

Agency Summary

**Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns  
Report to the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008)**

The committee is composed of twelve regular members representing African Americans, Native Americans, Latina/o Americans, Asian Americans, Middle Eastern Americans, and European Americans.

The 2006-08 membership of the committee is as follows:

Noushin Framke, Chairperson	Middle Eastern, at-large
Irvin Porter, Vice Chairperson	Native American Consulting Committee
Judith Pingel, Secretary	Native American, at large
Eugene Turner, Chair, Resource and Referral Subcommittee	National Black Presbyterian Caucus
John Spangler, Chair, Study and Comment subcommittee	European American, at-large
Mauricio Chacón	National Hispanic/Latino Caucus
Adel Malek	Middle Eastern Caucus
Patricia Lee, Liaison to ACSWP	National Asian Caucus
Adel Malek	National Middle Eastern Caucus
Jean Kim, Liaison to ACWC	Asian, at-large
Dale Lindsay Morgan	GAC Executive Committee

Jacquie Lyman was appointed GAC representative to ACREC in September 2007.

As of December 2007, the committee had two vacancies.

Liaisons to ACREC are:

Esperanza Guajardo, Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)  
Jerri Rodewald, Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC)  
Ruth-Aimee Belonni-Rosario, Racial Ethnic Young Women Together (REYWT)

1. *Assigned functions*

The Advocacy Committee on Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) works to fulfill its General Assembly mandate to provide advocacy and monitoring on issues of concern to people of color in both church and society. The committee evaluates social trends in church and society, and provides advice and counsel to the General Assembly (GA) and General Assembly Council (GAC). The committee addresses issues, including civil rights, racial justice, environmental justice, economic justice, public education, law enforcement, health care, employment and housing, as they impact communities of color. The committee also monitors the implementation of programs and policies approved by the church that impact the participation and quality of life for people of color within the church. The committee works in close cooperation with other agencies and entities within the church, including the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC) and the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP), to fulfill its

responsibilities. The ACREC's assigned functions, as stated in the *GAC Manual of Operations* include:

- a. Prepare policy statements, resolutions, recommendations, reports, and advice and counsel memoranda on racial ethnic concerns to the General Assembly at the request of the General Assembly, the General Assembly Council, or on its own initiative.
- b. Advise the General Assembly Council on matters of racial ethnic concerns including statements concerning pressing issues that the council may wish to consider between meetings of the General Assembly.
- c. Provide advice and counsel to the General Assembly and its committees on overtures, commissioners' resolutions, reports, and actions before the General Assembly that impact issues of racial ethnic concern.
- d. Assist the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy in maintaining an up-to-date and accurate compilation of General Assembly policy on racial ethnic concerns and provide information to the church as requested.
- e. Provide the Stated Clerk, the Moderator of the General Assembly, and the Executive Director of the General Assembly Council with information as they fulfill their responsibilities to communicate and interpret General Assembly policies on racial ethnic concerns.
- f. Monitor the implementation of racial justice policies and programs relative to racial ethnic concerns.
- g. Through advocacy maintain a strong prophetic witness to the church and for the church on existing and emerging issues of racial ethnic concern.

The work of the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) is coordinated through the Office of the General Assembly Council by the Deputy Executive Director of the General Assembly Council. The committee has direct access to the General Assembly and its chair has corresponding member status with the General Assembly Council and with the General Assembly.

## 2. *Accomplishments*

a. The Committee held four regularly scheduled meetings in 2006: January 19 – 22, in Louisville, KY, a joint meeting with the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns; March 30 – April 1 in Louisville, KY, a joint meeting with the National Cross Caucus; August 10 – 13 in Louisville and November 16 – 19 at McCormick Seminary, Chicago, IL. Officers elected in January: Chair–Adel Malek; Vice Chair–Evelyn Kelly; Secretary– Judith Armour Pingel; Resource & Referral Subcommittee Chair–Eugene Turner; and Study & Comment Subcommittee Chair–John Spangler.

b. ACREC provided Advice and Counsel to the 217<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, in accordance with its charter. The committee submitted two resolutions--one in support of

the Fair Food Campaign, and a Joint Resolution on the Women of Color Consultation, with the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC). Both resolutions were adopted by the Assembly. The Committee also submitted its first report on the Climate for Change assessment and consultation with the executives of the six corporate entities related to the General Assembly.

c. In the January 2006 meeting ACREC continued its education to understand cultural proficiency with DeBorah Gilbert White, Associate for Cultural Proficiency (GAC); and immigration issues with Julia Thorne, Manager for Immigration Issues (OGA). In joint session with ACWC, the committees met with Joseph Small to discuss concerns related to the Study Guide on the Belhar Confession and the Trinity Paper. The committees also identified areas of common interest and concern.

The March 2006 meeting featured a forum with the National Korean Presbyterian Council on Overture 35, which proposed a non-geographic Korean Synod. In joint session with the National Cross Caucus, the two groups discussed strategies to strengthen their relationships and possible responses to the disaster in New Orleans and the Gulf coast following hurricane Katrina.

In August 2006, in accordance with Manual of Operations revisions to accommodate the new General Assembly biennial schedule, the committee elected officers: Chair – Adel Malek, Vice Chair – Eugene Turner; Secretary-Judith Armour Pingel; Resource and Referral Subcommittee Chair – Eugene Turner; and Study and Comment Sub-committee Chair – John Spangler. The committee held annual consultations with the Executive Director of Project Equality, Carlos Salazar and Director of the Washington Office, PCUSA, Elenora Giddings Ivory; and heard a report on the GAC downsizing and reorganization. The committee voted to send correspondence to Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick, Moderator Joan Gray and Executive Director Linda Valentine concerning on-going issues in Israel/Palestine.

The November 2006 meeting, held at McCormick Seminary featured a forum with representatives of the Committee on Theological Education, OGA and GAC staff, and representatives of the McCormick community, concerning issues related to theological education, candidacy, call and ordination of people of color.

d. The Committee held three regularly scheduled meetings in 2007: February 15 – 17 in Louisville; July 8 – 11 in Los Angeles, CA; and November 16 – 19 in Merida, Mexico, in the Yucatan.

At the February 2007 meeting ACREC hosted a forum exploring the church's response to the disaster in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, and the continuing challenges facing the region. Participants included Jean Marie Peacock, representing South Louisiana Presbytery and former Vice Moderator, Susan Ryan, Director of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) and John Robinson, Regional PDA Coordinator. Discussion following the forum provided framework for a joint resolution with ACSWP to the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008). ACWC, meeting concurrently, also attended the forum, along with several other GAC staff. In preparation for the Fall meeting in Merida, the committee watched a DVD entitled *Letters from the Other Side*, which highlighted the plight of women left in Mexico when husbands and children migrate to the U.S.

In July 2007 the committee heard reports from the Climate for Change working group, the Joint Women of Color Consultation task force, and a report from ACSWP outlining their proposal for a joint resolution on Katrina. ACREC agreed to send an action to the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in response to the Supreme Courts decision striking down voluntary desegregation plans in Louisville and Seattle school districts.

The Fall 2007 meeting, a joint meeting with ACWC, was held in Merida, Mexico, which is located in the Yucatan. The primary purpose for this meeting was to support ACREC's on-going education and information gathering on immigration issues, to understand the factors that push migration, the influence of globalization on the local economy, social environment and culture. The committees met with seminary faculty and students; visited a Mayan community where they were welcomed by the local Presbyterian congregation and heard from representatives of Indemaya, a state agency working to improve economic conditions for Mayan communities and protect indigenous Mayan culture. The committees also toured Chichen Itza and heard from representatives of grass roots organizations working on migration issues in the region. As an outcome of this meeting ACREC voted to work with MRTI to address exorbitant remittance fees, specifically looking at the practices of Western Union.

d. Ecumenical Multicultural Conference – July 11 – 15, 2007, Los Angeles, CA

1) ACREC held a pre-conference forum on July 11, 2007. The purpose was to inform participants about the role of the Advocacy Committee, to hear about the recent work of ACREC and to share ideas/concerns in dialogue about key issues impacting people of color in the PC (USA). Facilitators were Virstan Choy, Interim Director of the Center for Asian American Ministries and Visiting Professor of Ministry, McCormick Theological Seminary, and Barbara Campbell Davis, Executive Presbyter and Stated Clerk of Presbytery of New Hope.

2) ACREC also hosted a workshop at the Conference entitled Race and Religious Pluralism: New Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This workshop examined some of the dynamics that are changing the cultural landscape of our society, explored the challenges of living in diversity, and offered modes for encouraging cross-cultural, cross-racial dialogue. This workshop was facilitated by Michael Livingston, Executive Director, International Council of Community Churches; President, National Council of Churches USA; and member of New Brunswick Presbytery.

e. ACREC will be reviewed at the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008). The following members and former members were appointed as the Self-Study team: Judith Armour Pingel, chair; Evelyn Kelly, Fahed Abu Akel, John Spangler, Mauricio Chacon, and Noushin Framke. The team met July 11, 2007 for planning purposes.

f. Responses to Referral

1) *2004 Referral: Item 07-08. Report, Creating a Climate for Change in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Recommendation 3.a., That the General Assembly Encourage All PC(USA) Corporate Agencies to Discontinue Utilization of the Term, "Racial Ethnic," and Replace Such Reference with, "Emerging Majorities"—From the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns Task Force to Examine GA Entities (Minutes, 2004, Part I, pp. 51, 540).*

**Response:** After giving further consideration to the recommendation, ACREC voted at its Nov. 12 –13 meeting in Atlanta, GA, to take no further action to change the usage of the term Racial Ethnic in the PC(USA).

2) *2006 Referral: Item 08-12. Joint Resolution Regarding the Women of Color Consultation Report and Recommendations, Recommendation 1. Create a Task Force to Respond to the Recommendations in the Women of Color Consultation Report—From the Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns and the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (Minutes, 2006, Part I, pp. 36–37, 677–706)*

**Response:** See *Hearing and Singing New Songs to God*, report of the Joint Task Force on the Women of Color Consultation to the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008).

3) *2006 Referral: Item 10-09. Commissioners’ Resolution. On Closing the Chef Menteur Landfill in New Orleans—(Minutes, 2006, Part I, pp. 49, 50, 941–42).*

**Response:** See *Struck Down, But Not Destroyed: From Hurricane Katrina to a More Equitable Future*, joint resolution with the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) to the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008).

g. ACREC is sending the following new items of business to the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008):

- 1) Resolution to Create a Committee to Study the Belhar Confession
- 2) Struck Down, But Not Destroyed: From Hurricane Katrina to a More Equitable Future - joint resolution with ACSWP
- 3) 2008 Creating a Climate for Change, report and recommendations
- 4) Public Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Resolution

3. ACREC took the opportunity in its final meeting with Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church USA, General Assembly on January 23, 2008 to express its gratitude for his faithful service and his support for the work of the Advocacy Committees:

*Cliff, how does one thank the “pope”?*

*I am speaking for the committees gathered here, and ACREC in particular. This is a wonderful opportunity for all of us to express thanks to you, Cliff, for having served the Presbyterian Church USA, well.*

*We thank you for your generous spirit, your availability to these committees that carry a heavy duty in helping the PCUSA live out its commitment to justice for all people.*

*Cliff, you have shown in your ministry as Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, that you care for the church and its ministry of justice. You are a loving person and it shows in your ministry.*

*Your influence is both national and international. You are well known throughout the ecumenical church world, and greatly appreciated by the way you have related to the church in the global community.*

*Your welcoming of all God's people is admirable.*

*As part of your staff, we became friends and colleagues, and it was a joy and a privilege.*

*It is a great honor to present this small gift to you on behalf of ACREC expressing appreciation to you for the support you have given to the advocacy ministry of ACREC.*

(Comments prepared by Eugene Turner)