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FAX

Date June 2, 1997**Number of pages including
cover sheet** 39**TO:**Lynn Cutler
The White House**Phone****Fax****Phone** (202) 456-2896**CC:****FROM:**National Council of
Churches
475 Riverside Drive,
Room 880
New York, NY 10115**Phone** 212/870-2141**Fax** 212/870-2817**Phone****REMARKS:**☐ *Urgent*☐ *For your review*☐ *Reply ASAP*☐ *Please Comment*Letter to Lynn
Thoughts on Racial Reconciliation and Racial Justice (3)
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10 cc's

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA



June 2, 1997

Office of the
General SecretaryMs. Lynn Cutler
The White House

Fax Communication: (202) 456-2896

Dear Lynn:

Would that I had more time to put into this task, but the events of June 8, 9, 10 -- the first anniversary of the Burned Churches Project -- are upon us and leave time for little else. I am sending along some thoughts that seem to address the subjects mentioned in our phone conversation.

As promised, I am also sending the Amicus Brief we filed with regard to Proposition 209 in California and have included a copy of the policy statement on racial justice adopted by the governing board of the NCCCUSA, November 10, 1984.

Please give the President my best regards and let him know that I will pray for this speech that he may find the right words to say to a nation in need of healing.

Most sincerely,

Joan Brown Campbell
General Secretary

JBC:db

Some Thoughts On Racial Reconciliation And Racial Justice

From my standpoint, the issue of race must be put in the larger context of our unity as God's people. This is both the faith based promise and our own nation's sacred vision. Our union is not yet perfect. We must continue to work toward a more perfect union. People of color and white Americans must come to understand that the nation's soul is at stake. Racial injustice violates a coherent moral vision. Spiritually we will all be stronger if we can but rid ourselves of prejudicial attitudes and unjust behavior. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves. In the words of a wise Rabbi, "neighbor is not a geographic term, it is a moral term."

The bright hope and bold promise of the American experiment in republican democracy is predicated on the words of the Declaration of Independence holding that "all men are created equal." The most significant point of hesitation in our republic's long history has been our particular and peculiar history of racism. At the close of the 20th Century, there remains an important and essential need for racial reconciliation in order to restore the values and claims inherent in the founding documents of the nation, in particular, the Declaration of Independence.

Coincident with that value held so dearly by our nation is the value held by the Christian faith - which, of course, helps to shape the American ethos. The Gospel of Christ holds that there "is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female..." Drawing from Hebrew prophesy, Christian values teach "that justice must roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." (Amos 5:24) These values held by the faith community have deeply influenced our involvement in the civil rights movement and inform us still.

Respecting the different and differentiated roles of church and government in our society, we are still able to note where our values are coincident and work together to achieve our common goals. The Burned Churches Rebuilding Project has been a quintessential example of the ways in which Government and Church, each informed by its own values might work in tandem for the betterment of society and all her peoples.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Noted that the "arc of history is long, but it bends toward justice." The Burned Churches Project has been significant in enabling the faith community, the departments of justice and treasury, and persons of good will to work together in the common goals of a society whose hallmark is justice and peace.

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We are a people who pledge allegiance to "one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all". Inalienable rights and human freedom are our stock in trade. Our dream is one of unity - "we hold these truths to be self evident, that all are created equal and endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights - the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Our national dream, our national vision is rooted in the Biblical injunction to be the one people we are called to be. Our best view of who we might be has deep roots in religious faith and Biblical images of divine intent and human possibilities. In this America, it is envisioned that government would promote the common welfare and secure the blessing of liberty for all. The dignity and worth of every person would be protected as a matter of policy, not just a matter of piety, and each person's potential would be developed to the fullest.

Perhaps Vaclav Havel, the former president of the former Czechoslovakia, put it best in a book he has written called Summer Meditations. He speaks of the moral origin of all genuine politics when he says, "In the last analysis, it is not power that matters but values, decency, reason, responsibility, sincerity, civility, tolerance." Freedom-loving people everywhere owe Vaclav Havel a lasting debt of gratitude and admiration for what he has done to define the basis of liberty. He sums up our current situation this way:

"The worst of it all is that we live in a spoiled moral environment. We have become morally ill because we are used to saying one thing and thinking another. We have learned not to believe in anything, not to care about each other, to worry only about ourselves. The concepts of love, friendship, mercy, humility or forgiveness have lost their depths and dimensions, and for many of us they represent only some sort of psychological curiosity or they appear as long-lost wanderers from faraway times, somewhat ludicrous in the era of computers and space ships..."

But maybe it was Thomas Jefferson who has the word for us. It was Thomas Jefferson who said, "Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just." I think Jesus weeps for us this day. He weeps for us for our broken promises and for our dreams deferred. And Jesus would say to us, even as he did to the people of Jerusalem, if you people, with your dreams of liberty and life and happiness and equality and justice - if you had only recognized the things that make for peace, but are now hidden from your eyes. How do we open the eyes of the blind? How do we heal the wounds of the nation? And how, indeed, do we form a more perfect union.

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It was no accident that it was in the shadow of the cross, in the face of danger and death and despair, that Jesus prayed for unity. Jesus knew that by our very nature it would be very difficult for us to grasp the vision of oneness. Yet, even today in the midst of disillusion, despair and disunity we can know that we have no less than the Lord of history praying for us, and calling us to come to the table that is set for all God's children everywhere in all times and in all places.

I am reminded of a simple story, a true story which perhaps will say something to you as it did to me. It is about a little child in Cleveland, Ohio, at an African Methodist Episcopal Church, and perhaps it will serve to illumine the darkness of doubt and despair. It was communion Sunday for the congregation in a riot-torn area of Cleveland. The pastor was a 74 year old activist, a mentor and a teacher to me, who, in his retirement, serves a small and struggling ghetto church. He asked me if I would come forward and celebrate the feast of life with him. All was ready. And the people came. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a little girl about three years old running down the aisle with her child-mother in tow. Neither of them knew very much about the protocol of church rituals. The little girl came boldly before me and put her hands together in front of me. I placed the bread in her hand and said to her, "This is the body of Christ, broken for you." She looked at me with those big brown eyes and said in a voice that the whole congregation could hear, "For me?" And I said to her, "Yes, sweetheart, for you."

And either that is true or it is a terrible hoax. If it's true, then God is calling us to do everything in our power to remove the obstacles that keep that child and all God's children from reaching their God-given potential. It is for these that we struggle to be a more perfect union. It is for this that we pray that God will give us grace to lay to rest the great danger brought upon us by our unhappy divisions; that all hatred and prejudice and whatever else may hinder us from a godly union and concord may be taken away and that we may be of one heart and mind, united in one holy bond of truth and peace and faith and love.

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE U.S.A.
475 Riverside Drive
New York, New York, 10115

POLICY STATEMENT ON RACIAL JUSTICE

(Adopted by the Governing Board November 10, 1984)

DEFINITIONS

Prejudice is a personal attitude towards other people based on a categorical judgement about their physical characteristics, such as race or ethnic origin.

Racism is racial prejudice plus power. Racism is the intentional or unintentional use of power to isolate, separate and exploit others. This use of power is based on a belief in superior racial origin, identity or supposed racial characteristics. Racism confers certain privileges on and defends the dominant group, which in turn sustains and perpetuates racism. Both consciously and unconsciously, racism is enforced and maintained by the legal, cultural, religious, educational, economic, political and military institutions of societies.

Racism is more than just a personal attitude; it is the institutionalized form of that attitude.

Institutional Racism is one of the ways organizations and structures serve to preserve injustice. Intended or not, the mechanisms and function of these entities create a pattern of racial injustice.

Racism is one of several sub-systems of domination in the modern world. It interacts with these other sub-systems to produce broad patterns of oppression and exploitation that plague the world. Among these sub-systems are class and sexual oppression. Women who are victimized by racism face a compound burden. They not only have to deal with oppression due to their racial origin or identity, but they are also confronted with economic and political exploitation and oppression based on their sex and/or class.

RACISM IN U.S. HISTORY

The United States has prided itself on its grounding in religious values, especially its founding claim that "all [people] are created equal." Yet historically it has uncritically placed a priority on being white, male and English-speaking.

Historically, people of European ancestry have controlled the overwhelming majority of the financial resources, institutions, and levers of power. Racism in the United States can therefore be defined as white racism: racism as promulgated and sustained by the white majority. White racism is not peculiar to the U.S.; it permeates much of the world. The complete dominance and institutionalization of white racism in the United States make "reverse racism" nearly impossible because the victims of racism lack power.

The colonists who invaded North America came with some pre-conceived notions of economic exploitation and white superiority. They institutionalized racism by the creation of dual economic, educational, social and political systems that made clear distinctions between Europeans and Africans, Asians, Hispanics and Indigenous People. To the colonist, life was significant only if it was of European ancestry. Africans were enslaved, maimed, and killed. Asians and Hispanics were paid low wages, imprisoned and slaughtered. Indigenous People were removed from their land and massacred.

From the early colonial years through the westward expansion, the general pattern of racial exploitation and oppression continued. This westward expansion did not end at the Pacific Ocean; it continued on with western imperialism extending to the Hawaiian Islands, the Philippines, Samoa, Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, and Latin America. Even now racial exploitation is still clearly visible in U.S. international policies and practices towards Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific Islands and the Middle East.

RACISM IN THE CHURCH

During the early colonial years and through the westward expansion, in the U.S. the general pattern of most Christian traditions was either to condone, participate in and develop a religious rationale for racism, or to keep silent. Yet, at points in U.S. history, some national and local churches were exceptions to this pattern and championed the call for equality, human rights and the dignity of all people.

Within many of the denominations, there have been prophetic streams which have advanced the cause of justice in the face of slavery, racial segregation, religious intolerance, racial violence and human suffering. At other times the church has been silent in the face of appalling injustice. For example, some congregations joined the underground railroad to rescue Africans from slavery while other congregations profited from slavery. During World War II, when Japanese-Americans were imprisoned in concentration camps, only a few Christian communions publicly protested. Some individual Christians, however, assisted in the resettlement of Japanese-Americans after the war.

At the national level, Christian denominations have recently failed to give adequate support to immigrants who are victims of racism, especially those who have migrated to the U.S. to escape political and economic oppression. A sign of hope has been that some churches have offered sanctuary to victims of persecution from Central America.

However, despite the significant involvement of some Christian denominations in attempting to combat racism, racial injustice still continues in both the church and society. Christians must no longer assume that racial justice is a matter of overcoming individual attitudes and personal bigotry, nor that well-intentioned and non-racist attitudes can, in and of themselves, effectively eliminate racism. Christians must acknowledge that, despite their good intentions, religious and societal structures, institutions and systems can and do perpetuate racism. They must confess that by its style of organization and management the white institutional church excludes those who are victims of racism.

Since the 1960's many Christian communions have entrusted racial justice work to commissions, committees, caucuses and departments. These institutional structures have grappled with the issues of the injustice and violence inflicted upon the victims of racism. They have defended victims of racially motivated crime and unjust court proceedings, rallied against hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis, and supported public policies that promote justice for the victims of racism.

However, these commissions, committees, caucuses and departments have often been ineffective in dealing with those systems and structures that perpetuate racism in the church and in society. Sometimes these mechanisms have even contributed to the perpetuation of those racist institutions and structures that they seek to eliminate. The bureaucracy of structures to eliminate racism has "pigeon-holed" racial justice concerns rather than allowing them to become a part of every aspect of church life. This compartmentalization of racial justice concerns has resulted in the perception that racial justice is a concern only for a special interest group, and an understanding of racism is often absent from the analysis of related issues such as peace, hunger, economics, global concerns and church life.

What the church needs today is a new analysis and approach to combatting racism. This approach must begin with the recognition of the systemic nature of racism and its inter-connections with other structures of oppression. We must also remember that the nature of racism evolves as systematically as our attempts to eliminate it.

Today there is very little evidence of any dramatic improvement in institutional efforts to combat racism, because very few churches can see the racism implicit in their own structures. If it is to be effective in creating racial justice, the church must examine its own structures and determine the extent to which those structures contribute to the perpetuation of racism.

An examination of racism in church structures should include the following concerns:

- (1) The continued unwillingness of the church and society to be open, inclusive, and accessible to everyone.
- (2) The abundance of theological statements calling for racial justice without demonstrating it, words without deeds.

(3) The failure to include in seminary curricula courses reflecting the theological perspectives of racial ethnic and Third World peoples; and the failure of seminaries and religious schools to seek out qualified faculty who themselves are victims of racism.

(4) The lack of understanding by individual clergy and lay persons of the damage and devastation caused by racism and discrimination.

(5) The unawareness in the white community that racism dehumanizes the oppressors as well as the oppressed.

(6) The inadequacy of annual reporting on racial justice progress.

(7) The failure of local churches and judicatories to follow up on racial justice efforts, and the encouragement of this failure by national leadership.

(8) The inadequacy of the funding allocated for racial justice programs.

(9) The absence of race and power analyses in the discussion of social concerns and their related issues such as women, youth, the aged, peace, labor, rural and urban realities, economic development, U.S. international policy, domestic and global missions.

Therefore, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. commits itself to begin and sustain a comprehensive strategy that will engage the commitment and participation of church leaders and members in the following areas:

Theology

Scripture affirms our oneness. The distinctions and similarities of theological interpretation within the family of God must be appreciated. In welcoming racial and ethnic diversity within our Christian churches, we must learn to share our beliefs and traditions, some of which are blessed with unique cultural perspectives. No longer can we accept only one dominant theology which fails to recognize the value of the theologies of others. We worship one and the same God in an enriching variety of ways.

Structure

For the necessary transformation of our structures, racial ethnic people and their efforts must be seen as critically important by the entire church. We must offer access and options for full participation and representation to all people throughout the life of the church, especially in its institutional structure. Positions of leadership, authority, responsibility, decision and policy-making and implementation should be entrusted to African Americans, Asian Pacific Americans, Hispanics and Latin Americans and Indigenous People. Racial ethnic executives must be treated as professional peers by their white colleagues.

Tokenism has been evident in two forms in previous attempts to achieve racial balance. First, candidates have been chosen through arbitrary methods by the white leadership without consultation with the respective racial ethnic leadership or membership. Racial ethnic people should participate in the process of determining which persons can be effective representatives for the entire church as well as for their own communities. Those chosen should also be responsive and accountable to their respective communities.

Second, the presence of racial ethnic people has not necessarily meant that they were allowed to exercise authority or to participate as equals. There is also continuing evidence of negative reactions throughout the church when racial ethnic women and men are selected for leadership positions. In the face of any backlash, the church must stand firm and remain true to the Gospel.

Although we laud the development of racial ethnic departments, commissions and caucuses, we are dismayed by the sporadic nature of the theological, financial, and political support they have received and perfunctory acknowledgement that has been given them by the leadership of the church. Clearly, the ostensible "liberalism" of the church has not reduced racism within its administrative, operational or programmatic life. Only as our institutions, their employees and leaders begin to reflect openly and honestly on the diversity of our communities will we be able to transform our churches into more inclusive communities of God.

Stewardship

Historically, the gathering and sharing of church resources on the national, regional and local levels have stigmatized racial ethnic communities, churches and congregations by viewing these communities as "mission" churches. We affirm the inclusion of racial ethnic people in the membership of stewardship committees, directorates and councils so that they may help determine new strategies, policies and priorities for the financial sustenance of the total church. We call for racial ethnic-owned and-operated companies to be included as suppliers for services and products purchased by the NCCC and its member communions.

Personnel

Institutional racism continues to enforce racist decisions in the hiring and firing practices of our communions. We must take active and deliberate steps to reshape the systems and so eliminate the attitudes and policies that sustain racial prejudice. We must also respond accordingly to personnel staff about their culpability.

We commit ourselves to develop and adhere to affirmative action policies for the recruitment and placement of personnel at all levels as an effective means of enhancing the quality and caliber of the professional and pastoral staff in our mission fields and of providing racially-balanced and truly inclusive leadership. We also affirm the intention of affirmative action policies in the development of opportunities for professional and leadership advancement, ordination, high official positions, and representation in ecumenical and interfaith forums.

Communication

Our churches use satellite transmissions, videotapes, computers and high-speed word-processors. As sophisticated as our communications have become, we have yet to become as conscientious about involving racial ethnic Christians in the information-gathering and-disseminating processes of our faith communities. They have also given very little opportunity to spokespersons from racial ethnic communities in the flow of information, particularly in areas of image and stereotype clarification, racial justice issues and responses to the church at large.

We, therefore, commit ourselves actively to engage all of God's people in the communication process and in the production of our religious messages. We also call for the creation of interracial dialogues and forums for the discussion of all church issues and the special concerns of our diverse communities, so that we can learn to speak to each other honestly and listen to one another sincerely in order to dialogue effectively.

In addition, to help insure better communications, we call for the inclusion of racial ethnic personnel and communities on mailing, subscription and survey lists and in church-sponsored communications skills training.

Education

The educational process and the development of educational materials are integral parts of our churches' faith development and application. While much of our religious education has focused on Christian nurture, evangelism, ministry and missions of social concern, our curriculum developers have utilized very little of the available scholarship, literature, and research done by racial ethnic people, and the texts and educational methods developed by victims of racism have been ignored. Our educational materials still contain racist images and graphics, negative stereotypes, and critical "omissions" of accurate portrayals, descriptions and histories of the diverse communities in the U.S. and in the Third World. Also, concepts which perpetuate racial injustice remain unchecked, such as teaching the oppressed that justice will come through patience and tolerance. In the context of the struggle for racial justice, such "patience" and "tolerance" can be negative and patronizing. Therefore, we call upon the churches to educate their membership about how these concepts are seen from the perspective of the oppressed.

We affirm the need to be extremely sensitive to the content of educational materials. We commit ourselves to an on-going assessment of these materials for negative and exclusivist content, racial stereotypes and demeaning graphics and terminology. In order to guarantee greater accuracy in these materials, we call for the employment of racial ethnic people in the educational divisions, offices and commissions; and for the enrichment of their products by the inclusion of scholarship and academic expertise from diverse communities. We also affirm educational programs, seminars, workshops and curricula which focus on the elimination of racism in the church, and we urge that they be made an integral part of all church life instruction for clergy and laity, leadership and general membership, including all age groups.

We also call the attention of the church to the racism developing within the network of denominationally-based schools and private fundamentalist "Christian" elementary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions particularly in these schools' admissions policies, curriculum content, religious and educational values, and methods of instruction. We commit ourselves to monitor these schools and make public pronouncements about their racism until they remove those conditions and change their policies and programs.

Seminaries and Schools of Theology, Religion

If racism is to be eliminated from the hearts and minds of people of faith, the transformation of seminaries and schools of theology and religion is critical. The various theologies of racial ethnic communities need to be intentionally integrated into the content of the curriculum and the methods of instruction. We need to be mindful of the fact that a majority of the faculty of these institutions is white male. There are only a few women with tenure or in distinguished posts. We can no longer "ghettoize" racially diverse theologies, such as Black theology, or new developments which originate from different communities or countries, such as liberation theology, into curricula that are only tentatively or tenuously funded or supported. We affirm the integration of various Christian theologies and faith-development histories into the common pool of esteemed religious thought.

This is not to say that special programs or racial ethnic theological centers should be abandoned, but rather that the scholarship accreditation and funding granted to them should be equal to other important programs. We call for increased financial commitment and support to secure the future of these critically important centers.

We affirm that the transformation of seminaries, schools of theology and religion will become evident with the inclusion of racial ethnic people as directors, trustees, faculty members, professors and administrators. We also affirm that intensive recruitment is necessary so that access to these institutions and many other ministerial training opportunities will be available to all people.

Church Development

We regard church development as a fundamental process of our communion and congregational administration. Critical decisions are made by church leadership on the local, regional and national levels about the location for new church development and timelines and methods for building sanctuaries, increasing membership, establishing capital, and securing financial sustenance. Historically, many white congregations have had the money and power to decide when and how to build their churches, but this has not been the case with racial ethnic congregations, many of whom were created as "missionary" enterprises or through racial isolation. They have struggled to maintain their churches despite the unrealistic standards and criteria based on the white church model established and adhered to by denominational church development agencies. We call for the development of racial ethnic churches on the basis of their own realistic expectations, guidelines and financial needs. In the planning of new churches that may include a significant racial

ethnic membership, communions should consult with and involve representatives of that racial ethnic constituency. Communions should also consult with other communions and faith communities, particularly traditionally Black churches, to determine the impact of new church development in their districts, synods, parishes and conferences, thereby affirming the process of self-determination among racial ethnic communities.

As growing racial ethnic communities and the influx of immigrants and refugees bring about significant changes in the racial demographics of urban centers and adjoining suburbs, churches are being challenged to create new congregations or reshape the old. In cases where two or more congregations share the same building, we still see "landlord-tenant" relationships, "we-and-they" perceptions, and resistance to open dialogue or sharing of resources. We must think about new options for a more inclusive church as we develop and welcome models for pluralistic congregations, ministries, worship and fellowship.

To become a more harmonious, inclusive and caring community of faith, we call upon our communions to commit themselves to be more intentional, creative and resourceful in the nurturing of new churches and the cultivation of the old.

Evangelism

Historically some churches have misused the Great Commission to "Go into all the world..." (Matthew 28:19) by ignoring racial ethnic differences. Others have been faithful to its witness, and new methods of evangelizing have celebrated the diversity of the human community. We applaud these efforts and recognize that evangelism at its best is Good News embodied in language, religious experiences and cultural expressions. This Good News liberates people from the evils of oppression and suffering. We affirm that none are whole in the body of Christ until the gifts of all are appreciated and respected.

We commit ourselves to authentic evangelism that is a reflection of the wholeness of the gospel and the wholeness of God's people.

Membership and Church Life

Full and participatory membership among churches must be extended to all people of faith. We call upon our church communions to remove official membership categories and implied classifications that are based on color and ethnicity and that denote lower status in the church. They should not allow administrative and operational policies or practices to be arbitrarily used as measures to preclude the presence, participation and membership of racial ethnic people in church life.

Local Church

New options for fellowship and partnership among churches must be pursued. We can no longer permit the isolation within a communion of congregations that are racially different from the dominant membership. Nor should superficial or artificial relationships exist between ethnically different congregations. We call for new covenantal relation-

ships and genuine friendships in the interest of an inclusive and pluralistic church. To this end we encourage intentional interracial and inclusive intra-church dialogues, joint-action projects, ecumenical and interfaith forums.

Homeland and Global Mission

Our global and domestic mission structures need continual transformation when they are found to include racist or unjust patterns or practices. Today there is an increase in proselytizing of racial ethnic people in the U.S. and in the Third World by missionaries who denigrate or ignore the peoples' own theologies or faith traditions. We strongly urge that missionaries from racial ethnic communities be recruited and employed. We affirm that the dignity of all people must be reclaimed through their empowerment and liberation, and we encourage the development of a two-way mission process to eliminate paternalistic giver-receiver assumptions that have been insidiously ingrained within the mission tradition. We further affirm that the white community needs Christian mission as much as the Third World.

Church-Supported Institutions

Our health and welfare institutions and programs (i.e. hospitals, homes for the aged, child care centers, outdoor camps, etc.) must also be free of racist policies and practices. We commit ourselves to include these church-supported institutions in our strategy for racial justice along with community-based and church-supported projects.

RACISM IN SOCIETY

Christians share with people of good will a deep concern for the dignity of humankind and a profound respect for the inalienable rights with which we have been endowed by our Creator, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

A responsible society is one in which freedom and social responsibility are practiced by all. Those who administer justice and public order and who hold political authority or economic power are accountable for its exercise to God and to the people whose welfare is affected by that authority or power. The responsibility of the church is to call attention to the injustices of society and to empower the victims of injustice in their struggle against the systems and individuals that oppress them.

Since racism knows no boundaries and penetrates religious and secular communities throughout the world, we are compelled to monitor its evolution and destructiveness in its entirety and create strong and effective strategies for combatting it. As communications technology allows us to be better informed about racial abuses throughout the world, our analysis of racism should continue to show a more comprehensive understanding of the matrix of root causes. Therefore, we urge our communions to challenge racism throughout society and to engage the commitment and participation of church leaders and members in the following areas:

Global Racism

Through consultations and reports of the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism, and of the National Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order and other units and commissions, the communions have been informed about the many forms of racism. Although other forms of racism exist, they do not command the power of white racism. Racism is prejudice fed with a sense of superiority. When these beliefs are combined with power in the institutional structures controlled by the white community, such as politics, economics, business, industry, education and religion, there arises a formidable union of oppressive political and economic systems which can sustain the subordination of millions of people. Because racism is a sin against God, we affirm our Gospel mandate to oppose any racist system.

Global Political Systems

Given the division of the world among nations, we support those international programs and policies which promote self-determination and self-sufficiency for oppressed people and nations. We commit ourselves to support people of Africa, Asia, Central and South America, the Caribbean, the Middle East and other areas that are struggling for liberation from political systems that are maintained by racism, colonialism, militarism and imperialism.

Militarism

On several occasions the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. has issued statements condemning the nuclear arms race as a threat to the survival of humankind, and it has condemned militaristic ventures in the Third World that have been encouraged or condoned by the global superpowers. While affirming those statements, we also urge our member communions to devote time and resources to continue their peacemaking efforts in directions that address in particular the issues of conventional weapons and the wars fought with them that continue to destroy the Middle East, Africa, the Caribbean, the Philippines, Central America and other areas of the world. We acknowledge that an increasing number of U.S. racial ethnic youth are being drawn into the armed forces against their personal convictions because of the lack of educational and employment opportunities in civilian life. We commit ourselves to engage in efforts to provide alternative areas of employment and educational funding for these youth.

Economics

Global economic systems foster and perpetuate dependent economies, especially in the Third World. The racism that feeds into and results from this arrangement is both subtle and virulent. Decisions of critical consequences for people at the lower end of the economic spectrum are made in the white-dominated power structures from which they are systematically excluded. Clearly the most victimized and economically deprived people are Third World women. They use limited resources to produce the majority of food for their countries and are the most exploited persons in the labor arenas.

Prices for raw materials are generally set without consultation with the countries that produce them. Cheap labor is extracted from areas whose stability is maintained by "First World militarism." The prices of manufactured goods and even food are set by forces foreign to the millions of people who must live with those prices. It is morally unjust to have millions of people starving in Third World countries while excess food rots in the store houses of affluent white countries.

We urge our communions to join together in carrying these concerns to the governments and multinational corporations which continue to profit through racism and oppression. We urge our communion investment boards to divest themselves of all interest in corporations which continue to profit from racial oppression, especially in South Africa, and we urge the religious community to share its concerns and perceptions regarding U.S. international policies with elected officials.

While we acknowledge the magnitude of humanitarian assistance provided by the church community to people of the Third World, we believe that it is equally important to uphold our prophetic responsibility to address the root causes of their suffering. We commit ourselves to advocate with our brothers and sisters in the U.S. and in international forums for programs, policies and international agreements which promote self-determination and self-sufficiency.

RACISM IN THE UNITED STATES

As we see the connection between global racism and racism in the United States, we affirm that our public and private treatment of all of God's people should exemplify not only our commitment to racial justice, but also our vision of an inclusive and caring society. Our strategies should include resignation from racist professional, civic, service and social clubs; monitoring negative media stereotypes; and identifying racist legislation at all levels of government. Our public pronouncements and witness should also include promotion and financial assistance for racial justice education, compensatory programs, fair and non-discriminatory housing and land rights. The following issues have been selected on the basis of their direct relationship to racial justice. But commitment in these areas should not exclude the many other areas of human life affected by racism.

Economics and Employment

Economics is the heart of racism in the United States. We continue to challenge those of the nation's economic priorities which belie the established right of each and all to a job with an equitable wage. We note that discriminatory practices and the precarious nature of the labor market jeopardize adequate and substantial financial security for racial ethnic people, who continue to be the most adversely affected during times of "economic crisis," decreases in government services and labor management disputes.

We pledge support for the development and full implementation of aggressive social, economic, and employment policies that protect the

economic well-being and job security of all people, mindful of the particular economic insecurities facing racial ethnic people. In view of the historic exclusion of racial ethnic people from full participation in society, we call for intentional efforts by societal institutions to include racial ethnic people in decision-making and leadership. We support goals, quotas, and other remedies of affirmative action when used as minimum, but not maximum, measures of participation. We call for a restructured economic system based on a cooperative model in place of current competitive and comparative models that promote profit at the expense of others. (Acts 2:44) We commit ourselves to promoting the institutionalization of an economic system premised on the ethical principles of Justice, Participation, and Sustainability.

Civil Rights

We support the advances made in the area of civil and human rights and in equal opportunity. We also affirm the protection of the essential liberties guaranteed by the Bill of Rights and the U.S. Constitution against efforts to undermine them. We reiterate our commitment to anti-racist efforts such as programs, policies and legislation that protect the civil rights of all people, their access to legal and social service, and their full participation in this country's political process.

We support a strong, independent U.S. Civil Rights Commission whose members are genuinely committed to racial justice, affirmative action and desegregation, and whose vigilance in defense of civil rights is not impaired by regressive or partisan manipulation. We call for a vital process of continuing liaison between the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice and citizen organizations working for racial justice.

Education

We believe that the nation should provide a system of quality education that is accessible and affordable to all of its people. Since property-tax financing does not provide sufficient resources for public education in many areas of this country, we call for new, more effective ways of financing public education. Because of this society's ethnic diversity, we also affirm the development and implementation of multi-cultural and multi-lingual education at all levels to meet the needs of racial ethnic people and to promote greater understanding of racial ethnic communities. In assessing a variety of educational systems nationwide, we have determined that many private schools, especially many of the so called "Christian" academies, promote and practice racial segregation and instill racist value-systems in their students. We find this type of instruction antithetical to Biblical precepts and extremely dangerous to the social and faith development of young people. We call for the elimination of these administrative and curriculum policies.

We commit ourselves to work for quality education for all people and to press for the financial resources necessary to support this vital system. We oppose all efforts to diminish the delivery of a variety of educational options, services, curricula, credentials and degrees. We also commit ourselves to the development, distribution and use of anti-racist materials and curricula that not only provide insights into racial

justice, but also encourage people to unlearn racial stereotypes and to work towards the elimination of racism.

Family

We recognize and deplore the negative impact that bigotry, racial stereotyping and racial discrimination have on the quality of family life in this society. We also deplore the economic indignities that disproportionately affect the health and wholeness of family members, and that contribute to the growing infant-mortality rates especially within racial ethnic communities. We advocate full access to health care, nutrition, and preventive medicine for all people. We also commit ourselves to provide support, resources, and educational materials that clarify the variety of images and roles within racial ethnic families in an effort to correct the stereotypes and biases that have distorted public perception, eroded interpersonal relationships and destroyed family structures.

Violence and the Administration of Justice

We abhor the pervasiveness of violence in the U.S., and we are particularly concerned about the violence that is perpetrated against racial ethnic communities. We deplore the sinful appropriation of the cross of Jesus, a symbol of religious wholeness, for diabolical usage by the Ku Klux Klan. We commit ourselves to continue analyzing and responding to the systemic genocide of racial ethnic people and to continue investigation of violence by individuals, groups and even law enforcement agencies. We also commit ourselves to continue monitoring the administration of justice throughout the nation to determine if any miscarriage of justice is being inflicted upon racial ethnic people through the court systems or legal procedures such as bail-setting, sentencing, and incarceration.

We pledge ourselves to the eradication of the root causes of violence in this nation.

Immigrants and Refugees

We recognize that the U.S. is a nation of voluntary and involuntary immigrants, with the exception of Indigenous People. However, immigration policies and practices have historically been racist and discriminatory. World problems and strife continue to cause mass migrations of people from one country to another and from one continent to another. As immigrants and refugees join us in the U.S., we affirm the Judeo-Christian concepts of hospitality, assistance and asylum for the stranger. We oppose the lack of due process protection; the brutality and violence during deportation proceedings; and the political favoritism for one group over another, such as the recent treatment of Haitians and Salvadorans when compared with that of Europeans. We support a fair and just immigration policy, the extension of rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution to immigrants and refugees, and the removal of the racist and inhumane stigmas forced upon immigrants.

Media

The media shape our thoughts, influence our decisions and alter our perception of the world. Because of technological advances, on one

hand the media have enhanced our understanding of ourselves and of the world. and on the other they have tended to lend themselves both consciously and unconsciously to the perpetuation of racism through noncoverage, poor coverage, negative stereotypes and misinformation. Motivated primarily by a desire to appeal to popular tastes and interest in order to maximize their attractiveness to commercial advertisers, the media tend to reflect and reinforce existing feelings and attitudes of racism in the larger society. Their capital-intensive structure has precluded the entry at decision-making levels of all but a few racial ethnic people. With the great influence exercised by the media in the modern world should go commensurate responsibility for truthfulness and sensitivity in the reportage, portrayal and treatment of racial ethnic people and their concerns, for creating cross-cultural dialogue, and for promoting awareness of the severity of racial and economic oppression. Instead of amplifying existing racism, the media can help to combat it, and we commit ourselves to call them to that kind of responsible role in this country.

BENEDICTION

From the beginning of human existence, justice has been a key element in God's revelation for human relationships. The Old Testament Prophets' words of condemnation and the need for repentance as well as their vision of the Kingdom of God, emphasize that peace and full life come from Justice. As churches of Jesus Christ, we acknowledge that we have not always shown leadership in issues of justice. At this time, God is calling us more strongly than ever to take a prophetic stance and move from powerful rhetoric to critical action. The call is to raise the banner against racial injustice and to make a significant impact on our nation and throughout the world. We commit our churches, our resources and our lives to the cleansing of racism and genocide from our world. As we focus our attention upon the evils of national and international secular racism, we must also, emphatically and intentionally, focus equally upon the evil resident within ourselves.

In order to concretize this commitment, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. commits itself and calls upon its member communions to commit themselves for the next decade to racial justice by eliminating racism from church structures and to initiate and support efforts to eliminate it from society.

It is our hope that the power of this action will create a condition of trust, hope and love among all people of good will. Although this action seems limited, the intent is to begin a serious and strenuous effort to eradicate racism by letting the world know by our actions that we are committed to justice for all of humanity.

We affirm our love and affection for the people of the world, for the people of this nation and for generations yet to come by offering this document as the starting point of a new way of life.

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE U.S.A.

475 Riverside Drive

New York, NY 10115

Theological Statement on Racial Justice

(To Be Inserted as the Opening Statement of the NCCC Policy Statement on Racial Justice, Adopted by the Governing Board November 10, 1984)

(This theological Statement Adopted by the Governinn Board November 6, 1985)

God's Creation

All humanity is created in the image of God. Christians are called to a oneness in Christ which unites all particularities and reaffirms the Biblical image of God as a universal affirmation of faith.

Racism is an expression of idolatry, replacing faith in the God who made all people and who raised Jesus from the dead with the belief in the superiority of one race over another or in the universality of a particular form of culture. When this idolatry is expressed by those who possess economic and political power, it leads to a cruel and extensive repression of selected peoples and a negation of their identity and value as given by God.

The Church's Mission

The church is called to identify racism as sin against God and is summoned to eliminate it. As Christians hear and respond to the Gospel they confess that all people are called into the fellowship of Christ and through the Holy Spirit create such a fellowship. The grace of God is needed in this task because sin exerts its power over all people (Romans 3:23). Racism can be vanquished, finally, by nothing less than God's redemptive action to liberate both victims and victimizers from this evil.

The struggle against racial injustice continues to be waged by the Lord Jesus, confessed by Christians together as the Christ. In Christ God challenges racism and promises its defeat. That challenge is part of the meaning of the Cross and is a part of the resurrection promise.

Through the Holy Spirit God calls and gathers the church in obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Although no one, not even those called by the name of Jesus Christ, can claim to be free from racism or its effects, those who have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ are called to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). In each generation the faithful of the church are to struggle against racial injustice.

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Fellowship and Proclamation

When the New Testament speaks of fellowship or koinonia (cf. I Cor. 1:9) among the Gentiles of "the nations" (ta ethne), it grounds that fellowship in baptism. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13; cf. Gal. 3:28). In its fellowship the church manifests God's new creation in the midst of the old: "If anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation; the old has passed away; behold, the new has come." (II Cor. 5:17; cf. Gal. 6:15). Within this new creation of God divisions which have formerly separated human beings are destroyed, even those created by racism. All are united in fellowship and freedom by the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

The grace of God allows Christians to recognize and appreciate ethnic diversity without confusing unity with sameness. Richness and diversity became the mark of the church from its earliest days. In the Acts of the Apostles, the description of the miracle of Pentecost demonstrates not that the Holy Spirit made dissimilar peoples identical, but that in the diversity of languages and tongues the one message was heard by the many peoples and was spread among all the nations (Acts 2: 14-21). From the moment of its birth the church has had as its mission to include all people and to unify them under the Gospel into true fellowship with God and with each other. In the diversity of their races and languages, people of faith were united in their confession of the mighty acts of God. It is in response to the continuing mighty acts of God that the church is called to pursue racial justice.

The risen Jesus instructed his disciples to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). All people and all nations are the focus of the mission and ministry of the Christian church. No one race or people can claim to be exclusively the people of God. No one race or people can be identified as being excluded from God's gracious salvation in Christ.

The Church's Responsibility

The sin of racism appears also in the church, for there is no immunity from its demonic power. The church is in constant need of God's word (John 1:1): to condemn and to forgive, to strike down and to promise grace, to accuse sinners of their idolatry and faithlessness and to redeem them to new inclusiveness in their life.

Within the church, then, there is both individual and institutional responsibility to promote racial justice. Where any form of racism exists Christians must call each other to account in love and justice by proclaiming God's powerful gospel. Christians also strive together in the power of the Spirit to create institutional forms of the church in which racism is eliminated and cultural and ethnic richness are celebrated.

Christ's Liberating Power

The rule of God extends to all creation. The church must identify and challenge political, social and economic injustice, beyond the church. The church is called to work against every institutionalized form of racism in society.

The church is called also to identify and stand with victims of racism. In standing with those who seek to be free from the oppression of racism, the church bears witness to the liberating love of the God who wills all people to be in fellowship and unity.

Christ is present in the world wherever Good News is preached to the poor, the release of the captives is proclaimed, the blind are given their sight, and those who are oppressed are set free. (See Luke 4:18). It is the privilege and responsibility of the church to be engaged in Christ's work to make that vision a reality.

Christ's Life, Ministry and Message are mandates to the church to participate fully in the overcoming of the power of evil and in the liberation of the oppressed.