

**Report to the ABCUSA Board of General Ministries Executive Committee  
Anti-Racism Convening Table | May 31, 2022**

Respectfully submitted by Rev. Dr. Marie Onwubuariri,  
Office of the General Secretary Staff Representative to the Anti-racism Convening Table

Updates since last report, dated March 1, 2022:

**Convening Table Membership and Meeting Schedule:**

At the first meeting, there was an observation made that no white males were put forth by the represented organizations. Several of the organizations went back with this consideration, and one additional person has since been added.

**Members of the Convening Table are (10):**

Lisa Harris-Lee, ABHMS, Staff	Perry Hopper, MMBB, Staff
Gina Jacobs-Strain, ABWM, Staff	LaRose Karr, ABWM, Board
James McJunkin, REMC, Staff	Robin Stoops, REMC, Staff (added after meeting 1)
Rodney Ragwan, IM, Staff	Lisa Rothenberger, IM, Staff
Marie Onwubuariri, OGS, Staff	Kathryn Ray, BGM/OGS, Board

**Meetings:**

Feb 25 – 2 hours; March 31 – 90 minutes; May 5 – 90 minutes; May 27 – 90 minutes = all virtual meetings. I have served as convener, facilitator, and administrator (meeting & materials oversight and coordination), though there is an open invitation for other members to serve in any of these capacities. No one yet has responded to this invitation, though I have enlisted different people to lead the biblical/theological grounding portions of the agendas.

We are in the process of scheduling at least two virtual meetings from June through August, and trying to have an in-person meeting in the Fall of 2022. ***For the latter, I would request that OGS cover the related expenses from the allotted funds for this work.***

Meetings are recorded for viewing by only the Convening Table members and only until the next meeting. Detailed notes for each meeting capturing essential conversation points are provided to the members. A password-protected online space via the abc-usa.org has been created for the group.

**Progress of the work of the Convening Table:**

Much of the first three meetings included building rapport among group members, clarifying the task at-hand for this particular group (as opposed to a future group such as a commission), and articulating desires and concerns for impactful anti-racism work in the denomination in general, particularly given the history of starts and stops of similar efforts. There are several important factors to keep in mind that impact the pace of progress:

- I am the only person that brings consistency between the anti-racism task force and the convening table. Lisa Harris Lee had kept in touch with the task force and Kathryn Ray is a

BGM member, so both have some familiarity with the task force work. Orientation to the work done so far and to the vision of the next steps is necessary.

- We went into this phase allowing the exploration of whether or not a commission is the right direction to carry the work forward, so this, understandably, complicates the tasks of the establishment phase.
- Moving forward with intentionality of partnership (verses a clear BGM/OGS-directed effort) also necessitates opportunities for partners to explore what this means for both their investment and their agency in this joint effort.
- Anti-racism work is a large mandate, as evidenced in the Proposal prepared by the task force. The discernment of sequencing, strategy, and priorities alongside realistic considerations of human and financial resources and organization bandwidth and investment is important work, with final decisions ultimately dependent on people who are not on the Convening Table.

At the May 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, we began to do a side-by-side comparison of components of the Proposal with items raised by the Convening Table members. I think seeing the alignment was helpful, and there will be synergy from this into our next meetings.

#### **Highlights for the Board of General Ministries Executive Committee from the Convening Table members:**

- One of the things shared at the May 27<sup>th</sup> was a summary that I gave to the group from a conversation I had with Rev. Michael-Ray Mathews, who just completed his (2) terms as President of the Alliance of Baptists, particularly about their anti-racism efforts and progress over the past few years. The Convening Table thought this was helpful for them and believed it would be helpful for you as well. ***Please see addendum to this report.***
- Anti-racism (and diversity, equity, and inclusion) efforts are happening throughout the ABC, and certainly within the organizations represented on the Convening Table (staff/board and constituency). Part of our discussions and discernment has been about how to keep this fact in mind as we distill what a commission (or other determined entity) would do.
- As much as this remains an effort of the Board of General Ministries, ***it would be very helpful to have a member of the Executive Committee part of the Convening Table.***

#### **My Closing Comments:**

- It has been an encouragement to work with the Convening Table. Even with the urgency that we feel for this work, there seems to be an authentic desire to discern a “right” way going forward for relevant and lasting results.
- A few members of the former Anti-Racism Task Force has contacted me over the past several months with wonderings about what is going on with the establishment phase. I have responded appropriately, and you may recall we put out a news release on April 1.
- ***I remain open to further direction from the Executive Committee*** regarding the progress of the Convening Table as well as the office’s communications to the wider constituency about continuing anti-racism efforts, aside from the Convening Table.

## Learnings from the Alliance of Baptists

Reflections by Marie Onwubuariri from Conversation with Rev. Michael Ray Mathews

Prepared for the Anti-Racism Convening Table and the Board of General Ministries

May 27, 2022

### Intro Notes:

- Marie had a zoom meeting on 5/24/22 with Rev. Michael Ray Mathews who recently served as Alliance of Baptist Board President during a time when the Alliance made noticeable progress on anti-racism efforts.
  - Marie's questions were primarily based on the following article and primarily focused on process and decision-making considerations:  
<https://allianceofbaptists.org/the-light-was-worth-the-candle/?fbclid=IwAR2P7RSrQ0wtyPd1sVascyt66J714F7IUstry-6yITlueRUd04oYWVd4jv3s>  
***This would be a good read in order to have a fuller context.***
  - There are a few comments recorded from the Convening Table members, after this information was shared with them at the May 27 meeting.
1. AoB had a consistent growing narrative of their racial justice/anti-racist journey and identity as a communion of churches and individuals since at least 2006. Several threads of racial justice work already present in the organization throughout these years (such as Racial Justice Multiculturalism Community).
  2. A key more recent catalyst was a personal conviction of top co-director staff, which then filtered to other staff and merged with already present and growing awareness among Board. Led to Board identifying some steps collectively, including nominations for officers and Board training.
  3. Led to the elected of a particular Board President, the identifying of a training resource for the Board, the development of a Task Group, and ultimately Board reception of the Task Group (over 100) recommendations (***values, practices, and policies***). They utilized expertise already present on the Board, and perhaps some contract work of Alliance members in key places/ways.
  4. While this effort started primarily internal focus with an internal organizational focus (as the Alliance change, this would spill out to impact churches), the Board stayed open to other movements such as Thrive, which led to a program for congregations, and a curriculum on Whiteness, which is being offered to individuals.
  5. Comparisons between ABC and the AoB:
    - a. Ramp up to current efforts is different [AoB – consistent and longer-term ramp up; ABC only since 2020 and disjointed from previous efforts]
    - b. AoB was very much top staff and board driven/owned/engaged vs. ABC's approach of putting much emphasis in the Task Force, in which there was no Board leadership
    - c. AoB has a smaller/less complex and more flexible structure; more homogenous membership
  6. Take-aways
    - a. Importance for key leaders, formal and informal influencers, to drive [and do, appropriately] the work
    - b. Given the whiteness of AoB, the work of white identity is crucial; could be same for ABC
    - c. "BIPOC" leaders being clear about own personal boundaries [Black, Indigenous, People of Color]
    - d. Pay attention to the folks that are not talking/not affirming the direction
    - e. What is our synergy? Whose mandate is to stay consistent in the work, personally, and in leading the organization?

### Key Notices from the Convening Table Members:

Possible parallels to Cultural Humility efforts in PBA, maybe a model for us to look at; Star that - Key leader driving it and Board ownership/important to visit this with BGM; Appreciates that recommendations were categorized as "values – practice – policies;" Naming of "White work"—good education for everyone; We have American Baptists that are also active in the Alliance – are they potential resource people?