**SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO THE CALL BY THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE AS A CONTRIBUTION TO HER REPORT TO THE GENRAL ASSEMBLY**

*Submitted by the United Methodist Church—General Board of Church and Society, with contributions from the United Methodist Women. Both NGOs have consultative status (roster and special, respectively) with the UN Economic and Social Council.*

10 August 2021

**A. REASON FOR THIS SUBMISSION AND ITS LIMITATIONS:** This submission is intended to respond to the Call for submission issued by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance for the preparation of her report to the General Assembly on the 20th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. As a religious NGO with three related organizations in consultative status with UN ECOSOC, we intend to show in this submission the commitment of The United Methodist Church against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. But we will also portray how this faith-based religious institution is being confronted by current public discourse on these issues and how it is responding to events in society. This submission does not intend to portray the entirety of work and activities done by different levels within the United Methodist Church but rather to give examples of the kind of activities covered by the mandate of the Special Rapporteur. It is delimited by the contribution of United Methodist agencies that shared information allowed by the short period of time since we received the July 27, 2021 call for submission from the office of the Special Rapporteur. It must also be stated that only the General Conference of the United Methodist Church speaks for the entire church. Official statements of the church are clearly indicated and referred to in this report.

**B. SOURCES OF OFFICIAL POSITION OF THE UNITED METHODISDT CHURCH ON RACISM AND RELATED ISSUES:** This submission comes from the [United Methodist Church—General Board of Church and Society](http://www.umcjustice.org/), one of three United Methodist agencies that have ECOSOC consultative status. The other two are the [United Methodist Church-General Board of Global Ministries](http://wwwumcmission.org/) and the [United Methodist Women](http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/). These and other agencies of The United Methodist Church all base their work on official statements approved by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church. For the purpose of this submission, these official statements come from the Book of Disciple and the Book of Resolutions, both of which contain the United Methodist Social Principles. These denominational documents contain the official statements of the worldwide United Methodist Church from which the three United Methodist NGOs base their stance and action on the matters that concern the mandate of the Special Rapporteur. The United Methodist Church is a religious body committed to ecumenical, interfaith and interreligious dialogue and relations. It therefore also informs its official positions on social issues from statements derived through these dialogues and relations.

**C. THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH AND THE DURBAN WORLD CONFERENCE ON RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND REALTED INTOLERANCE.** The three general agencies of The United Methodist Church mentioned in Part B above had registered delegates to the 2001 Durban conference. Our delegates were also part of the Ecumenical Caucus and the NGO Forum. The Durban Conference was a complex but one of the most representative and inclusive conference that gave voice to marginalized and disenfranchised populations and communities in the world. With such diversity came the complexity that varied issues brought to a common table is bound to confront. The [account of the Durban Conference by the World Council of Churches](https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/world-conference-against-racism-racial-discrimination-xenophobia-and-related-intolerance-durban-south-africa-26-august-7-september-2001)—of which we are a member denomination—remains appropriate today. Our United Methodist delegation at Durban led the drafting of the [Ecumenical Caucus Statement](https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2001/09/archbishop-tutu-delivers-ecumenical-caucus-statement-at-world-conference-against-racism.aspx), read at the world conference by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The 10 priority commitments in this Ecumenical Caucus Statement issued 20 years ago remain salient and urgent to pursue today. These commitments spring from the fundamental assertion by The United Methodist Church and the ecumenical community that, from the text of the Ecumenical Caucus Statement, "Racism is a sin. It is contrary to God's will for love, peace, equality, justice and compassion for all. It is an affront to human dignity and a gross violation of human rights.”

The United Methodist position enunciated in [A Charter for Racial Justice in an Interdependent Global Community](https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions/a-charter-for-racial-justice-in-an-interdependent-global-community-3371) asserts that “racism is a rejection of the teachings of Jesus Christ;…(and) robs all human beings of their wholeness and is used as a justification for social, economic, environmental, and political exploitation….” The Charter laid down United Methodist understanding of the relation of racism with slavery and colonialism. The Charter stated: “Racism is a system of inequality based on race prejudice and the belief that one race is innately superior to all other races. In the United States, systemic race-based prejudice and misuse of power have justified the conquest, enslavement, and evangelizing of non-Europeans.”

Addressing the situation in the United States, the Charter posits that “The racist system in the United States today perpetuates the power and control of those who are of European ancestry. It is often called “white supremacy.” The fruits of racism are prejudice, bigotry, discrimination, and dehumanization. Consistently, African Americans, Hispanics, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders have been humiliated by being given jobs, housing, education, medical services, transportation, and public accommodations that are all inferior. With hopes deferred and rights still denied, the deprived and oppressed fall prey to a colonial mentality that can acquiesce to the inequities.”

These positions of the United Methodist Church are germane to the core of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism and therefore support the mandate and the work of the mandate holder.

**D. ANTI-RACISM WORK SINCE DURBAN.** Racism in the world today is ever more pernicious and has risen to the level of pandemic, equally ravaging lives and pillaging communities like other pandemics, but especially COVID-19 and the pandemics of poverty, violence, global warming and forced migration. Racism’s effects on people’s lives and relations owe much from its complicity with slavery and colonialism. All these historic injustices today complicate our response to the rise of populism, xenophobic nationalism, white supremacy and their pernicious and injurious effects in people’s lives, social relations, and even in the relations and governance of populations and nations. The resulting document that came out of Durban—the [Durban Declaration and Program of Action](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Durban_text_en.pdf)—remains ever more current today and must be given its due attention—popularization among peoples of the world and the conduct of activities that implement the program of action.

**E. SELECT WORK AND FOCUS OF UNITED METHODIST CHURCH AGENCIES RELATED TO RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE.** This link provides the [history and engagement of the United Methodist Church and what it is doing with racism and related issues](https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-does-the-united-methodist-church-say-about-racism). The story headlines the call by the Council of Bishops to “name the egregious sin of racism and white supremacy and join together to take a stand against the oppression and injustice that is killing persons of color.”

The United Methodist Church as a corporate body has spoken about racism and issued resolutions and principles related to it. The church’s general agencies have addressed the same. This [link gives a snapshot of how some of the general agencies of the United Methodist Church have addressed racism.](https://docs.google.com/document/d/11F2eq9YhBIvmDSOsGWX2fV6XolBYjTfxLs5yb_Y3krk/edit?usp=sharing) The link also gives a sample of the most important official statements of the church on the matter.

The denominational discourse on racism mirror the public discourse “against racism” and on “anti-racism”, as well as the growing realization of how deeply connected and implicated slavery, colonialism and racism are to each other. This discourse in church and society are bringing in sharper focus the assertion that anti-slavery, anti-colonialism (and decolonization) and anti-racism belong to the acts from which United Methodists have been asked by the General Conference of the United Methodist Church to heal, to repent from and to repair and redress. The two major acts of repentance that The United Methodist Church has undertaken refer to its complicity to racism and the [subjugation of tribal and indigenous peoples](https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions/trail-of-repentance-and-healing-3324).

The United Methodist Church—General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) has recently launched a [webinar series addressing the matter of reparations](https://www.umcjustice.org/news-and-stories/reparations-remembering-repairing-and-re-imagining-1318). It follows an [earlier webinar series that exposed pre-existing disparities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic](https://www.umcjustice.org/what-you-can-do/seminar-program/covid-19-webinars). The webinars underlined systemic racism and discrimination. Staff at GBCS are in the process of articulating both theological grounding, definitions and programmatic focus within programming and advocacy through a lens of racial justice.  Staff collaborating within the Church, within the agency, at ecumenical tables, and with faith partners within the US and around the world on racial equity and the eradication of racism, colonialism, xenophobia at all levels within the United Methodist Church and within the societies around the world.

The collective resolve of the general agencies of The United Methodist Church to address racism in all its forms can be summed up in the [“General Secretaries Table: Statement Against Racism,](https://www.umcjustice.org/news-and-stories/general-secretaries-table-statement-on-racism-1057)” issued on 20 June 2020. The statement spoke of United Methodist work against racism in society as well as in its own structure and ministry.

The statement, in part, said: “We confess that we have work to do in our own agencies. We commit to look with new eyes and renewed commitment at matters relating to staffing, the make-up and leadership of our boards of directors and the allocation of resources to the important work of racial justice and equity. Our current use of tools like tracking racial diversity, applying standards of pay equity and codes of conduct is not enough to transform majority white institutions into places where persons of color are certain that their gifts and talents will be respected and honored. We will do more. We confess that we have worked individually and in separate programs on the interrelated systems that threaten the lives of African Americans and other people of color. We commit to support each other in the work of elimination of institutional racism and acknowledge that this is the work of the whole church and all of our agencies.”

**F. GENERAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR**

1) Popularize the Durban Declaration and Program of Action. The DDPA is a virtually unknown document to the public. As an agreed document coming out of a UN world conference, the United Nations must popularize it everywhere. In the interest of transparency, its report on the implementation of the DDPA should include information about where the UN has distributed copies of the document and what it has done to promote the program of action.

2) All UN resolutions on strengthening DDPA outreach and information must be implemented and the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights should publish reports showing implementation.

3) The existing programme budget adopted by the UN General Assembly that provides for the staffing of the anti-racial discrimination section of the OHCHR, in particular staff to work on the Durban follow-up mechanisms and the anti-racism work. The Human Rights Council must inquire in its session why this is so when the High Commissioner for Human Rights reports to the Council.

4) The UN General Assembly has since 2014 adopted resolutions with the following text included, like this one from Dec 2020, 75/237. The Special Rapporteur must underscore its urgency and implementation.

” 8. Requests the Human Rights Council to consider, at its forty-sixth session, the question of developing a multi-year programme of activities to provide for the renewed and strengthened outreach activities needed to inform and mobilize the global public in support of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and to strengthen awareness of the contribution that they have made in the struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, in consultation with Member States, national human rights institutions, relevant civil society organizations and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.”

5. Act on the proposals made by the Group of Eminent Independent Experts on DDPA implementation regarding the development of an outreach programme for DDPA advocacy and information:

” 13. The Group recommends to the Human Rights Council to develop and adopt at its forthcoming sessions a comprehensive multiyear outreach programme that can contribute to the preparations for the 20th anniversary and beyond and include a system wide UN coordination and support for the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action outreach, activation of UN information centres, wider dissemination of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in official and non-official languages, engagement with universities and other educational entities and schools for the inclusion of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in their curriculum, promoting outreach through libraries, researching and giving publicity to positive examples of Durban Declaration and Programme of Action implementation, production of education and publicity material on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, including youth friendly material, engagement with news media, supporting civil society networking, engaging with social media and also to include possibilities for seminars and strategy meetings at both the international and regional level.”

6. We stress as well what has been stressed by the Intergovernmental Working Group on DDPA implementation in its conclusions adopted by consensus in October 2020:

” (e) Emphasizes the critical importance of the full implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and to increasing public awareness and support for the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action;

(f) Noting with concern that lack of public knowledge about the content of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action has constituted a serious obstacle towards generating political will for its full and effective implementation;

63. Requests that the concrete proposals by the Group of Eminent Independent Experts be included in the preparation of an active outreach programme for DDPA information and advocacy as contained in the report of the sixth session of the Group and invites the Group of Independent Eminent Experts to further develop on its proposals in consultation with states, experts and civil society organizations.

7. We support the Special Rapporteur’s repeated stress on the importance of the DDPA but that a UN Programme that is not known cannot be implemented successfully. Current impediments to the implementation of the DDPA should be identified and rectified in a manner that is transparent and accountable. The 20th anniversary of the DDPA must be an occasion for a major information and advocacy effort for the DDPA.