



## Message from the Consultation on Resisting Cultures of Discrimination, Authoritarianism and Nationalism

This is a pivotal moment in global history, and Christians will be judged by how we stand with the most marginalized in our midst. As such, we, the attendees at the Resisting Cultures of Discrimination, Authoritarianism and Nationalism Consultation in Bangkok, Thailand, in December 2018 have discerned and witnessed a growing global trend towards racism, nationalism and authoritarianism. We are deeply troubled by this insidious rise of empire. We echo the words Dr. Allan Boesak offered in his keynote address to us that we are called to “discern, challenge, and dismantle the idolatrous, blasphemous nature of empire.” We have discerned this to be a *kairos* moment when God has issued a challenge for decisive action. The appropriate theological response at this moment requires *status confessionis*.

In our time together as a consultation, we heard of mutual experiences as well as struggles unique to our distinctive contexts. Particular attention was focused on disrupting and dismantling hegemonic theological and biblical norms. As we contrasted the struggles for justice, equality, equity and dignity against the backdrop of the current worldwide phenomenon of exclusionary versions of nationhood it became clear that they are shaped by dominant and dominating religious and cultural resources. These include the politics of fear, xenophobia and hatred, the demonization of religious and ethnic minorities and oppressed communities, the suppression of rights and freedom for invented threats to national security, the development of policies advocating national integration and the utter disregard for democratic institutions. We believe these are detrimental not only to the marginalized but also to the moral integrity of our world.

As such, our focus included and went beyond reinterpreting the Bible and theological doctrines and considered how the tradition has undergirded and shaped cultural imperialism and how we might faithfully challenge these core, underlined norms. We recognized the commonality of shared experiences of oppression of people of African descent in the United States and Dalit communities in India, and we made ourselves conscious of similar experiences of other marginalized communities globally, and we affirm the need for an intersectional approach to these expressions of systemic evil.

We declare that this manifests in the persistent and worsening experiences of people of African descent in the Americas, Dalits in India and indigenous peoples globally. We note the unmitigated attacks and violence on Dalits by casteists; the murder of Black men and women by governmental agents and hate/white nationalist groups that have been committed and encouraged by sometimes tacit, sometimes explicit, political and governmental consent. We recognize the escalating violence, the rape, sexual and reproductive violence against Dalit and Black women and girls in our respective nations. We noted the limited access to adequate housing, clean water and healthy food; the proliferation of voter suppression, gerrymandering and other tactics that limit access to electoral power; the increase of income inequality; failing health and education systems and the ghettoization of our peoples within our contexts. Simply put, we note the failure to recognize Dalits and people of African descent as equal human beings fully worthy of human dignity.

We conclude that such dehumanization, denigration and devaluation of any human being is sin. Such behavior violates a Christian faith that all human beings are created equally in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27). Rather, we understand our faith to emphasize that we are called to treat all humanity as neighbours in ways that we would wish to be treated (Leviticus 19:18b; 33-34), called by God to intervene on behalf of one another when found in need (Luke 6:27-31), and that our treatment of those deemed the least among us evidences our Christian covenant with God and one another

(Matthew 25:31-46). The unmasking of dehumanizing tendencies demonstrates that the church has been, in the least complicit, and too often active in creating, fostering and accepting such sin. We believe that the only moral response is for the church to confess, repent and offer reparations.

We must foster a self-understanding of being church as a community of partners in God's mission. We must affirm that these partnerships are not exclusive but are open and inclusive of all those who seek to be in relationship with God and humanity. We are obligated to be the prophetic witness that voices a strong "no" to these dehumanizing, idolatrous structures and a strong "yes" to alternative, life-giving realities.

As such, we call upon the World Communion of Reformed Churches to act now by implementing programming and engaging the process of *status confessionis*. We ask you to draw international attention to the atrocities committed against, engage in advocacy work around reparations for and boldly work to policies of redress on behalf of these and other impacted communities. We understand this as a call for the church to create, nurture and partner with groups that strive for justice and peace such as the People's Movement, the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, the Civil Society Organization, the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute, the United Nations, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and other similar organizations working to address these concerns. We further request that in addition to action at the level of the General Council, the Executive Committee tasks the Caribbean and North American Area Council, South Asia Region and North East Asia Area Council to address these disturbing trends in the respective regions.

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