

**Minnesota Council of Churches
Board of Directors
3-Point Action Platform:
Dismantling the Structures and Repairing the Damage of Racism in Minnesota**

The genocide of and stealing of land from the Indigenous population combined with the arrival of enslaved Africans as uncompensated labor made racism and White supremacy core to the way of life in what would become the United States of America. The complicity of Christian faith communities further stamped on the nation the imprint of a sinful dehumanization. The State of Minnesota was born out of this blueprint.

Through the generations there has always been resistance to this reality. But in recent years the public reckoning with the killing of Black people by law enforcement and the highly publicized Standing Rock standoff led by Native Americans has called for renewed action. Minnesota has been a part of this process with Jamar Clark and Philando Castile killed by police and the debates around the Enbridge Line 3 pipeline. Now in 2020, a series of high profile killings of Black people involving law enforcement have agitated the nation (including Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery). The May 28 killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis became the catalyst for weeks and months of protests and unrest throughout Minnesota, the Nation, and around the globe. Moving forward, all eyes are on Minnesota—the epicenter of the movement for change.

This platform for change sets forth a role for the Minnesota Council of Churches (MCC) during this post George Floyd season of possibility and promise. The purpose is to build a structure for racial equity in the church and the State of Minnesota through initiating a process of truth telling about racism in Minnesota and investing in repairing the damage done by racism in Black and Indigenous communities. The focus will be on naming the history and addressing the systems that have made Minnesota rank as a state with some of the highest racial disparities in the United States. This proposal emerges in the midst of a Covid-19 health pandemic that has further exposed these racial disparities through the disproportionate health and economic effects on BIPOC communities.¹

The focus of this truth telling, education, and reparations process is on addressing the historic harm to African American and Native American communities in Minnesota. Black and Indigenous communities are not the only ones experiencing the effects of racial or economic disparity in Minnesota. As immigrants and refugees have arrived in Minnesota from Latin American, African, Asian, Arab, and other countries, they have also been directly impacted by the pre-existing structures that create inequity. Focusing on the structures developed to support White supremacy and the discrimination against Black and Indigenous communities will also benefit others thus affected ... even economically marginalized Whites.

Each of the three propositions pre-supposes that an organization with a membership of twenty-five denominational communions and strong interfaith partners is well situated to lead the envisioned process for change. Much of the work is on a larger scale beyond what an individual denomination could address on their own. With MCC's collective bandwidth and influence statewide, we are poised to do what no one else likely can or will.

¹ BIPOC = Black, indigenous, and people of color.

The response to the killing of George Floyd and the subsequent protests and unrest here in Minnesota suggests that this time could be different and there is reason to hope for real transformation. For that to be true, MCC needs to step in with a plan that offers a leadership role for the Council to build a set of partnerships for a process over the next 3-5 years that can be sustained for up to ten years. Below are three actions. In order to sustain the vision and daily commitment required, the MCC Board of Directors will continue with the leadership of the historic African American denominations for at least ten more years (President, Vice President) and that the majority of the membership of the Executive Committee will be BIPOC persons during that same period of time.

We envision a process of truth telling, education, and reparations that could eventually lead to reconciliation. The new book on reparations, *From Here to Equality* (2020),² uses the acronym ARC—acknowledgement, redress, and closure. [Acknowledgement = truth telling and education. Redress = reparations. Closure = reconciliation.]

There is biblical precedent for confession (truth telling) and reparations. Two examples are:

“The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the Israelites: When a man or a woman wrongs another, breaking faith with the LORD, that person incurs guilt and shall confess the sin that has been committed. The person shall make full restitution for the wrong, adding one-fifth to it, and giving it to the one who was wronged” (Numbers 5:6-7).

“Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, ‘Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much’” (Luke 19:8).

MCC 3-Point Action Platform

1. Truth Telling Process

MCC brings a moral voice to the work of racial justice and equity. In order to get at the deeper issues blocking the transformation of systemic racism in Minnesota, a strong moral voice is required to call for truth telling, welcome lament, advocate for reparations, and hold systems accountable for change. The South African Truth & Reconciliation was led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and other religious leaders because of their moral authority. Faith communities provide a redemptive space for acknowledging past egregious intentional injustices and redressing past injustices and present inequities through specific acts of penance and contrition.

Truth telling must begin at home and complicity by faith communities in racial injustice and disparities must be declared and addressed. A truth telling process for the State of Minnesota will also be launched in various contexts at the State, regionally, and in cities and towns. Issues will include: policing, land, and racial equity in health, education, wealth, employment, housing, etc.

² William A Darity Jr. and A. Kirsten Mullen, *From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty First Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 2-3.

2. Education: Denominations and Congregations Equipped with DEI³ Lenses and Competency

Each MCC member denomination will pursue its own educational process for racial justice and equity work in conversation with MCC and other judicatories. This could include anti-racism training, cultural competency development, DEI-informed leadership development, etc. Best practices will be shared.

3. Reparations in Black and Indigenous Communities

A process of reparations and equity will be pursued by MCC among the member judicatories and throughout the State of Minnesota. MCC will build a coalition to call for, legislate, and deliver reparations to Black and Indigenous communities. This would be coordinated with the truth telling process. This restitution would include land and economic reparations. Reparations are effective when “an improved position for (Blacks and Native Americans) is associated with sharp and enduring reductions in racial disparities, particularly economic disparities like racial wealth inequality, and a corresponding sharp and enduring improvements in (Black and Native American) well-being.”⁴

Next Steps

During the Fall/Winter 2020, MCC will seek partnerships, create plans and processes, establish budget and funding strategies, and propose a timeline with the goal of launching the public work in the first part of 2021.

Approved by the Minnesota Council of Churches Board of Directors on September 24, 2020.

³ DEI = Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

⁴ Darity and Mullen, 3.