

**A RESOLUTION OF RESPONSE TO SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
AND
NEW YORK CONFERENCE ANTI-RACISM AFFIRMATION**

This resolution calls upon the New York Conference to acknowledge the sin of racism in all its forms and affirm its commitment to be an Anti-Racism Conference of the United Church of Christ. We further call upon the New York Conference to publicly denounce the actions of Theta Tau Fraternity and Syracuse University as it relates to blatant racist behaviors and systemic racism on the Syracuse University campus.

WHEREAS Sacred Scripture teaches us that “*there are many members, yet one body*” (1 Corinthians 12:20), and Jesus taught his disciples that we shall “*...love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.*” (Luke 10:27), and that God “*created humankind in God’s image in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them*” (Genesis 1:27); and

WHEREAS the letter to the Philippians teaches us that we are to “*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves*” (Philippians 2:3) which causes us, as believers, to proclaim with Paul that “*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) thus heeding the warning in the First Letter of John that “*whoever hates another believer is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has brought on blindness*” (1 John 2:11); and

WHEREAS on Wednesday, April 18, 2018, offensive, racist, anti-Semitic and homophobic videos made by members of the Theta Tau fraternity of Syracuse University were made public, prompting student protests on the Syracuse campus as well as campuses across the country; and

WHEREAS Syracuse University students of color have testified that the actions of Theta Tau are “a mere manifestation of the roots of systemic white supremacy,” within the institution, (April 25 Campus Conversation publication)¹; and

WHEREAS the administration of Syracuse University should be commended for their swift response and expulsion of the Theta Tau fraternity; however more must be done to address the oppressive environment that continues to exist on the school’s campus, including but not limited to: the lack of diversity in faculty hiring, underfunded programs for minority communities, building accessibility issues and racially-oppressive actions by professors, (April 25 Campus Conversation publication)¹; and

¹ April 25 Campus Conversation Recap, <https://news.syr.edu/2018/05/april-25-campus-conversation-recap/>

WHEREAS the United Church of Christ is deeply committed to interfaith relationships and General Synods have confessed to the sin of anti-Semitism and proclaimed its renunciation (GS 23 [2001])² and has declared itself to be an Anti-Racism Church, encouraging all Conferences, Associations and local churches to work in concert to dismantle racism in the church and in society (GS 24 [2002])³

WHEREAS the New York Conference offices are located less than 5 miles from the Syracuse University campus and the Fifty-fifth New York Conference Annual Meeting is taking place in the city of Syracuse, NY; and

WHEREAS the New York Conference is one of the most racially diverse Conferences within the United Church of Christ; and

WHEREAS we understand that Anti-Racism is defined as “the **active process** of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.”⁴

WHEREAS the New York Conference has sought to engage in this active process and has shown leadership among many United Church of Christ conferences by initiating the New & Right Spirit Anti-Racism program, training facilitators and making dismantling racism a priority;

WHEREAS we acknowledge that the work of confronting racist actions and eliminating the ongoing plague of systemic racism is a continuous effort and we must be vigilant in our labors and refuse to remain silent in addressing and confronting acts of racism in our city, churches and community.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the New York Conference, its Associations, and its local churches affirm its commitment to be an Anti-Racism Conference by engaging in the following active processes:

- 1) Participate in the New & Right Spirit Anti-Racism program so as to better understand the historic and systemic racism of our nation, as well as the deep impact white privilege has had on people of color; and

² Resolution: Anti-Semitism, *Minutes of the Twenty-third General Synod*, pp. 11-12, <http://www.ucc.org/assets/pdfs/synod/g23.pdf>

³ Resolution: Calling the United Church of Christ to be an Anti-Racist Church, *Minutes of the Twenty-fourth General Synod*, <http://uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/CALLING-THE-UNITED-CHURCH-OF-CHRIST-TO-BE-AN-ANTI-RACIST-CHURCH.pdf>

⁴ NAC International Perspectives: Women and Global Solidarity, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/cared/antiracismdefined>

- 2) Engage in humble and intentional multiracial conversations to better understand the impact of racism and white privilege at the local church level; and
- 3) Conduct a “White Audit”⁵ of our church facilities and examine ways that the overwhelming whiteness of our churches could be barriers to the inclusion and welcome of people of color;
- 4) Identify and eliminate racism within its systems, organizational structures, policies, practices, and attitudes to ensure there are no barriers to inclusivity; and

further

BE IT RESOLVED that we call upon the Syracuse University Administration and Trustees to transform the systems of oppression that contribute to the suffering of marginalized campus communities, by holding University staff, students and faculty accountable for actions and behaviors intended to demean, insult and demoralize, and further commit to effectively resolving all instances of injustice within the school’s campus and community; further

BE IT RESOLVED that not later than September 3, 2018, the leadership of the New York Conference provide Syracuse University and Mr. Sam Ogozalek, Editor in Chief of the University student-run newspaper, The Daily Orange with a copy of this Resolution; further

BE IT RESOLVED that not later than September 3, 2018, the Conference Minister issue a statement to University Chancellor Kent Syverud that addresses the following:

1. Denounce the racist actions of Theta Tau Fraternity;
2. Take swift and deliberate actions to implement the demands for safety, inclusion and equality presented to the administration by the RecognizeUS student organization;
3. Provide mandatory Cultural Competency training for all University faculty and staff;
4. Offer the assistance of our New & Right Spirit Anti-Racism facilitators to help with engaging in campus-wide conversations around racism and white privilege;
5. That the administration work alongside students and faculty from marginalized communities to conduct a University-wide “White Audit”⁴ for the purpose of examining and identifying barriers to inclusivity across the Syracuse campus.

Respectfully,

New & Right Spirit Facilitators:

Pierre Albrecht-Carrie

Dominique Atchison

Vicki Burtson

Amy Harbo

Peter Nilsson

Gary Smith

⁵ UCC Curriculum: *White Privilege: Let’s Talk—A Resource for Transformational Dialogue, Chapter 4.*

Marsha Williams