406–17, esp. 414.

<sup>42</sup> Antiracism is an intentional stance that opposes the sin of racism while affirming the dignity and humanity of those who may hold racist views or benefit from it. It opposes sin not the sinner.



ongoing part of its ministry. Presbyterian Women made combating racism a priority for the 1997–2000 triennium and offered its 300,000 member constituency tools for working with local congregations.<sup>43</sup> Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association (PHEWA) has offered workshops and seminars on racism at its conferences. If the church accepts the challenge, and indeed it must, the course of our history will be changed and the jangling discords of this nation will be transformed into a symphony of brotherhood, sisterhood, and freedom for all.

## **SEVENFOLD STRATEGY**

The proposed churchwide strategy is sevenfold and involves: The General Assembly; synods; presbyteries; congregations; educational institutions; related agencies; ecumenical partners.

The task of dismantling racism must be a partnership effort that involves all levels of the church. Since institutions vary in their social reality, it follows that the approach to dismantling racism must be flexible and adaptable to changing situations. Nevertheless, there can and must be continuity in the general approach so that resources can be developed to support antiracism work across the church and in ecumenical relationships.

The process must begin with dialogue in congregations and other venues around the church. For dialogue to be effective, it must begin in the context in which we find ourselves, in all of our brokenness. Therefore, dialogue must be designed for use in places where people ordinarily gather for work and worship. There must be ground rules that preserve the integrity of people engaging in dialogue. The dialogue must move beyond the dynamics of interaction to grapple with and clarify the foundations of the learned behavior of racism and its structural manifestations that have polarized our society. Merely working on issues of prejudice and bigotry without addressing root causes is to miss the point. We must move to where the discussion itself does not result in further polarization. Thus, we must first be honest with ourselves and then with each other. We must name the problem so we can claim it and then change it. Our journey begins with confession, forgiveness, redemption, and then transformation. This kind of engagement will help prevent extraneous conversation that masquerades as dialogue.

While dialogue is a necessary starting point, we must move beyond that to a common assessment of the problem. We must articulate a common vision of what can and ought to be. The shared vision will engender strategies for engagement that result in the transformation of personal lives, institutions, structures, and practices. Dialogue must lead to the identification of measurable goals that can be benchmarks of progress. Once benchmarks are established, the more challenging task of identifying obstacles that stand in the way of realizing the vision can begin. Only then can specific strategies be designed that will help us overcome racism. Finally, the process of dialogue involves returning to the vision and assessing our progress on a regular basis, perhaps annually.

People of goodwill have long recognized that eradicating the sin of racism from church and society is a high priority. It cannot be done without sacrifice. Experience has taught us that people cannot leap from centuries of racial polarization into a new vision. It is a long journey that will require discernment, prayer, and worship based action. Therefore, an antiracism manual that sets forth procedures, models for dialogue, plans for Bible study and worship, methods for visioning, strategizing, and engaging was developed, new modules have been added, and it has been made available to the church. Study guides have also been created and are available at <http://www.pcusa.org/racialjustice> (Presbyterian Mission Agency's Racial Justice web site).

---

<sup>43</sup> This was communicated to Otis Turner, associate for racial justice, in a letter dated September 25, 1998.

## **POINTS OF ENGAGEMENT**

The proposed churchwide strategy is multifaceted and involves the General Assembly, mid council, congregations, educational institutions, related agencies, and ecumenical partners.

### *General Assembly*

Training and education is integral to the task of equipping the church to engage in the struggle for racial justice in the next century. To this end the Presbyterian Mission Agency continues to:

- Provide for antiracism and cultural humility training of staff at the Presbyterian Center in accordance with the action of the February 1997 meeting of the General Assembly Council (now the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board), which mandated antiracism training for all national staff. This was initially undertaken in partnership with the PC (USA) Foundation, the Office of the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, and the Board of Pensions. More recently, the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board held Cultural Humility training at its September 2015 meeting.
- Recruit, train and commission a core team of people capable of training teams of facilitators in mid councils.
- Support and work in partnership with presbyteries and synods in their antiracism ministries.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency must also do the following:

- Initiate a forum for visioning, developing, and promoting a supplemental church school curriculum that supports antiracism ministry in congregations. The curriculum supplement should be designed to cover an extended period of time and involve all grade levels. The adult and young adult curriculum should be designed so that persons completing advanced classes will be prepared for further training as facilitators should they choose to become more engaged in the antiracism ministry of the congregation.
- Design a preschool curriculum so that participants advance to upper levels with age and maturity. This accomplishes two fundamental goals: (a) it counters negative influences and values in the culture by orienting children differently at an early age and provides ongoing support and nurture; and (b) it begins preparing the next generation of leaders who can nurture and sustain the values upon which our vision of the Intercultural Community can be built. A curriculum of this nature will require some field testing and refinement. Pilot projects can be conducted in local congregations situated in a variety of settings both rural and urban.

### *Synods*

- Synods need to play a key role as a coordinating point for regional training events and other activities that can be effectively done on a regional basis.
- Synods need to provide for antiracism training for their staff.

- Synods need to support presbyteries in their antiracism ministries.

### *Presbyteries*

- The *Book of Order*, Section G-3.0103, provides for councils of the church, including presbyteries, to address issues of racism. In partnership with General Assembly agencies, presbyteries need to recruit, train, and commission presbytery-based antiracism teams that will work with congregations in establishing and supporting antiracism programs and ministries.
  - Presbyteries need to provide for antiracism training for their staff and committees.

### *Congregations*

The centerpiece of an antiracism ministry is the congregation. This is a place where moral values can be taught and nurtured. It is also a place where families can receive support in nurturing values essential for living in an intercultural society. It is a place where worship and nurture come together in ways that can transform lives and perpetuate values that will change both church and society. Congregations are also strategically placed to effect change in the community by building bridges of communication across racial and cultural lines, as they worship together and learn how to live into a vision of one church in Jesus Christ. Thus, those working with local congregations, including staff, need to be trained in both antiracism work and community organizing.

### *Educational Institutions*

- Seminaries are places where future pastors, Christian educators, and other church leaders are trained for ministry. They are also places for research and development as the church seeks to prepare leaders to respond to God's call to ministry in a complex and changing society. Seminaries need to play a vital role in developing a biblically grounded antiracism theology and ethic that will better prepare ministers and educators for effective leadership in an intercultural and multiracial society.
  - Seminaries need to initiate dialogue about developing course offerings that support an antiracism ministry. Provisions can be made for all seminarians to undergo antiracism training as a part of their field experience. Seminary-based training institutes can be places for developing and testing models of antiracism ministry as well as providing continuing education experiences for pastors and lay leaders.
  - Colleges and universities need to play a key role in preparing future leaders for antiracism work in both church and society. They should provide educational opportunities for persons disadvantaged by racism. If we are to achieve our goals in racial ethnic church growth, colleges and universities are essential places for educating, training and recruiting future church leaders of all races.

### *Related Agencies*

The PC (USA) works with a variety of agencies. Dialogue can be initiated to explore opportunities for working in partnership on the issue of racism.

### *Ecumenical Partners*

Systemic racism does not persist just because of the action of people of ill will. A contributing factor is

the inaction of people of goodwill.<sup>44</sup> The Formula of Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Christ, and the PC (USA) presents an opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of racial justice work through mutual support, planning, resource development, and coordination. The cooperative work of churches helped move the nation forward in the sixties and seventies. The struggle against racism in this new era will require churches to work in more coordinated and effective ways. Appropriate staff members of the above denominations have held several meetings. This work must continue with renewed vigor. The goal is to find ways of developing a more unified and coordinated approach to the struggle for racial justice and move toward the development of joint resources and mutually compatible training for antiracism ministry.

## FUNDING AND STAFFING

Adequate staffing to support the church's antiracism ministry is essential. As the nation becomes more racially diverse the need for work on race relations will increase significantly. If the church responds to the rising demand for help with antiracism programs across the denomination, additional staff will be needed. Not only is this necessary for the church's antiracism ministry, it is absolutely essential for the Racial Ethnic Church Growth Strategy, which cannot be achieved without breaking the barriers of racial injustice that have kept the church from including the people of color.<sup>45</sup> The church cannot achieve its goals in racial ethnic church growth without strengthening its racial ethnic ministry.

A crucial element in implementing any ministry is funding. Funding stability is necessary for the church to sustain an effective antiracism ministry in the next century. One source of funding is the Hawkins Buchanan Fund for Racial Justice. The fund, established by several staff members at the Presbyterian Center and John Buchanan, Moderator of the 208th General Assembly (1996), was designed to provide support for racial justice and antiracism ministries.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

*A Study of The Belhar Confession and its Accompanying Letter*, Eunice T. McGarrahan, Office of Theology and Worship, PC(USA), [www.pcusa.org/resource/belhar-confession-study-guide](http://www.pcusa.org/resource/belhar-confession-study-guide)

Ansell, Amy, *New Right New Racism*, New York: New York University Press, 1997.

Barkun, Michael, *Religion and the Racist Right*, revised edition, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Batstone, David, Editor, *New Vision for the Americas: Religious Engagement and Social Transformation*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

Bjorgo, Tore and Jeffrey Kaplan, eds., *Nation and Race*, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998.

Barndt, Joseph, *Dismantling Racism*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1991.

Brown, Dee, *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee*, New York: Bantam Books, 1970.

---

<sup>44</sup> James M. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, p. 296.

<sup>45</sup> Racial Ethnic Church Growth Strategy Report, *Minutes*, 1998, Part I, p. 414.

*Building an Inclusive, Caring Community through Dialogue.* Produced by Presbyterian Women, Inc., this printed resource takes the group facilitator through the process of creating community through dialogue, step by step, PDS #PWR03121.

*Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990's: A Report of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights,* February 1992.

*Confession of Belhar.* [www.pcusa.org/resource/belhar-confession/](http://www.pcusa.org/resource/belhar-confession/)

Demott, Benjamin, *The Trouble With Friendship: Why Americans Can't Think Straight About Race,* New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995.

Derman-Sparks, Louise & Phillips, Carol Brunson, *Teaching/Learning Anti-racism,* New York: Teachers College Press, 1997.

Gonzalez, Justo L. *Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes:* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.

Gossett, Thomas F., *Race,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Gregory, Steven, and Roger Sanjek, eds., *Race,* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996.

Gunning Francis, Leah, Ferguson and Faith: *Sparking Leadership and Awakening Community,* Danvers: Chalice Press, 2015.

Hadjor, Kofi Buenor, *Another America: The Politics of Race and Blame,* Boston: South End Press, 1999.

Harvey, Jennifer, *Dear White Christians,* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014.

*Hearing and Singing New Songs to God: Shunning Old Discords and Sharing New Harmonies. Report of the Women of Color Consultation Task Force To the 218th General Assembly (2008)*

[www.pcusa.org/resource/hearing-and-singing-new-songs-god-shunning-old-dis/](http://www.pcusa.org/resource/hearing-and-singing-new-songs-god-shunning-old-dis/)

Jencks, Christopher, *Rethinking Social Policy,* Boston: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Kivel, Paul, *Uprooting Racism,* Gabriola Islands, B.C., New Society Publishers, 1996.

Lee, Jung Young, *Marginality,* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

Patterson, Orlando, *The Ordeal of Integration,* Washington, D.C.: Civitas, 1997.

*Presbyterian Social Witness Policy Compilation,* Chapter 8 on Race and the Rights of Minorities in America, access at [www.pcusa.org/acswp](http://www.pcusa.org/acswp)

*Race in a Post-Obama America: The Church Responds.* Multi-author. Westminster John Knox Press, forthcoming 2016.

*The Racism Study Pack,* The Thoughtful Christian, the studies may be purchased individually or as a set, [www.thoughtfulchristian.com/Products/TC0385/the-racism-study-pack.aspx](http://www.thoughtfulchristian.com/Products/TC0385/the-racism-study-pack.aspx)

Rendon, Armando B., *Chicano Manifesto,* New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1941.

Rutstein, Nathan, *Healing Racism in America*, Springfield, Mass.: Whitcomb Publishing, 1993.

Takaki, Ronald, *Iron Cages*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979.

Wellman, David T., *Portraits of White Racism*, Second Edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

West, Cornel, *Race Matters*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.

Wilmore, Gayraud S., *Black and Presbyterian*, Louisville: Witherspoon Press, 1998.

***Rationale:***

These recommendations and revised Churchwide Antiracism Policy are a final response to the 2014 Referral: Item 08-06. A Resolution to Develop a Churchwide Antiracism Policy. Recommendation 1. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency, Using Existing Racial Ethnic Ministries, Consultation with the Racial Ethnic Ministries Task Force, the Advocacy Committee for Racial-Ethnic Concerns, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, and Engagement with Experienced Practitioners as Appropriate, to Update and Revise Churchwide Antiracism Policies and Develop Implementing Procedures Similar to the Existing Antidiscrimination Policies and Procedures—From the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (Minutes, 2014, Part I, pp.14, 41, 491–95; pp. 221–22 of the print copy).

A team to revise the churchwide antiracism policy was formed by Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries and met several times in 2015. The team consulted with members of the Racial Ethnic Ministries Task Force, the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, antiracism trainers, and with those who have knowledge in the field of racial justice in order to update and revise the policy.

The introduction has been revised, and a vision statement has been added. The new vision statement can be used alone when brevity and clarity is needed. Other revisions to the content of the policy to update information such as general assembly agency names, *Book of Order* references, and other minor edits were made. The policy has not been substantially changed, as the Churchwide Antiracism Policy Team believes that the content and analysis of the 1999 policy is still current today, as racism in the United States has not significantly improved since the policy was developed.

The Churchwide Antiracism Policy Team includes: Rev. Victor Aloyo, Jr.; Rev. Shannon Craigo-Snell; Rev. Laura Cheifetz; Dr. Christine Darden; Rev. Curtis A. Kearns, Jr., and Rev. Samson Tso. The Rev. Shannon Craigo-Snell is the writer of the 2016 introduction, vision statement, and accompanying study guides. Dr. Otis Turner is the writer of the 1999 policy. Dr. Mark Lewis Taylor was a consultant who worked with the team. Dr. Virstan Choy was a consultant for the 1999 Churchwide Antiracism Initiative Team. In the Presbyterian Mission Agency, staff associate Sera Chung provided support to the team, and Dr. Rhashell Hunter and Alejandra Sherman provided editing and formatting support for the revised policy.

Another action of the 221<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (2014) asked the Presbyterian Mission Agency to develop tools, assessment instruments and training materials for the presbyteries and congregations in order to develop a clear and effective understanding of systemic racism, including white privilege, power, and prejudice in relation to race.

Responding to both referrals, and in keeping with the desire to make this policy accessible to the

**PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY BOARD**

**April 27-29, 2016**

**Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries**

whole church, the team created a series of six hour-long study guides for adults or teens. These are available at <http://www.pcusa.org/racialjustice> (Presbyterian Mission Agency's Racial Justice web site).