

**REPORT OF THE ANTI-RACISM TASK FORCE
TO THE
BOARD OF GENERAL MINISTRIES EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MARCH 2021**

Date: March 10, 2021

Name of Task Force: The Anti-Racism Task Force

Anti-Racism Task Force Co-chairs:

Rev. Justin Thornburgh and Rev. Dr. Natalie C. Wimberly

Name of Task Force Members:

Rev. Dr. Eugene Downing

Rev. Joan C. Friesen

Mr. Ethan Medley

Rev. Dr. Don Ng

Rev. Rodney Lynch

Ms. Sandra Lee

Rev. Dr. Dan Brockway

Ms. Stephanie Commandest

Rev. Abner Cotto-Bonilla

Objective of the Anti-Racism Task Force:

The Anti-Racism Task Force is a compassionate group of American Baptists clergy and lay people from across the nation committed to live into the call to be the hands and feet of Jesus the Christ in the world. We have been tasked by the ABCUSA General Secretary and President to provide anti-racism resources, exercises, and other materials to the denomination to be utilized by individuals, congregations, and institutions. We have also been asked to host a denominational wide Anti-Racism Symposium.

The Work of Anti-Racism

The work of anti-racism is redemptive, transformative, and conciliatory. It is sacred work. *As a people of prayer, purpose, and passion, creating a community of faith where people of every race, nationality and culture gather as one in worship, service and work, we take up this mantle as co-creators of God's kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.*

The initial meeting of the Anti-Racism Task Force was held on November 10, 2020 and yielded an unprecedented commitment and dedication to this work by Task Force members. Through prayer, discernment, and honest reflection we have begun to identify and surface the historical and present experiences and stories of peoples affected by racism. We are dawning a new age in which we realize that providing symposiums and multifaceted resources are essential, and yet the great benefit to these initiatives is the revelation that anti-racism work is work that must be ongoing. Racial hatred, bias, systemic racism, white supremacy, and inequitable opportunity are deeply rooted in our systems of education, health care, economics, government, and faith traditions, permeating all aspects of individual, community, and corporate life. As a denomination, we must be willing to respond appropriately.

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In 2019, research studies indicated a 100 percent increase in hate crimes and blatant acts of racial violence (www.justice.gov). These incidents continue to rise and signal the need for anti-racism work within the church and in our world. It is not enough for us to conclude our response to suffering, oppression, and dehumanization with prayer. Prayer is an initial act of faith that moves us to action. It moves us to work. Accordingly, the work of anti-racism is the active dismantling of systems, privileges, and everyday practices that reinforce and normalize the contemporary dimensions of white dominance (Crenshaw, 2020). In Mark 12:30-32, Jesus gives us two great commands that empower us in this world. Jesus teaches us to, *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”* The second is this: *“Love your neighbor as yourself.”* We lean toward the teachings of Jesus in this love mandate and see it as a compass for our individual and denominational future movement.

The Vision

The Anti-Racism Task Force envisions the symposium and the development of a platform for resources as an initial step toward a long-term commitment by the American Baptist Churches, USA to the on-going ministry of anti-racism. The ABCUSA is the most diverse denomination in the United States. The Anti-Racism Task Force requests the support of the ABCUSA Board of General Ministries to commit to the work of becoming the most anti-racist denomination in the world.

Working from a paradigm reflective of the historical relationships of racial and ethnic groups and racial oppression within the denomination and the world and from the power and faith in God through Jesus the Christ, we make the following recommendations:

- 1) The development of a ABCUSA Board of General Ministries Anti-Racism Commission
- 2) The hiring of an Associate General Secretary for Anti-Racism work with staffing support
- 3) Adequate funding for the continued work and support of the Anti-Racism Commission
- 4) The Anti-Racism Commission to work within the ABCUSA making necessary connections with other offices and divisions as to further the work of Anti-Racism
- 5) Representation from the Anti-Racism Commission to be integrated and utilized appropriately within the Board of General Ministries.

We thank you for this opportunity to serve God, ABCUSA, and our neighbors.