

To the Presbytery of the Pacific, in partnership with
the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii,
the General Assembly of the PC(USA)

From the National Black Presbyterian Caucus-Southern California Chapter (NBPC-SC)

June 26, 2020

The members of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus Southern California chapter acknowledge there have been many benefits experienced by African American Clergy and Laity as members of the PC(USA). We applaud the work and advocacy of many of our white and other colleagues in their efforts to work with us in dismantling forms of institutional racism and white privilege that still exist within our denomination. There is widespread agreement that more is needed from the white constituency of this denomination in addressing these deep-seated issues. The authors of this document understand forms of institutional racism and white privilege still exist and are in dire need of being dismantled. We cannot ignore these realities. Therefore, this document is written with the distinct purpose of challenging the powers that be to move from silence, complicity, and inertia, to action.

On May 25, 2020 George Floyd was murdered by a knee held on his neck for eight minutes and forty-six seconds by a Minneapolis police officer. His death is a reminder of the continued brutality African Americans have faced daily since 1619 in this country. What his death triggered for many black men and women is the reality that our lives can be taken for absolutely no reason than our lives do not matter. Also highlighted is the systematic and institutional racism that keeps knees on the necks of Black people in this country in myriad ways.

Institutional racism is alive and well; it exists in the banking industry, housing industry, corporate America, entertainment industry, communications industry, and sports, educational systems, courts, employment patterns, law enforcement. It exists in governing bodies and congregations of all religious denominations – including the Presbyterian Church (USA). As African Americans in the Presbyterian Church (USA), we often feel the knees of racism on our necks when we discover that inclusivity and the structural engagement of others occurs simply because of the dominance of church polity and not because of an authentic and genuine belief that all of God's children are valuable and enhance the quality of life for all.

Institutional racism is distinguished from explicit attitudes or the racial bias of individuals by the existence of systematic policies and practices that provide differential access to services and opportunities. Yes, institutional racism exists within the PC(USA), the Presbytery of the Pacific, and the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii.

Because of these issues and other compelling concerns, the National Black Presbyterian Caucus takes a demanding position and puts forth a Call for Aggressive Action to make

lasting and genuine change within the Presbytery of the Pacific and its congregations. Collectively, The NBPC pursues the prophetic belief that our Presbytery must demand change from all partners and stake holders.

Because of this we demand change! We demand change in the following ways:

1. Our Presbytery must demand that our white colleagues stand up, speak out, and work to tear down the walls of institutional racism.
2. Our Presbytery must demand that the staff of POP and the Synod reflect the current diversity of Southern California and strive to nurture and increase more diversity in the future.
3. Our Presbytery must demand a more open and inclusive pastoral selection process that encourages white churches to support, interview and take seriously the hiring of African American men and women as ministerial staff.
4. Our Presbytery must demand a call to return to the greater welfare of the city, to organize God's people for the proclamation of the Gospel and the promotion of racial, economic, and social equity and justice for all citizens of the Greater Los Angeles area. [*The Gospel in Detroit* (2014) report].
5. Our Presbytery must demand a sustainable funding source for Black churches who struggle with limited people and financial resources to do ministry in compromised communities and to maintain the campuses held in trust for the denomination.
6. Our Presbytery must demand a more culturally open approach to worship and ministry, that are not derived from Eurocentric models.
7. Our Presbytery must demand a Presbytery-wide event to address localized racism be planned and that all clergy and staff persons be required to attend.
8. Our Presbytery must overture the General Assembly to make amends for the historical role the Presbyterian Church played in relationship to slavery, including but not limited to the fact that founders of the Presbyterian Church in America were themselves slave owners. It is also historical fact that one of our predecessor bodies provided theological support for slavery, a sin for which we have never confessed. This was not dealt with in reunion and our reunion plan had the collateral effect of disempowering the voting blocks of Black Presbyteries and Synods, the only places where Black Presbyterians constituted the majority. This was a sacrifice for the sake of reunion that never lived up to its promise.
9. Our Presbytery must also demand that the Self Development of People fund be returned to its original intent and purpose which was borne out of a desire to repair the ills created by systemic racism. It is time for our church to face its history. It is time for Americans to pay reparations to our African American (and Native American) brothers and sisters and the PC(USA) is called to lead the way.

10. Our Presbytery must demand that the Presbyterian Church renew its commitment to birth New Church Developments in African American communities. We therefore demand the PC(USA), the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii and the Presbytery of the Pacific take seriously this commitment by providing the institutional and financial resources to birth and support new African American congregations.

We demand that the knee of institutional racism be taken from our necks!

Signed,

National Black Presbyterian Caucus – Southern California

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