

Report of the General Synod Council on Multiracial Future

POLICY WORDING

The RCA will be a fellowship of congregations committed to a multiracial future engaging all of God's people in mission and ministry and resisting the sin of racism.

GENERAL SECRETARY'S INTERPRETATION

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

By journeying into the future with a commitment to unity, reconciliation, and justice, we build Christ's church on a firm and diverse foundation that extends God's grace to the world. Through forgiveness, deep relationships, active service, and love for each other, the church is able to live out the message of God's love. The RCA commitment is to name racism as a sin and to work against its prevalence and pervasiveness both within our relationships and our denominational system and in the wider domestic and global communities. Our efforts at eradicating racism call for us to change not only our systems but also our hearts for each other and for the life matters that concern each other. It requires transformation of both institution and of our person. It impacts what we embrace, what we include, what we see, and how we respond and resource. A multiracial future must first be envisioned, then articulated, and finally actively engaged as the preference and commitment of all.

MULTIRACIAL FUTURE FREED FROM RACISM

During the first five years of Transformed & Transforming, Earl James has provided leadership on cultural agility and advocacy. In that capacity, cultural agility and advocacy was treated from a silo-ed perspective, rather than an embedded one. In Transformed & Transforming's second trimester, we are embedding cultural agility as a value and practice into all of the initiatives of Transformed & Transforming. It would be like saying, "disciples are culturally agile," "leaders are culturally agile," "mission must be culturally agile." The goal is to assist the Transformed & Transforming executives to increase their cultural agility outcomes in ways that equip them to lead in the RCA's multicultural future freed from racism.

We will implement this goal through three strategies:

1. To increase knowledge and understanding of cultural agility and how to apply it intersectionally to life and leadership.
2. To assist Transformed & Transforming executives to develop diverse sets of personal and ministry relationships.
3. To ensure Transformed & Transforming resources focused on long-term, sustainable changes in congregations are equitably utilized among white and racial-ethnic congregations.

For the first strategy, we partnered with Reesheda Graham Washington, director of Communities First Association. Reesheda provided four day-long trainings for the Transformed & Transforming executives. The Transformed & Transforming executives took a deep dive in considering their metacognition, how we think about, how we learn, and how that impacts

cultural agility. Executives were invited to reimagine inclusive posturing and disposition awareness when considering cultural agility by seeing ourselves as the oppressor and the oppressed. Together we learned the intersectionalities between race, culture, and ableism, and we practiced deconstruction as a lifestyle and organizational ethos.

The second strategy will assist Transformed & Transforming executives to develop leadership relationships with persons whose demographic profile differs from our own and from the norms we might have in the profiles of the people we more easily trust. Communities First Association's contract included coaching us through aspects of this strategy. Each Transformed & Transforming executive set a goal with Reesheda of adding one or two new people to our "trusted ten" of a demographic profile that differs from the profile earlier identified.

In the third strategy, we established as a baseline the percentage of racial-ethnic congregations that participated to-date in Transformed & Transforming learning communities, leadership communities, and leadership collaboratives. We compared that baseline against the percentage of all RCA congregations that are racial-ethnic and served by the three racial-ethnic councils and Native American Ministries. We discussed and made corrective actions to ensure that racial-ethnic equity at the congregational level exists in terms of benefitting from Transformed & Transforming resources.

In September 2019, the Reformed Church in America held its guiding coalitions meeting. This gathering comprised ten groups, one from each initiative area under Transformed & Transforming, plus Church Multiplication. As part of this event, we invited Ashanti Bryant as our guest speaker. Bryant is the education director of Amplify GR and coordinates partnership efforts with community schools to lead the charge of increasing access to high-quality early childhood education opportunities. Bryant's workshop was developed in partnership with the Cultural Intelligence Center and centered around unconscious bias training. His workshop had four main objectives: understand why bias matters, recognize sources of unconscious bias, identify bias at the RCA, and practice culturally intelligent strategies to disrupt bias.

To further prepare our staff for this workshop, our guiding coalition members completed unconscious bias training prework. This was facilitated by Rob Dixon from InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and Lesley Mazzotta from the RCA, both with extensive training in unconscious bias. The prework consisted of a webinar that introduced unconscious bias definitions and types of bias and discussed micro-aggression. The prework also discussed case studies that were written to include bias remarks. These were discussed as part of participants' learning and awareness of how unconscious bias may look in a life situation. Participants were also given suggested activities and questions to help dive deeper into their understanding of unconscious bias as a next step.

At our recent Transformed & Transforming retreat in December 2019, we decided on a set of values we hold for equitable hospitality. This includes the following attributes.

- Accessibility
- Freedom to come and go
- Putting the audience's needs first
- Sense of belonging and ability to contribution
- Intentional diversity
 - Extra level of invitations
 - Second loop to who is not in the room
 - Implement charge of trying to be free from racism

- Content and context is important
 - Rethink who we invite as experts
- Composure including vulnerability and humility
- Don't exclude the needs of the few over the majority wants. Anticipate this versus waiting until someone has to speak out.