



American Baptist Anti-Racism Convening Table

MEETING NOTES - #2

Meeting #2 | Thursday, March 31, 2022 | 1:00 – 2:30 PM ET

Present: Perry Hopper, LaRose Karr, James McJunkin, Marie Onwubuariri (convener), Rodney Ragwan, Lisa Rothenberger, Robin Stoops (new member). Unable to join: Lisa Harris-Lee, Gina Jacobs-Strain, Kathryn Ray

I. Meeting began with personal sharing using the following:

My name is ___ and I am from _____. One thing that you cannot tell by looking at me is _____. This is important for me to tell you because _____.

Topics of importance raised that may be pertinent to our shared work:

- Economic resource allocation for justice must be part of our work
- Geographic and social contexts in which people are raised and shaped frame perspectives, for good or ill, and may often shield us from very different perspectives. To acknowledge that what is “norm” for us may not be “norm” for other is an important “learning/unlearning/relearning” on this journey.
- Need to be mindful of how this work has very personal impact on those doing the work that may not be evident to others
- We need journey-mates with whom we can be fully be honest and ourselves
- When interrelating, be aware of the assumptions we make of others based on appearance, including how one self-identifies

II. Administrative Items:

- Reviewed engagement agreement tools
- Group agreed that meetings would be recorded, shared only for group members and accessible only until the next scheduled meeting, and at any point during the meeting someone can ask recording to pause
- A question was raised regarding the lifespan of the Anti-racism Convening Table: initial answer was that this group would meet throughout 2022, but our discussions may lead to adjustments to this timeline
- Marie reviewed the document “Establishing an ABCUSA Commission” that was sent to the ARCT members and presented it as ***the starting framework within which the Anti-racism Convening Table was formed and is beginning its work.*** A key point that Marie raised was that while this is our starting framework, the work of anti-racism is also assessing whether the current structures (i.e. models, practices, processes) in which we operate are actually/potentially perpetuating racist realities, so even the task of establishing an “ABCUSA commission” as it’s currently defined should be considered in our discussions.

III. Centering Activity led by Rodney: Shared a comment, “...it is power & policy, not people, that keeps racism entrenched in society...” from Ibram Kendi, and read Luke 13:31-34 with the framing, “how is power exerted/applied on the way to the cross?” Rodney pointed out religious power (Pharisees), state power (Herod), Kingdom power (Jesus). Jesus used ***redemptive power.*** **How will we use our power? How will we confront power that is antithetical to the Kingdom of God?**

Transition to the question of “Discerning what is God’s Will for Us Together in Anti-Racism Work across the ABC?”



IV. Discussion: Discerning What is God's Will for Us Together in Anti-Racism Work Across the ABC

Following are individual comments or themes of discussion, not necessarily decisions agreed upon by the group, and not necessarily documented in order of the conversation. Comments have been generally categorized as 1.) Clarifying questions raised and responses; 2.) Potential Action Items; 3.) Other Reflections/Star That's/Notices/Wonderings. Some points are duplicated if helpful to list in multiple categories.

Clarifying questions raised and responses

- Are we in agreement that there should be some level of shared work about our partners to dismantle racism among us?
 - o Absolutely, and what have been the obstacles in the past?
- When in the past has a commission been effective and what was the topic, form, timing, etc.?
 - o Burma Refugee Commission is a potential example. What has been helpful in functioning is that there have been **clear actionable topics and practical tasks** that unite people's efforts (i.e. bills in Congress). What has been challenging is the Baptist autonomy that does not obligate individual churches/people to join the "call to action" or even attention to the concern at hand.
 - o National Leadership Council (NLC) as a model of a "table" with stated purpose/goals of shared ministry/mission (how well that happens seems to be in continual discussion; the council does not meet often)
- What is an effective structure when we want to bring change to others vs. an effective structure when we want to **bring change to ourselves**? Is it the same?
- What is/can be unifying?
 - o Acknowledge human value in Christ for ALL people? ... while acknowledging how the differences impact how human value is fully honored
- Would there be any objection of using the Proposal for the Commission as a jumping off point, noting that this document raises similar issues that are our group is raising?
- Given our polity, can we really do something that would "stick" or is our best hope to support a group of "resource" people that can then resource the breadth the anti-racism work that defined by each organization/level?
- Reality check: what are each of our own organizations involved with (anti-racism work) and what is our organization bandwidth to consider something shared?



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Potential action items

- Research and compile the anti-racism efforts that have been done in various parts of the ABC, including the learnings (missteps and constructive actions)
 - o Reference to the ABC 1983 (1989) statement document – see the ARCT webpage.
- Potential subgroups to do some “ground-work:”
 - o Historical research/compilation of previous efforts/progress/learnings
 - o Shape shared language/definitions
 - o Shape educational paths for the varied journeys
 - o Study group: what have other denominations done/are doing?

Other Reflections/Star That’s/Notices/Wonderings

- Definitions of terms are in order
- Definition/clarifying our work/task
 - o Different areas/opportunities of work: local church; corporate
 - o For example, notion of diversity – how is our value of diversity influencing how we function corporately (e.g. – mission giving practices/procedures).
 - o So many things to unpack on both “What work” and “how to go about the work”.
 - o There is different “work” that needs to be done within each person, let alone in each community/organization, based on each journey
 - o Acknowledge we need various jumping on points, knowing destinations may vary (at least within shared timelines)
- Acknowledge the need to MAKE TIME for this work
- What can we glean from readings on “Racialized Trauma” as we consider our work?

V. Next Steps

- a. Shared Learnings | Star That Items
 - Capacity
 - Long-term and complex journey | Clarity on what is the task is each of our homework
- b. Communications to the broader ABC
 - Discussed news release; okay to send out expressing we are in formation
- c. Meeting Schedule / Meeting Planning
 - Next meeting tentative – Thursday, May 5 1-2:30 ET, Marie to check in with those not present
 - We will try to set a regular meeting time