



abcmy

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES
of METROPOLITAN NEW YORK

PMC-RJ

Board of Directors // October 15 2020

**A Statement for Review on Racial Justice
American Baptist Churches of Metropolitan New York
Public Mission Committee
ABCMY Board Meeting
October 15, 2020**

THE SITUATION

The belief that white lives matter more than black, brown, Asian and Indigenous lives has given rise to institutions, laws, policies, structures, systems and practices designed to leverage power and immunity for one racial group and marginalizing and vilifying masses of nonwhite people. The negation and snuffing out of a black human being was horrendously displayed in the public murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis, MN. The witnessed torture of M. Floyd sparked the largest global civil rights, anti-racist movement in generations, where across this country and the world masses of people joined together to seek an end to systemic racism, and to demand long needed justice and change. Mr. Floyd's killing is one of a series of publically known, highly suspicious, fatal encounters involving nonwhite persons against the lethal strength of law enforcement or vigilante groups.

The United States is currently and has historically been a hot bed of racial resentment and human suppression. Within the United States, an often explosive and toxic environment, with its nefarious history of a "knee on the neck" of less privileged persons is again being confronted. The indicators of alarming levels of COVID19 infections and deaths, voter suppression, missed economic opportunities, sexist silencing, gender suppression, and gun violence have threatened the democracy of the United States.

White superiority has been a destructive force and has dominated every phase of American life for centuries. Since European colonization of North America in the 17th century, racism has profoundly shaped how Americans live and treat each other. Various American ethnic groups have been targeted, including Native Americans, African Americans, Caribbean Americans, Asian Americans, Jewish Americans and Muslim Americans. These and other ethnic groups and communities have suffered from overt and covert expressions of racism experienced through colonization, slavery, Jim Crow laws, exclusionary social practices, economic dislocation, immigration policies, redlining and mass incarceration.

Acts of current racial injustice infused with the lingering effects of historic racial inequities have converged, and remind us that hatred and violence toward targeted groups remain a constant reality. We have witnessed hate crimes motivated by race; white supremacists baiting race wars; black men more than other category shot and killed by the police; active hate groups in every state, and blacks consistently earning less than whites. One third of the American population is made up of persons of color, yet two thirds comprise the prison population. We have also seen racial profiling, including police stops, illegal searches,



abcmy

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES
of METROPOLITAN NEW YORK

PMC-RJ

Board of Directors // October 15 2020

juvenile arrests, use of deadly force, drug arrests, federal court sentencing, lengths of incarceration, sentences of life without patrol, and the elimination of the right to vote for formerly incarcerated persons.

During the COVID19 pandemic, assaults have been perpetrated against Asian-Americans who have been viewed as the source and carriers of the virus. Black Americans have been disproportionately impacted by COVID19 in respect to deaths and hospitalizations. Gender violence has increased. Citywide programs that provided a safety net for economically disadvantaged communities have been cut. People and small businesses are unable to pay their rent and face evictions. Persons of color have been forcefully taken down for not wearing masks or not social distancing, while others have been excused or warned. Allocations of monies from the Payment Protection Plan and the CARES Act have been biased. The horrific deaths of Ahmaud Aubrey, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, Daniel Prude and others by police have provoked worldwide outrage and massive protests to effect change of racial violence toward black and brown people. Unequal access to healthcare, employment, housing, and social services demonstrates that we continue to live as a people separated by race.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

In the creation narrative, we read in Genesis 1:26-27 that God created all humanity in the image and likeness of God, making our identity and purpose closely aligned with who God is. Humanity has a limitless capacity for fellowship and communion with God. Baptists who believe in soul liberty and freedom of conscience know that within the constitution of our soul is the freedom of will and choice which cannot be taken away. God refuses to superimpose God's will upon humanity. God gives us the right and privilege to at all times make decisions about what we will do in the contexts of our relationships.

Likewise, God created humans as social beings who live in community: never meant to be permanently isolated or separated. God did not create a hierarchy or hegemony called race. God created all people to be on equal footing. We believe that race and racism are contrary to the nature of God. All lives were created equal and are sacred: we were created as one humanity.

God does not determine the worth and value of humanity by the color of one's skin or one's economic status. Rather, God looks at the heart (I Samuel 16.7). God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10.34), and is impartial in human dealings. In the formation of the church, God broke ethnic, gender and linguistic barriers to ensure that the gospel was accessible and available to all nations (Galatians 3:28). God is inclusive (Acts 2: 1-13).

Jesus taught disciples that the greatest commandment was to love God with all one's heart, mind and soul and to love one's neighbor as one's self (Mark 12: 30-31). Love of God is



directly related to loving our neighbor. To love God and practice racial hatred and violence is incompatible. Unity and inclusivity are priorities of the church.

WHAT CAN WE DO?¹

At the Individual Level

1. *Learn to recognize and understand one's own privilege.*

One of the first steps to eliminating racial discrimination is learning to recognize and understand one's own privilege. Racial privilege plays out differently across social, political, economic, and cultural environments. Checking one's privilege and using one's privilege to dismantle systemic racism are two ways to begin the complex process of dismantling privilege. Awareness of the impact of the construct of race, and intentional interruption of it is only one aspect of privilege. Religion, gender, sexuality, ability-status, socio-economic status, language, and citizenship status all affect one's levels of privilege. Using the privileges that one has to collectively empower others requires first being aware of those privileges and acknowledging their implications. Learn more about the many types of privilege and how it manifests itself differently among persons of differing racial identities.

2. *Examine your own biases and consider where they may have originated.*

What messages did you receive as a child about people who are different from you? What was the racial and/or ethnic make-up of your neighborhood, school, or religious community? Why do you think that was the case? These experiences produce and reinforce bias, stereotypes, and prejudice, which can lead to discrimination. Examining our own biases can help us work to ensure equality for all. It is possible that black people can perpetuate racist ideas and support racist policies, but it is most often true that black people as a community does not have the same social power that whites often have.

You can see the PBS documentary, *Race: The Power of Illusion*, which tackles the social construct of race in the United States.

¹ https://nnedv.org/latest_update/8-everyday-ways-to-fight-racism/



3. *Validate the experiences and feelings of other people of color.*

Another way to address bias and recognize privilege is to support the experiences of other people and engage in tough yet grace-filled conversations about race and injustice. We cannot be afraid to discuss oppression and discrimination for fear of “getting it wrong.” Take action by learning about the ways that racism continues to affect our society. For example, by watching documentaries, such as *13th*, or reading books, such as *Americanah* or *Hidden Figures*. As advocates, we learn about domestic violence by listening to survivors of domestic violence. Similarly, the best way to understand racial injustice is by listening to people of color.

4. *Challenge the “colorblind” ideology.*

It is a pervasive myth that we live in a “post-racial” society where people “don’t see color.” Perpetuating a “colorblind” ideology actually contributes to racism. When Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. described his hope for living in a colorblind world, he did not mean that we should ignore race. It is impossible to eliminate racism without first acknowledging the human created hierarchical construct of race. Being “colorblind” ignores a significant part of a person’s identity and dismisses the real injustices that many people face as a result of race. We must see color in order to work together for equity and equality.

5. *Call out racist “jokes” or statements.*

Let people know that racist comments are not acceptable. If you are not comfortable or do not feel safe being confrontational, try to break down their thought processes and ask questions. For example, “*That joke doesn’t make sense to me, could you explain it?*” Or “*You may be joking, but this is what it means when you say that type of thing.*” Do not be afraid to engage in conversations with loved ones, coworkers, and friends. Micro-aggressions and overt aggressions can appear in the form of racist jokes or statements, perpetuate and normalize biases and prejudices. Remember that not saying anything – or laughing along – implies that you agree.

6. *Find out how your place of employment, city agencies or school works to expand opportunities for people of color.*

Systemic racism means that there are barriers – including wealth disparities, criminal justice bias, and education and housing discrimination – that stack the deck against people of color in the workplace or at school. For example, the African American Policy Forum (AAPF) reported that in 2014, a 12-year-old girl faced criminal charges, in addition to expulsion from school, for writing “hi” on a locker



room wall. Their campaign, #BlackGirlsMatter and #SayHerName addresses the issues of over-policed and under-protected black girls within the education system. It is important for companies and schools to address these issues and promote a culture of equity.

7. *Be thoughtful with your finances.*

Take a stand with your wallet. Know the practices of companies that you invest in and the charities to whom you donate. Make an effort to shop at small, local businesses and give your money back to the people living in the community. Your state or territory may have a directory of local, small businesses led by different ethnic groups in your area.

8. *Adopt an intersectional approach in all aspects of your life.*

Remember that many forms of oppression are connected. You cannot fight against one form of injustice and not question yourself about your willingness to fight against other oppressions. Ask yourself pointed questions about your reluctance in some areas of injustice.

Many survivors of domestic violence also face racism and other forms of oppression. We must recognize and support survivors' unique experiences. Learn more about domestic violence and how you can help end it at NNEDV.org/GetInvolved.

At the Congregational Level

1. Pray with your church community about the impact of racism in the church, community, country and the world.
2. Facilitate Bible Studies - Have grace-filled courageous conversations about race and racism especially with different ethnic groups. Discover the true origins and beginnings of human beings before the construction of race categories. Engage with biblical texts regarding equitable treatment of all God's people. Learn about the mythological construction of race and the reality of racism in America. Develop strategies to move from conversations to advocacy and activism. Work toward actively dismantling and eradicating racism within your church, community, city, state, and nation.
3. Write and Develop Sunday school and youth group curriculum for children of all ages that opens conversation on racism and privilege with the children in church. A



Board of Directors // October 15 2020

part of the curriculum could include land acknowledgement of the first peoples on the land.

4. Expose Racism. If you see something, say something. Step in when you see racism occurring, and disrupt it in a safe way. Have hard conversations with others when you hear or see racism, whether explicit or implicit. Challenge racist assumptions by asking about supporting facts and evidence (in general, they do not exist). Have conversations about what led you and/or others to have racist beliefs. Capture on video.
5. Cross the racial divide (and others) by offering friendly greetings to people, regardless of race, gender, age, sexuality, ability, class, or housing status. Think about who you make eye contact with, nod to, or say "Hello" to while you are out in the world. If you notice a pattern of preference and exclusion, shake it up. Respectful, friendly, everyday communication is the essence of community.
6. Learn about the racism that occurs where you live, and do something about it by participating in and supporting anti-racist community events, protests, rallies, and programs. For example, you could:
 - Register and attend Anti-Racist training through People's Institute for Survival and Beyond Undoing Racism Workshop (www.pisab.org) and Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing and Training (<http://crossroadsantiracism.org/training/workshops>)
 - Support voter registration and polling in neighborhoods where people of color live because they have historically been marginalized from the political process.
 - Donate time and/or money to community organizations that serve the youth of color.
 - Mentor white kids on being anti-racist citizens who fight for justice.
 - Support post-prison programs, because the inflated incarceration rates of black and Latinx people lead to their long-term economic and political disenfranchisement.
 - Support community organizations that serve those bearing the mental, physical, and economic costs of racism.
 - Communicate with your local and state government officials and institutions about how they can help end racism in the communities they represent.

At the National Level

1. Advocate for Affirmative Action practices in education and employment. Countless studies have found that qualifications being equal, people of color are rejected for employment and admission to educational institutions at far greater rates than white people. Affirmative Action initiatives help mediate this problem of racist exclusion.



abcmy

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES
of METROPOLITAN NEW YORK

PMC-RJ

Board of Directors // October 15 2020

2. Vote for candidates who make ending racism a priority, and vote for candidates of color. In our federal government, people of color remain underrepresented. For a racially just democracy to exist, we must achieve accurate representation, and the governing representatives must actually represent the experiences and concerns of our diverse populace.
3. Combat racism through national-level political channels. For example, you could:
 - Write to senators and members of Congress and demand an end to racist practices in law enforcement, the judiciary, education, and the media.
 - Advocate for national legislation that would criminalize racist police practices and institute ways to monitor police behavior, like body cameras or independent investigations.
 - Join the movement for reparations for the descendants of African slaves and other historically oppressed populations within the U.S., because theft of land, labor, and denial of resources is the foundation of American racism, and it is on this foundation that contemporary inequalities thrive.

PUBLIC MISSION COMMITTEE SUGGESTED READINGS ON RACIAL JUSTICE

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, Michelle Alexander, 2010.

The History of White People, Nell Irvin Painter, 2010.

Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice, Paul Kivel, 2011.

Understanding White Privilege: Creating Pathways to Authentic Relationships Across Race, Frances E. Kendall, 2012.

The Cross and the Lynching Tree, James H. Cone, 2013.

Lynched: The Power of Memory in a Culture of Terror, Angela Sims, 2017

Between the World and Me, Ta-Nehisi Coates, 2015.



abcmy

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES
of METROPOLITAN NEW YORK

Board of Directors // October 15 2020

PMC-RJ

The Third Reconstruction: Moral Mondays, Fusion Politics, and the Rise of a New Justice Movement, William J. Barber II, & Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, 2016.

Revive Us Again: Vision and Action in Moral Organizing by William J. Barber with Liz Theoharis and Rick Lowery, 2018

Race: A Theological Account by J. Kameron Carter
New York: Oxford University Press, 2008

Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God by Kelly Brown Douglas
Publication Date: Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014

The Sin of White Supremacy: Christianity, Racism, and Religious Diversity in America by Jeannine Hill Fletcher
Publication Date: Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017

Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism by Drew G. I. Hart
Publication Date: Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2016

Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Reconciliation, 2nd ed. by Jennifer Harvey

The End of White Christian America by Robert P. Jones
Publication Date: New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017

Welcoming Justice: God's Movement Toward Beloved Community, Expanded ed. by Charles Marsh; John Perkins

Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice by Eric Mason
Publication Date: Chicago: Moody Press, 2018

Dream with Me: Race, Love, and the Struggle We Must Win by John M. Perkins
Publication Date: Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017



abcmy

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES
of METROPOLITAN NEW YORK

PMC-RJ

Board of Directors // October 15 2020

Rediscipling the White Church: From Cheap Diversity to True Solidarity by David W. Swanson; Foreword by Brenda Salter

The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism by Jemar Tisby; Foreword by Lecrae Moore; Publication Date: Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019

America's Original Sin by Jim Wallis

An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

Between the World and Me - Ta-Nehisi Coates

Citizen: An American Lyric - Claudia Rankine

How to be Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi

Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor by Layla Saad

My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies by Resmaa Menakem

Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches - Audre Lorde

So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo

Soundless Cries Don't Lead Healing by Valencia D. Clay

Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You: A Remix by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi (Young Adults)

Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions by Valeria Luiselli

White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism by Robin DiAngelo

Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race by Beverly Daniel Tatum

Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent, by Isabella Wilkerson, August 2020



abcmy

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES
of METROPOLITAN NEW YORK

PMC-RJ

Board of Directors // October 15 2020

Articles:

11 Things You Can Do to Help Black Lives Matter End Police Violence

The 1619 Project (all the articles) | The New York Times Magazine

“America’s Racial Contract Is Killing Us” by Adam Serwer | Atlantic (May 8, 2020)

Speak Out: Black Lives Matter

Sticking With Black Lives Matter - Demetria Mack

“Who Gets to Be Afraid in America?” by Dr. Ibram X. Kendi | Atlantic (May 12, 2020)

Why I Feel Less American Than White People - Ria Parker

Podcasts:

BOLD: Conversations About Race

Code Switch (NPR)

Combing the Roots with Ally Henny

Intersectionality Matters! hosted by Kimberlé Crenshaw

Momentum: A Race Forward Podcast

Small Doses with Amanda Seales



Board of Directors // October 15 2020

Documentary (non-fiction):

- The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution — Available to rent\
- CONNECTING THE DOTS - POLITICAL EDUCATION SERIES
- "How Studying Privilege Systems Can Strengthen Compassion" Peggy McIntosh at TEDxTimberlaneSchools (18:26)
- An interview with the founders of Black Lives Matter, Ted Talks
- Race: The Power of an Illusion
- Stay Woke: The Black Lives Matter Movement (Amazon Prime, YouTube, & BET)

Resources for Parents and Educators:

- American Indians in Children's Literature (Dr. Debbie Reese) <https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/>
- Listen, Learn, Participate: A #BlackLivesMatter Resource Series <http://oaklandlibrary.org/blogs/from-main-library/listen-learn-participate-blacklivesmatter-resources-series>
- Precious Children: Activities that Promote Racial and Cultural Awareness http://www.pbs.org/kcts/preciouschildren/diversity/read_activities.html
- Racial Equity Resource Guide <http://www.racialequityresourceguide.org/organizations/organizations>
- Raising Race Conscious Children <http://www.raceconscious.org/>
- Reading, Writing, and Rising Up: Teaching about Social Justice and the Power of the Written Word by Linda Christensen
- Rethinking School <http://www.rethinkingschools.org/index.shtml>
- Talking to Kids About Racism and Justice: a list for parents, caregivers & educators <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1s0ICA3FluIVhK6DFE2d3uYCipc6ApY8Gn2rMwm6fYqw/edit>
- Teach and Transform (Liz Kleinrock) <https://www.teachandtransform.org/>
- Teaching for Change teachingforchange.org

Books for Children:

- All Are Welcome by Alexandra Penfold
- The Colors of Us by Karen Katz
- Let's Talk About Race by Julius Lester
- Marching for Freedom: Walk Together Children, and Don't You Grow Weary by Elizabeth Partridge
- Not My Idea: A Book About Whiteness by Anastasia Higgenbotham
- Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation by Duncan Tonatiuh
- Skin We Are In by Sindiwe Magona and Nina C. Jablonski
- We Are All Born Free: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Pictures by Amnesty International

Other Resources:



abcmy

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES
of METROPOLITAN NEW YORK

PMC-RJ

Board of Directors // October 15 2020

- Asian American Solidarity against Anti-Black Racism
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice
- Black Visions Collective
- Campaign Zero
- Center for Racial Justice in Education
- Communities United for Police Reform
- Community Justice Exchange
- Justice for Ahmaud Arbery
- #JusticeForGeorgeFloyd NYC Bail Outs
- NAACP "Take Action" page- petitions and contacting representatives
- NYC Budget Justice
- Reclaim the Block
- Showing Up for Racial Justice
- We are New York Values