

***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)**

*“The caged bird sings
With a fearful trill
Of things unknown
But longed for still...”*
--Maya Angelou

“If you want to know me, learn my song!”
--African Proverb

PRELUDE

Hearing and singing¹ new songs to God releases our harmony of spirit and vibrant voice as faithful people of God. The ancient psalms have been our model of both tune and tone. Their lyrics and melodies have often called us and given voice to our shared harmonies of praise and lament from every person and all of creation.

Sadly throughout the history of the church, some voices have been devalued, excluded or silenced. For too long, we have caged the faithful songs that some would sing. We have neither heard nor learned their songs, and so we have not really known them. Women, people of color, and particularly those at the intersections of these two identities have seldom found their voices heard and their songs sung throughout the life of the whole church.

So we who are church must now confess that whenever and wherever voices of the faithful are shunned, silenced or ignored, there is disharmony that impoverishes the life of the whole church and denies our beliefs and commitments:

All of you are God's children because of your faith in Christ Jesus. And when you were baptized, it was as though you had put on Christ in the same way you put on new clothes. Faith in Christ Jesus is what makes each of you equal with each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman. (Galatians 3:26-28, Contemporary English Version)

*In sovereign love God created the world good
and makes everyone equally in God's image,
male and female, of every race and people,
to live as one community...*
--A Brief Statement of Faith, lines 29-32

*The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall give full expression to the rich diversity within its membership and shall provide means which will assure a greater inclusiveness leading to wholeness in its emerging life.
[Book of Order, G-4.0403]*

Along with their sisters and brothers in the PC (USA), women of color fully affirm our churchwide commitments and vision to be a faith community of inclusive diversity and diverse inclusiveness of God's people. Those commitments are biblical and theological—deeply rooted in our identity as Presbyterians and as Christians. Women of color also share their lament for the many ways that the church has not always kept faith with this vision. Those broken promises are some of the old discords to be shunned. Then, new harmonies can be sung:

¹ Mindful of people with hearing and speaking disabilities, it should be noted that language in this report about "hearing" and "singing" does not exclusively refer to physical activity of the bodyperson. Rather, the language of "hearing" and "singing" is metaphor that also, and perhaps more importantly, refers to activities of mind and spirit. Indeed, by the grace of God and the gift of faith, our minds and spirits both experience and express our praise and thanks to God through our "seeing" and "hearing," through our "visioning" and "speaking" and "singing."

*God of the women long put to the test,
Left out of stories, forgotten, oppressed,
Quietly asking: "Who smiled at my birth?"
In Jesus' dying, you show us our worth
--Carolyn Winfrey Gillette*

As the church seeks in faithfulness to live into the vision of wholeness that God calls us to be, women of color within the church offer their gifts—the rich diversity of experience, culture and world view; gifts of faithfulness, service and leadership—inviting the whole church to sing in new harmonies, naming and claiming new ways of being the whole people of God.

We believe the time, both God's and ours, is now—now for all members of the church to learn the songs of women of color in the PC (USA) that we might truly know them and justly include them. Only in hearing and singing new songs to God will we fully and freely know all our sisters who are women of color, and thereby more fully and freely know God.

BACKGROUND

In January 2001, the Racial Ethnic Women's Dialog of Presbyterian Women (PW) made a historic decision to call for a gathering of racial ethnic women. A great number of GAC ministry offices, presbyteries, synods, and Presbyterian Women responded to this call. In October 2004, more than 180 women of color from across the church came together in Atlanta where they met with approximately 40 staff and elected consulting partners for national consultation. The participants were mostly grassroots, Presbyterian women of color leaders from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds. Most women were nominated by presbyteries, synods, PW groups and racial ethnic caucuses to participate in the consultation. Among those participating were Asian Americans, African Americans, Latinas, Middle Easterners, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and new immigrant women from Ghana, Kenya and other countries.

The 2004 Consultation was the first opportunity for women of color to meet together since 1993 when the Committee of Women of Color (CWC) was phased out at the General Assembly Council level. The theme drawn from Revelations 22:1-2, "Come, Be Refreshed by the Waters of Life", expressed the spirit of hope and stirred creative imagination in women of many races, cultures, ages, and all aspects of the church's life. There were three plenary sessions that addressed key issues for women of color, and there were ten mini-consultations that allowed the participants to share their experiences, perspectives and ideas. Together, the women developed their vision of how the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) might become an inclusive, beloved community. These sessions also generated the Consultation recommendations that addressed many facets of the church's mission and ministry. Documents related to this process were published in the March/April 2005 issue of *Church and Society* magazine, titled "*Come! Be Refreshed!*".

After having participated in the Consultation, participants expressed that they had developed new relationships and new understandings of issues that affect women of color and had learned strategies for bringing about change in the church. In addition, these women expressed more awareness and acceptance of each other's differences, recognizing those differences as strengths. The Consultation became a safe place where they could speak freely, be heard, and be themselves. Many participants expressed a desire for continuing consultations, which serve "as the church's and society's hope and conscience."¹

Following the Consultation, a team that included members of the Consultation planning team and staff consultants, gathered the recommendations from the Consultation in a report. The Consultation recommendations were addressed to several entities of the church, including the General Assembly Council, the Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Women, the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC), the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC), and the participants themselves.

Based on their review of the report, the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns and

the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns submitted a joint resolution to the 217th General Assembly (2006). The resolution adopted by the Assembly stated the following:

1. Create a task force to respond to the recommendations in the Women of Color Consultation (WoCC) report. This task force should include representation from ACREC, ACWC, as well as members identified from Presbyterian Women and the National Cross Caucus. As part of the response to the recommendations, the task force will design a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the recommendations in the WoCC report. This task force will report to the 218th General Assembly (2008).
2. Direct the General Assembly Council (GAC) to provide sufficient funding and staff support for the ACREC/ACWC joint task force.
3. Direct the GAC to provide sufficient funding and staff support to ensure a regularly recurring Women of Color Consultation.
4. Equip all GAC staff to be responsive to the needs of women of color as part of their continuing commitment to valuing the gifts that all people bring to the PC(USA). GAC staff should continue to be encouraged to reflect on and incorporate the values articulated in the Report on Creating a Climate for Change Within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved by the 216th General Assembly (2004).
5. Encourage all members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to read, study, and respond to the WoCC report and recommendations.

ANALYSIS OF THE WOCC REPORT

The Report and Recommendations of the Women of Color Consultation (released December 2005) took a wide-scope view of the church's organizational structure at all levels, and included reflections on the culture of the church. Women at the consultation spoke about their experience in the church:

- at congregational, presbytery, synod and national levels;
- in organizations, networks and caucuses where they participate;
- as members and as leaders; and
- as ordained clergy, elders, deacons and as laypersons.

Throughout the report, one can hear the authentic voices of racial ethnic women expressing both their love of Jesus Christ and the Presbyterian Church as well as their struggle with a church that often renders them outsiders. They express deep frustration with a church that is often resistant to change and many times, is obstructive to the efforts of women of color to participate fully in the life of the church. As the task force met and began its assessment, these questions served as their guide: "Whose voices are not being heard?" "What messages have been silenced?"

Themes

The task force identified four overarching themes in the consultation report, and placed these at the core of its analysis of the response to the report. Consultation participants were asked to share experiences of racism and sexism in the church and in the society. They were also asked to think about how the church might do things differently, in order to become a more welcoming church—fully engaging and supporting women of color in the life of the church. The report captures their recommendations to the church and reveals several overarching themes of their vision for a more inclusive and diverse church that affirms and takes seriously the gifts of racial ethnic women. The message that resonates throughout the report is a call to the church for transformation. If the PC(USA) is to become a truly multiracial, multicultural church that welcomes and is strengthened by diversity, the report holds that the church must be willing to be transformed—to learn new ways of doing and being a faith community.

1. Gender Lens and Intersectionality

The report calls the church to use a "gender lens—that is, to learn to see "gender-specific needs and realities." The report also points out emphatically that women of color are both racial ethnic and female, thus, neither identity can be denied for them to be whole. It calls the church to develop a better understanding of the intersectionality of race and gender in the experience of women of color. The report continually reiterates the importance of incorporating women's organizations, networks and communication vehicles in planning at all levels of the

church so that women's experiences are made an integral part of the process of giving shape to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Furthermore, it urges that this should be done in a framework where 'intersectionality' is understood to mean the ways in which the factors of race, gender, class and other social identities interact and intersect in the lived experiences and personal identity of women of color. Intersectionality then, is the recognition that the lives of women of color are both racialized and gendered, and therefore their experience of oppression is shaped by discrimination directed towards both their race and gender. Intersectionality is a recognition that women of color experience racism differently than men of color; it is a recognition that women of color experience sexism differently than white women.

2. Church as a System of Privilege and Discrimination

The second theme arising out of the report is a call to the church to recognize the ways that the church perpetuates systems of privilege within its own structures and ethos, and to renew its commitment to dismantle racism in all its forms, recognizing the complexities of race, ethnicity, and class as factors of marginalization and privilege. The church has already done some of this work. The 211th General Assembly (1999), in *Facing Racism: A Vision of the Beloved Community*, directed all presbyteries to engage in anti-racism training by 2005. While many presbyteries have undertaken this work, there are still many who have yet to do so. Anti-racism resources and training opportunities are available to Presbyterians, though there seems to be a lack of initiative and recognition of a need to do the work. There remains a need to expand on the resources the Church can provide congregations, presbyteries and synods, in the areas of race, gender and class intersections, internalized oppression, white and male privilege.

3. Commitment to Inclusivity with Justice

Another theme present in the Consultation's report is a desire for the church to express a renewed commitment to inclusivity with justice, through equity and mutuality, recognizing the need for shared power at all levels of the church and the need for cultural transformation within the church to make this possible. Equity and mutuality are elements of a whole and welcoming beloved community that lend themselves to an environment where shared power is possible. It is much more than ensuring that particular groups are represented in decision-making bodies. Presbyteries and synods must be equipped with the tools of cultural proficiency and dialogue in order to develop and foster vital community-building skills. The adoption and incorporation of the tools for cultural proficiency throughout the body of the church can help to create an environment where women of color's voices, gifts, and leadership are fully valued and appreciated.

4. Making Visible the Leadership of Women of Color

Finally, the Consultation is calling the church to express its commitments to inclusivity and diversity by developing, nurturing and supporting the leadership and gifts of women of color within the church—beyond token representation. It is important, therefore, to collect data that will give the church an accurate assessment of where and how women of color are serving throughout the body of the church. This data would aid the church in measuring its own commitments in nomination and recruitment processes that utilize broad searches for candidates, and result in a greater diversity of candidates. Too often, the church has called on the same few people to be the representative for their racial ethnic or age group. The 208th General Assembly (1996), in *Racial Ethnic Immigrant Evangelism Church Growth Strategy*, called upon the church to commit itself to the goal of increasing the membership of diverse racial, ethnic and immigrant communities, and to the vision of creating an environment where their numbers and gifts are welcome and valued. The church is more fully able to embody the beloved community when responding to this call. However, the Consultation report also reflects the reality that the whole church has not actively embraced this goal with intentional, committed actions. Until that happens denominational goals for increasing racial ethnic and new immigrant membership have little meaning.

Assessment of Recommendations

Many recommendations in the report were broad in scope, but there were also many that narrowly addressed specific program ministries and entities that existed in 2004. Many of these entities were downsized or eliminated

in the 2006 restructuring of the General Assembly Council program areas. The task force, which was asked to assess the structure's response to the recommendations in the report, became frustrated by the confusion present within the organization—an organization that was in significant transition. Essentially, the task force had received a document addressed to a nonexistent structure and struggled with how to move forward.

While trying to fulfill its responsibility in the midst of transition, it became increasingly apparent to the task force that the processes for change can have a significant impact on the outcome. In other words, inclusivity with equity means that the people impacted need to have a voice in the changes that effect their participation in the life of the church. The task force experienced significant frustration as it saw the GAC, in particular, busily working to reorganize itself to support stated goals to become a more diverse, multicultural church, yet not taking time to attend to the work of 200 women of color—grassroots women from across the church—who spoke from experience about the realities the church confronts. The following describes some of the difficulties that the task force has experienced in addressing the recommendations to an organization in transition—and some of the successes. Within the GAC staff, all senior leadership positions have yet to be filled as of the writing of this report. Three ministry divisions in the GAC became one Mission Ministry with seven ministry areas. Program staff were sometimes dispersed into differing ministry areas and had to adjust to changes in management and budget. Without an ability to accurately determine who in the surviving structure should be contacted, the task force wrote the General Assembly Council asking for an assessment of program responses. In order to assist in this process, the task force translated the report from the Mission Work Plan 2005-2006 (MWP 05-06) framework into the Mission Work Plan 2007-2008 framework. This was done in the hope that it would improve the response rate, but the response rate remained low. However, the task force is pleased to report it had the opportunity to engage in conversation with the GAC working group developing the Mission Work Plan 2009-2010 in the interest of bringing the voices of the Consultation into the planning of this guiding document. The Mission Work Plan 2009-2010 team appreciated how the Women of Color Consultation organized its recommendations in line with the mission work plan and commended this as a model for others.

Given these circumstances, the task force's attempts to receive written feedback from most program areas were only minimally successful. However, many of the staff that the task force sought to consult with were able to meet with the task force. Many of these conversations were helpful. The task force met with staff from:

- Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/Presbyterian Women Ministry area
- The Office of Vocation,
- The General Assembly Nominating Committee (GANC), and
- General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR).

In these meetings, the task force found colleagues who deeply appreciated the expressed concerns of women of color, and were eager to share their ongoing efforts to address these concerns. These conversations, a meeting with the Executive Committee of the GAC, and additional correspondence with the Executive Director have brought some measure of clarity on the work that GAC ministries are doing and the ways that their work is responsive to the concerns raised in the Consultation.

A Model for Change

The initiative to sponsor a gathering of women of color in the church came from Presbyterian Women through its own Racial Ethnic Women's Dialog, which began in 1998. The Dialog began as a response to racial ethnic women calling for a forum where their voices could be heard within PW. This group of women of diverse racial ethnic backgrounds and ages meets annually with the intention to break down barriers, promote mutual understanding, and to move in the direction of a deeper collaborative work. The process of the Dialog has helped to raise awareness within PW of the need for change within their organization.

Presbyterian Women has engaged the issue of racism in a variety of ways. After declaring its anti-racist identity in 2000, it has worked consistently on its anti-racism initiative. PW has offered two rounds of anti-racism training programs over the last six years through which over sixty women have been trained and are providing

leadership to bring about racial justice in their churches, presbyteries and synods. PW has offered anti-racism and cultural proficiency training to its Churchwide Coordinating Team (CCT) of PW since 2000. PW CCT is also addressing issues of shared power and internalized oppression utilizing the anti-racism and cultural proficiency training tools of the PC(USA).

Unfortunately, PW's commitment does not seem to be shared by many other entities in the Church. Women attending the Consultation repeatedly asked for accountability to be built into the system to respond to their voices and needs. Critical failures for this structural accountability were noted with the major reductions of staff (1993 and 2004), some of whom had responsibilities to these constituencies, and the elimination of the Committee of Women of Color (CWC), a national committee with sole focus on women of color's concerns, in 1993. With a few exceptions, Committees of Women of Colorⁱ have now been phased out at all levels in the connectional structure. With these losses, women of color strain to recognize support for them throughout the church. Acknowledging financial and membership losses in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) does not mean we must accept a church of scarcity for women of color.

Tools for Change

During the consultation Roula Alkhouri and Laura Mariko Cheifetz asked in their sermon – “But what sort of life is this? If we are identified only by the stereotypes that others hold against us... only by what wounds us ...only by what limits our possibilities...[then] what is it that makes us whole and good? What is it that makes us free?”ⁱⁱ They are inviting the whole church to listen to their cries and hopes and to explore these questions together and respond to the vision to which God calls all of us. In the recommendationsⁱⁱⁱ, the consultation urged the Church to

“Demonstrate spirituality by growing into an inclusive community that embraces change with new ideas to make all racial ethnic/ immigrant persons feel welcome. ...Be more intentional about sharing power, creating accountability, and adopting new ways of doing ministry at all levels of the church...”^{iv}

This vision of the beloved community requires hard work from the whole church. To contribute to this vision, women of color recognize that they need to work on their own internalized oppression of racism and sexism. They call the family of God to this same self-examination, conviction, repentance, and transformation.

Cultural Proficiency

In order to build the beloved community we need to learn to communicate effectively across our differences. We will learn that differences and distinctions do not have to separate us – instead they are gifts from an abundant loving God, which must be appreciated, celebrated and engaged. Cultural proficiency is a process that can help us move in this direction, individually and organizationally. One of the tools of cultural proficiency is to recognize the barriers to change: the presumption of entitlement and lacking an awareness of the need to adapt to human diversity.

In the world of gender relations, power dynamics between men and women tend to disadvantage women. In the world of race relations in the U.S., power dynamics between whites and persons of color tend to disadvantage people of color. This broken system serves to advantage men and whites. Advantaged persons in this construct intentionally and unintentionally perpetuate systems of privilege. In this sense, women of color are doubly burdened—burdened by their race and burdened by their gender. This social construct does not take seriously the realities of women of color who live at the intersection of race and gender; the needs of women of color are often ignored.

The framework of cultural proficiency provides a spectrum (for individuals and organizations), which begins describing behaviors that are culturally destructive and builds toward cultural understanding, which honors differences as assets to the individual and the whole community. It is a tool to help individuals and organizations learn to assess where they are and where they need to change. These analytical skills are a critical component for organizations seeking to be intentional about change and transformation.

Cultural proficiency is

“...a way of being that allows individuals and organizations to interact effectively with people who differ from them. It is a developmental approach for addressing the issues that emerge in diverse environments.”^v

Culturally proficient organizations learn to recognize institutional and systemic barriers to inclusion with equity. Antiracism training and gender equity audits are two tools that can help organizations learn to identify structures and habits that work to marginalize people within their organizations.

Dialogue is a major tool for developing empathy and understanding. During the consultation, dialogue facilitated major change in the participants. Participants learned to appreciate each other’s differences, learned from each other, and built strategies based on their collective wisdom.

In the work of the task force, tools of cultural proficiency were used to explore and understand how the intersections of race and gender are experienced in our own lives. In sharing with one another, we furthered our commitments to this process and to the understanding of how becoming culturally proficient changes us. These tools changed the task force. They can help to transform the Church also.

World Alliance of Reformed Churches

It is important to note that women of color in the PC(USA) are not alone in calling the church to think critically at the intersections of categories, such as race and gender. There are many other women and men around the world that are making a similar call. For instance, a consultation on “Gender, Leadership and Power” (June 2007), organized by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) of which the PCUSA is a member, examined the issues of leadership and power through a gender lens and in relation to race/ethnicity, culture, and many other forces that impact women’s lives. What emerged from the WARC consultation is a proposal for a global study process that is intended for transformation of gender and power constructions in relation to racial and ethnic identity, cultural identity, use of the Bible and theology in the church, globalization, and leadership. The General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations (GACER) has recommended to the General Assembly Council “that it develop a strategy for such study process for the PC(USA) and leadership and our participation in the North America study process.” Participation with WARC will strengthen and enhance the efforts within PC(USA).

Summary

What is true about the world is also true about the Church. We have built systems of white and male privilege into the life and ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and these two gender-based and race-based systems seldom meet, making women of color fall between the cracks. Once recognized, we must transform this reality by removing the barriers and building, with one another, the beloved community. The church is called to be distinct, to be salt and light to the world—the gospel model for society. Anything less is a scandalous denial of God.

The reports received by the task force from responding entities indicate that PC(USA) structures continue to be naïve about their diversity claims. Yet these women do not end with a song of lament. Our faithful sisters in God’s family remain steadfast in the church and continue to sing a song insisting on change, calling on the Church to listen.

CONCLUSIONS

True commitment to a new vision of the church requires committed action. If the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is to become a diverse and inclusive community of faith that fully engages all of its members in all aspects of the life and decision-making with equity and mutuality, we must take concrete steps to effect the kinds of change that make this vision a reality. Change in an organization is a process that happens at multiple points and from

multiple directions. Some things can be mandated or legislated, but some kinds of change must come with a conversion of the heart. Any strategy for change must also acknowledge that there are always barriers to change. This is especially true when confronting the systemic nature of racism, sexism and classism. The task force acknowledges that if the vision for change does not belong to the whole church the transformation called for by the Women of Color Consultation will not become a reality. Therefore, the task force is recommending a strategy that seeks to engage the church at every level and in a variety of ways.

Presbyteries and synods were prominent in the consultation report, as the place where members are most likely to be involved beyond the local congregation. Consultation participants lifted up specific denominational responsibilities and commitments that had an impact on their participation in the church. These included:

- Responsibilities and functions of presbyteries relating to processes of candidacy, call and ordination;
- The work of Committees on Representation to promote the engagement of women of color in the leadership of their presbytery or synod;
- The activities of presbyteries and synods to help congregations to engage in ministries of social justice,
- Provide training and resources for antiracism work, and
- Model the use of inclusive and expansive language in meetings and worship

The women who participated in the 2004 Consultation expressed a strong sense of urgency in their call for recurring consultations. The task force urges the GAC to reflect the same sense of urgency in planning and conducting the next consultation and recommends a timeline that would provide for an event no later than 2011. With the loss of staffing and programs directly relating to women of color, a consultation process is seen as an important mechanism to give voice for women of color within the PC(USA) structure. The task force believes the focus of the next consultation should be on presbyteries and synods.

Accountability to each other in the community of faith

A central theme of the Consultation was the need within a connectional church to hold each other accountable to the commitments we have made as a community of faith. The governing bodies of the church play a critical role in exercising accountability through its structures, as do the member-based organizations that speak for particular constituencies within the church. The elected GAC plays a crucial leadership role in monitoring and directing the work of GAC staff and setting the Mission Work Plan goals.

The Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC) and the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) were created by the General Assembly to monitor the work of the church and to advocate for women and for people of color, respectively. The spirit of the WoCC underscores the need for these two committees to work together to address the intersections of race and gender, rather than segmenting the work in separate categories of 'women' and 'racial ethnic'. Historically, ACWC and ACREC have met jointly in conjunction with the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP). The agenda for this joint meeting has focused on their common work in preparation for General Assembly. When assemblies met every year, this was an annual meeting, which facilitated the three committees' work in advising the Assembly. However, it did not allow time for the creative work of developing new initiatives or educating committee members to work more effectively in the intersections of gender, race and class that shape and inform the work that each committee is called to do.

Following the WoCC, ACREC and ACWC created a Joint Working Group with members of both committees to consider the recommendations of the Consultation and ways in which the two committees could work together to address concerns raised by women of color. The Joint Working Group refers items of business back to the ACREC and ACWC committees for additional conversation and action. This gives responsibility to ACREC to examine issues of racial justice through a gender lens, and ACWC to examine issues of gender justice through a racial/cultural lens. The task force believes that the Joint Working Group is crucial to ensuring that ACWC and ACREC are equipped to be fully responsive to women of color in the church. The work of this group would be enhanced by the participation of non-voting members to provide greater representation and expertise. The current

budgets for ACREC and ACWC do not provide for the costs associated with bringing additional participants to a joint meeting. Providing for that expanded participation and extended meeting time ensures that both committees can sustain the joint working group on a permanent basis and allows for greater representation of women from various parts of the church in the process.

Equipping and resourcing the church for transformation

Intentional, committed strategies for change require equipping people with the tools for change. The 2004 consultation pointed to the failure throughout the church to use the resources available. Many of the women present were not aware of the denomination's commitment to do antiracism training at all governing levels, for example. The consultation also pointed to the need for additional resources to equip the church for change. When the consultation met in 2004 the concepts and tools of cultural proficiency were just being introduced to the church. As the task force did its assessment, cultural proficiency emerged as a way of speaking about the multiple facets of change that need to occur—encompassing a variety of strategies at different locations within the organizational structure of the church:

- Creating greater awareness of the realities of sexism, racism and classism; the intersections of gender, race and class; and the significant difference that age/generation makes in the experience of racism and sexism in our culture;
- Learning to recognize the barriers to change, which includes recognizing the ways that privilege and internalized oppression impact both personal relationships and formal structures within the church;
- Developing better skills for cross-cultural communication;
- Learning to share power and create relationships based on equity and mutuality, using different models for dialogue and decision-making;
- Recognizing the role of OGA & GAC to equip congregations, presbyteries, and synods by developing resources and facilitating networks where Presbyterians can share best practices and learn from each other's experiences;
- Developing and utilizing tools to help the church learn to recognize the ways that it perpetuates systemic patterns of discrimination so that they can be dismantled:
 - Gender equity audits
 - Training in antiracism; the intersections of gender, race & class; internalized oppression and privilege
- Gathering, organizing and reporting data that gives an accurate picture of the status of women of color in the church; and
- Renewing commitments to seeking full participation of women and people of color through the work of committees on representation and nominating committees.

In addition to providing resources, support, and guidance to congregations, presbyteries and synods, the work of the church at the national level is critical to transforming the church. The Consultation, while affirming the work of the General Assembly in its public witness to race and gender justice, also expressed the need for the church at the national level to embody the vision expressed in our policies. The work of the General Assembly level committees, governing boards and staff entities reflect whether the church is truly committed to transformation by the ways it embodies a new vision.

The 2004 Consultation affirmed the work of the General Assembly Nominating Committee, the General Assembly Committee on Representation, and the denomination's policies that require minimum levels of participation for people of color and women in particular entities. The Consultation also underscores the importance of not segmenting race and class as the church seeks to be representative, seeking instead to pay close attention to the intersections of race and gender—so that when seeking to meet standards for racial ethnic representation we seek to have gender balance, and when seeking to assure participation of women, racial and cultural diversity is included in that representation.

The Consultation also pointed to the importance of communication on multiple levels. Providing translation in meetings and publications in languages other than English are important steps to creating an inclusive church. Communicating in a culturally proficient manner encompasses other aspects as well:

- Paying attention to the diversity in the church,
- Not assuming there is only one normative way of being Presbyterian,
- Including persons of color in visual media with integrity,
- Using language that is inclusive and sensitive to the ways diverse communities speak about themselves, and
- Learning to speak to a generation that has grown up in an Internet age but remembering that not every congregation has Internet access.

These are just some of the considerations that should be reflected in the ways we communicate throughout the church.

Many of the women who participated in the Consultation were invited through grassroots member-based organizations such as Presbyterian Women, the racial ethnic women's organizations, racial ethnic caucuses, and Racial Ethnic Young Women Together. The Consultation recognized that the members of these organizations also have a voice in effecting change within the church. They called on their own organizations and others throughout the church, to call their members to accountability and to equip their members to be effective agents for change. As the task force met with various entities within the church, it became more aware of the many organizations, associations and networks that have significant impact on the life of the church—and it urges all of them to engage in the process of transformation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Hearing and singing new songs to God, calling the church to new directions and new ways of being in ministry, and affirming the denomination's ongoing efforts to "*unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace,*" (A Brief Statement of Faith, *The Book of Confessions*, 10:4, lines 69-71); the Task Force on the Women of Color Consultation recommends that the 218th General Assembly (2008) take the following actions:

- 1. Declare 2009 to 2019 a "Decade of Hearing and Singing New Songs to God" in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which will call for transformation of the church, focusing on the intersections of gender, race, and class, and will include the following emphases:**
 - a.) developing an understanding of and ability to use a "gender lens", that is--to view issues, institutions and actions through the lens of gender specific needs and realities;**
 - b.) recognizing the intersectionality of gender and race, along with other factors such as ethnicity and class, that contribute to unique or particular experiences of oppression and/or privilege;**
 - c.) seeking inclusivity with equity: moving beyond tokenism in the participation of women of color of all ages to valuing and embracing the gifts they bring to the life of the whole church;**
 - d.) adopting an understanding of shared power as a fundamental element of community; and**
 - e.) implementing mechanisms of accountability that hold the systems of power in the church accountable to the *whole* church, particularly those parts of the church that have been historically silenced or invisible.**
- 2. Request the Moderator, Stated Clerk and Executive Director of the General Assembly Council to communicate with congregations, presbyteries and synods, seminaries, campus ministries and conference**

centers asking them to recognize the Decade of Hearing and Singing New Songs to God and incorporate it in worship, conferences, training events, and other activities.

3. Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) and Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC) create a permanent Joint Working Group on Women of Color in the Church, to be made up of two members of ACREC, two members of ACWC, appointed by the leadership of each committee.

a.) In addition to the ACWC and ACREC members, the working group may appoint two to four members at-large, one of which who should be a young woman of color between the ages of 18-35, to provide representation and expertise, as needed.

b.) ACWC and ACREC shall meet jointly at least once a year, at which time an extra meeting day will be provided for the joint working group.

c.) The joint working group shall monitor the church's response to issues and concerns raised in the initial Women of Color Consultation, advise ACREC and ACWC on new and emerging issues impacting women of color, and consult with the General Assembly Council in planning for future consultations.

4. Direct the General Assembly Council, in consultation with Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns and Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns, to plan a Women of Color Consultation that focuses on the full participation and leadership/decision making roles of women of color of all ages in synods and presbyteries. Plans for the next consultation shall be reported to the 219th General Assembly (2010), for an event to be held no later than 2011, and from which a report and recommendations shall be submitted to the 220th General Assembly (2012).

5. Urge the Committee on the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council elected to utilize the tools of cultural proficiency in all of their activities to deepen and enhance their work together across differences.

6. Request the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council, working in partnership to resource and equip presbyteries and synods, utilizing the tools of cultural proficiency, to work for equitable participation of women of color in all aspects of the life and ministry of presbyteries and synods.

7. Urge all entities in the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and General Assembly Council (GAC) to be mindful of the critical importance of utilizing culturally proficient communication tools and strategies and to be intentional in working to communicate with the whole church to convey the vision of being diverse and inclusive with equity. Request Communications and Funds Development, in partnership with the Cultural Proficiency office to equip OGA and GAC staff with culturally proficient communication tools.

8. Direct the Office of the General Assembly, General Assembly Council, the Board of Pensions, Presbyterian Foundation, Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program, and the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation to collect, organize and report data for all research in the church (such as comparative statistics, Presbyterian Panel, data gathered by the Vocation's office on inquirers, candidates and clergy, the Stated Clerk's annual statistical report, etc.) in a disaggregated form by race, ethnicity, gender and age, so that data on women of color and young adult women of color may be identified separately for analysis, where possible and as permissible by law.

9. Direct the General Assembly Council to develop a resource for use by congregations, presbyteries, synods and General Assembly that will provide tools to conduct a gender equity audit that includes age,

race and ethnicity, that enables entities within the church to gather quantifiable data on women and persons of color's presence, participation and influence in decision-making processes.

10. Direct the General Assembly Council, in consultation with Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns and Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns, to expand on the basic antiracism training to include modules on the intersectionality of race, gender and class and provide focused training on internalized oppression and privilege, with a timeline as follows:

- a.) **The intersections of race, gender and class by 2010**
- b.) **Internalized oppression (race & gender) by 2012**
- c.) **White privilege and male privilege by 2014**

11. Reaffirm the General Assembly policy commitments to race and gender justice, including the church's commitments to ensure racial ethnic and women's representation in decision-making bodies. Urge all nominating committees, committees on representation and policy-making bodies to be mindful of the intersections of race, gender and class. At the General Assembly level,

- a.) **Remind and reaffirm the General Assembly Nominating Committee, the General Assembly Council Nominating Committee and the Committees on Representation as they do their work, where they are guided by specific representation criteria to consider gender balance when they are fulfilling guidelines for racial ethnic representation and to include racial ethnic representation when fulfilling guidelines for women's representation.**
- b.) **Remind and reaffirm the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, to be mindful of the intersections of gender, race and class in the appointment of its resolution teams, task forces, consultants, etc. and in the development of policy.**

12. Encourage member-based organizations, networks, associations and caucuses within the church to dismantle racism, sexism, classism and ageism at all levels of the church, including within their own organizations. These organizations are encouraged to utilize the antiracism, cultural proficiency and other leadership training resources developed by Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council to equip their members to be advocates of transformation within Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) structures (See Appendix B: Resources). They are encouraged to work in partnership with others in this endeavor.

13. Encourage the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as it participates with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in its development of a global study process on Gender, Leadership and Power, to include attention to the intersections of gender, race and class in the U. S. context.

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Affirmative Action: A set of public policies and initiatives designed to help eliminate past and present discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The actual phrase “affirmative action” was first used in President Lyndon Johnson’s 1965 Executive Order 11246 requiring federal contractors to “take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin.” In 1967, Johnson expanded the Executive Order to include affirmative action requirements to benefit women. (Source: <http://www.now.org/nnt;08-95/affirmhs.html>)

Ageism: Discrimination on the basis of age and life experience. The term is most often used to refer to discrimination against older adults, but within the church it can refer to the marginalization of young adults from leadership.

Anti-racism: An active and consistent process of change to eliminate individual, institutional and systemic racism as well as the oppression and injustice racism causes. (Source: Canadian Race Relations Foundation’s Glossary of Terms)

Assimilation: A process by which “outsiders” are brought into or are made to take on and then live out of, the identity of a dominant group, often resulting in the loss of the culture of the minority group. The term has a decidedly negative connotation implying coercion and a failure to recognize and value diversity. Other times this term is understood as a survival technique for individuals and groups.

Class: A category usually used to divide members of society into groups in terms of their economic status. The American Heritage Dictionary defines it as “a social stratum whose members share similar economic, political, and cultural characteristics.”

Consultation: (working definition for the 2004 Consultation) Describes the process by which people engage one another at a meeting. It usually refers to a gathering where a group of people with a particular set of concerns, experience, and expertise are brought together to consult with one another with the goal of engendering a projected outcome.

Cross-cultural: Communication and interactions that understand and respect the difference culture makes in relationships.

Culture: Everything you believe and do that identifies you as a member of a group and distinguishes you from other groups. You may belong to more than one cultural group. Cultures reflect the belief systems and behaviors that are informed by ethnicity as well as other sociological factors like gender, age, sexual orientation, and physical ability. Both individuals and organizations are defined by their cultures. (source: R.B. Lindsey, Kikanza Nuri Robins, and Raymond D. Terrell, editors. Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders, 2003, 2nd edition.)

Cultural Competence: A term created by Terry Cross which means interacting with one’s clients, colleagues and community using the essential elements of cultural competence: assessing culture, valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, adapting to diversity and institutionalizing cultural knowledge.(source: Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell)

Cultural Group: A group of people that share certain characteristics such as mannerisms, beliefs (religious and other), language, values, and usually a common history, real or fictitious. See Ethnic Group.

Cultural Identity: Seeing oneself in relation to one’s own ethnic or cultural group. There are many different affiliations that we hold that come together to create a unique cultural identity for each of us. Our cultural identity is very complex with each group membership intersecting with the others. Because of this complexity, we cannot

be judged, labeled or categorized based on one aspect of our identity. (Source: D. Merrill-Sands, Holvino, and Cumming. Working with Diversity: Working Paper NO. 11, Center for Gender in Organizations, SIMMONS Graduate School of Management, MA, USA, 2000. www.awid.org/ywl/glossary.)

Cultural Filter: Our complex cultural identity creates in our minds a sort of “cultural filter”. Everything we experience each day goes through this filter, influencing how we think, feel and react to the world around us.

Cultural Proficiency: The policies and practices of an organization, or the values and behaviors of an individual, which enable that organization or person to interact effectively in a culturally diverse environment. Cultural proficiency is a “way of being” that is reflected in the way an organization treats its employees, its clients and its community. There are six points along the cultural proficiency continuum: cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural indifference^{vi}, cultural precompetence, cultural competence, and cultural proficiency. (Source: Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell)

Dialogue: A process of communication that allows people to share their perspectives and experiences with one another about difficult issues we tend to just debate about or avoid entirely. (Source: National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation. <http://www.thataway.org>)

Discrimination: Treating members of a targeted group less favorably than those of the dominant group. Often occurs when the dominant group determines the accessibility of goods or services for, and/or the rights and privileges of, the targeted group. (Source: Association for Women’s rights in Development. www.awid.org/ywl/glossary)

Diversity: A general term for indicating that many people with many differences are present in an organization or group. Diversity refers to ethnicity, language, gender, age, ability and sexual orientation and all other aspects of culture. (Source: Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell)

Dominant Culture: Used widely to refer to the cultural group with the greatest political power in a given context.

Ethnic Group: A group socially defined on the basis of cultural characteristics of diverse types such as language, religion, kinship organization, dress, and mannerism, or any other set of criteria deemed relevant to the actors concerned. (Source: Merrill-Sands, D., Holvino, and Cumming. Working with Diversity, Working Paper, No. 11, Center for Gender in Organizations, Simmons Graduate School of Management, MA, USA: 2000)

Ethnicity: A social construct which divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base. (Source: Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A sourcebook. New York: Routledge, 2000)

Ethnocentrism: The belief that one’s ethnic group is superior to all others, resulting, at times, in discrimination toward those of different ethnic backgrounds or national origin. (Source: Maurianne Adams, et. al.)

Gender (vs. Sex): Describes the socially-constructed identities (as opposed to biological), roles and expectations assigned to women and men. Feminine and masculine are the qualifiers used to describe gender stereotypes for women and men.

Gender Audit: A self-assessment tool for organizations and institutions on how gender issues are addressed in programming portfolios and internal organizational processes, and not on external evaluation.

Gender equality: Women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development and to benefit equally from the results, not by becoming the same, but by correcting the systemic nature of inequality. (Source: Association of Women’s Rights in Development, www.awid.org/ywl/glossary)

Gender equity: The process of ensuring fairness to both women and men, often involving making measures available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on the same level. Equity leads to equality. (Source: Association for Women's Rights in Development. <http://www.awid.org/ywl/glossary>)

Gender lens: Using a gender lens is like putting on spectacles. Like using a pair of glasses to correct our vision, gender lens helps us focus our attention on gender differences in needs and realities and take these differences seriously.

Gender Roles: Learned behavior in a given society/community that conditions certain tasks, activities, and behavior to be perceived as male or female. They vary according to culture and/or social group and according to class, ethnicity, and race. Factors such as education, technology, economic change and sudden crises like war and famine cause gender roles and the gender division of labor to change. (Source: Association for Women's Rights in Development, www.awid.org/glossary)

Inclusive Language: A corrective to human languages that mirror the societal values and institutions of the dominant group. The inclusive language policy adopted by PCUSA in 1985 stated that the language of the church "should display a sensitivity to varied metaphors that reflect our belief in a covenanting God, the limitations as well as the richness of human imagery in language about God, and diversity among Presbyterians." (Source: Definitions and Guidelines on Inclusive Language, PDS 70-420-01-003)

Institutional racism/sexism: When the values, norms, beliefs, standards and expectations of a dominant group become the basis for organizational policies, practices, arrangements and appropriate behaviors, and result in unequal distribution of benefits and opportunities. The power to control resources, determine access, reward and punish behaviors, distribute benefits and privilege is lodged in norms of the dominant group and access is denied to people of different identity groups. (Source: Merrill-Sands, D., Holvino and Cumming. Working with Diversity. www.awid.org/ywl/glossary)

Internalized oppression: External oppression becomes internalized oppression when the oppressed come to believe and act as if the oppressor's belief system, values, and way of life are reality.

Intersectionality: The reality for women who suffer not only from gender discrimination, but also experience a range of other power relations such as racial, ethnic, caste, among others. For instance, most racial ethnic women experience discrimination not only because of their race but also because of their gender; in other words, racial ethnic women live the intersection of gender and race discrimination. (Source: Association of Women's Rights in Development, <http://www.awid.org/glossary>)

Male privilege: Unearned and unquestioned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed on people solely because they are men living in a system that is built on sexism. By virtue of their maleness, men enjoy concrete benefits through access to resources and social rewards and the power to shape the norms and values of society. Generally, men who enjoy such privilege do so without choosing it or even being conscious of it.

Multiculturalism: The preservation of different cultures or cultural identities within a society or nation, holding each as equally valuable to and influential upon the members of society. The educational term, *multicultural* refers to teaching about different cultures. Multiculturalism differs from cultural proficiency, in that it reflects a state of being, whereas cultural proficiency is a process or a way of being. (Source: Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell, Cultural Proficiency)

Mutual Invitation: A process designed by Eric Law to ensure that everyone who wants to engage in a dialog has the opportunity to speak and be heard in a group setting where the dynamics of power can be played out in such a way that some may dominate the conversation while silencing others.

Patriarchy: Literally means “rule of the father”. In a patriarchal society, women are seen as the primary house workers and child raisers, and their capacity to compete economically with men is thereby limited. Cultural patterns and legal restrictions continue to limit women’s economic, political, and social equality to ratify the view that women are subordinate to men as a gender group, a subordination that is interstructured with class and racial subordination. Religion and society is deeply shaped by this system. (Source: Rosemary Radford Ruether, Dictionary of Feminist Theologies, Westminster/John Knox. Letty M. Russell and J. Shannon Clarkson, 1996.)

Person of color: Generally used to refer to “non-whites.”

Prejudice: A pre-judgment drawn in the absence of evidence and held in the face of evidence that contradicts it. (Source: Working Definitions prepared for anti-racism training in the PCUSA)

Race: A socially constructed category developed during the period of European colonial expansion that uses characteristics such as skin color, facial features, and body structure as a basis for classifying people. (Source: Working Definitions prepared for anti-racism training in the PCUSA)

Racial ethnic: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 1987 defined “racial ethnic” as a term to refer to a group of people that defines itself or is defined by others as different from the dominant White American group. (Source: Minutes, 199th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1987), Part I.

Racism: (Power + Racial Prejudice=Racism) results from a merger of social power and racial prejudice to create systems that treat people differently whether intentionally or unintentionally. It shapes institutions and structures so that they provide privileges for some while oppressing others. It involves inequality and unfair access to the distribution of such resources as money, education, information, and decision-making power between dominant and dominated groups.

Sex (vs. Gender): Refers to the biological differences between women and men.

Sexism: Refers to gender stereotyping of men and women as hierarchically ordered (men over women) and also as confined to limited cultural identities and roles as “masculine and “feminine”. It is expressed in the exclusion of women from certain types of employment or leadership roles that are assumed to be the prerogatives of males. Sexism is expressed in personal, interpersonal, cultural, economic, legal and political terms, and is part of a total social and cultural system. (Source: Rosemary Radford Ruether, Dictionary of Feminist Theologies, Westminster/John Knox. Letty M. Russell and J. Shannon Clarkson, 1996.)

Stereotype: A fixed notion or conception of a person, group, idea, etc., allowing for no individuality and no critical judgment of individual cases. Stereotypes are usually based on false generalizations about a particular category of people, and are often used to justify the actions taken against members of that group. (Source: Maurianne Adams, et. al.)

White Privilege: The concrete benefits of access to resources and social rewards and the power to shape the norms and values of society which whites receive, either consciously or unconsciously, by virtue of their skin color in a racist society where those who are considered to be white are the dominant group. Generally white people who enjoy such privilege do so without being conscious of it. (Source: “Working Definitions” prepared for anti-racism training in the PCUSA)

APPENDIX B

Printed Resources

Cannon, Katie G. *Remembering What We Never Knew: The Epistemology of Womanist Theology*. Louisville: Women's Ministries Program Area, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2001.

Garcia, Magdalena I. *Toward a Liberating Faith: Introduction to Mujerista Theology*. Louisville: Women's Ministries Program Area, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2001.

Lee, Unzu. *Coming home: Asian American Women Doing Theology*. Louisville: Women's Ministries Program Area, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). 2006.

Lee, Unzu, ed. *Come! Be Refreshed!: A National Gathering of Women of Color in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*. In *Church and Society, March/April 2005*. Louisville: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2005.

Lewis, Nantawan Boonprasat, Lydia Hernandez, Helen Locklear, and Robina Marie Winbush. *Sisters Struggling in the Spirit: A Women of Color Theological Anthology*. Louisville: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1994.

Lindsey, Randall B., Kikanza Nuri Robins, and Raymond Terrell. *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, 2003.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). "Facing Racism: A Vision of the Beloved Community." 211th General Assembly (1999). OGA-99-033.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). "Racial Ethnic Immigrant Evangelism Church Growth Strategy." 208th General Assembly (1996). PDS #72-429-06-001.

Audio-Visual Resources

Becoming the Beloved Community: People of Faith Working Together to Eradicate Racism. Produced by Presbyterian Women, 2006. PWR-06-120.

Web Resources

Association for Women's Rights in Development. <<http://www.awid.org>>

Center for Women's Global Leadership. <<http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu>>

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) *Racial Justice & Advocacy*. <<http://www.pcusa.org/racialjustice>>

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) *Office of Women's Advocacy*. <<http://www.pcusa.org/womensadvocacy>>

ⁱ Committee of Women of Color was eliminated with two other women's advocacy networks: Justice for Women and Women Employed by the Church. See *Years of Strong Effort* (by Annette Chapman-Adisho, PDS #72-710-98-001).

ⁱⁱ *Come! Be Refreshed! A National Gathering of Women of Color in the Presbyterian Church (USA)*, *Church and Society*, Volume 95, Number 4, (March/April 2005) p.86.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Appendix C, Women of Color Consultation Report and Recommendations, p 13-14.

^{iv} Come! Be Refreshed! A National Gathering of Women of Color in the Presbyterian Church (USA), *Church and Society*, Volume 95, Number 4, (March/April 2005) p.133.

^v “Cultural Proficiency: What is it? ©2003 The Cultural Proficiency Group, page 1

^{vi} Lindsey, Randall B., Robins, Kikanza Nuri, and Terrell, Raymond D. 2003, *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, Press, Inc.), 2nd Edition, 98. Authors of Cultural Proficiency use the term “cultural blindness” for this stage.