

**ITEM C.300**  
**ADVICE AND COUNSEL MEMORANDUM**

**The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns offers the following advice and counsel on Item C.103 REPORT OF THE HISTORICALLY PRESBYTERIAN RACIAL ETHNIC INSTITUTIONS TASK FORCE:**

1. Strikeout the last 2 lines from Recommendation 2, ending with “Historically Presbyterian Racial Ethnic Institutions.” New text would read: “That the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board approve and recommend that the 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly (2016) approve that funds from the Christmas Joy Offering continue to be disbursed to eligible Historically Presbyterian Racial Ethnic Institutions.”
2. Edit Recommendation 1.1 to read: “ Presbyterian racial ethnic institutions primarily serve students *whose access to full educational opportunity has been routinely inhibited by the constructed category of their race as well as by their socioeconomic circumstances.*”

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) acknowledges the exceptional and countless contributions of the racial ethnic schools in the United States by serving minority constituencies who are often disproportionately underprivileged. Through education, faith nurture, and leadership development, Historically Presbyterian Racial Ethnic Institutions were and remain one of the most effective intervention means by which the Presbyterian Church (USA) helps to transform society and directly affects the socioeconomic emancipation of numerous children of God and their communities.

ACREC continues to lift up and support the Historically Presbyterian Racial Ethnic Institutions for their historic role that demonstrates the active and essential partnership of Presbyterians with disadvantaged communities to affect racial equality, diversity, community development, and societal change.

Moreover, ACREC continues to support the mission of our Historically Presbyterian Racial Ethnic Institutions because the need for such community engagement and societal transformation for equal access to education, meaningful community development, and socioeconomic freedom are greater now than ever before despite a long, long journey towards equality, and because much unnecessary suffering, oppression, and white privilege that still prevail in our society today.

The Task Force begins with an ambiguous premise in the first paragraph:

“In response to its biblical and theological call, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is committed to increasing the diversity and inclusivity of the PC (USA) and building up the whole body of Christ. One of the ways that the church has historically demonstrated its commitment to diversity and inclusivity is in its support of racial ethnic education.”

While this written commitment is important, the stated mission of the church, including PCUSA, is not simply administrative or organizational, but rather transformational in nature. Our mission is not to be self-serving and focused inwardly, but we are called to focus outwardly.

Diversity is indeed a valued theological and organizational goal of the church, but that in itself is not a mission objective. “Commitment to increasing the diversity and inclusivity of PC (USA)” needs to result in an act of confession and repentance by the 91.2% majority “White” organization which fails to reflect even the diversity within its social context. Our commitments on paper have not yet created the real and meaningful change we as a denomination have repeatedly committed to. Lofty pronouncements and declared promises must be translated in terms of practical ways to benefit the constituencies we claim to serve, and not to benefit and enrich our own bureaucracies, programmatic and staffing structures. More importantly, given the realities of the widening gap between the rich and poor and between the “white”

**PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY BOARD**  
**April 15-17, 2013**  
**Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns**

and “non-white” we cannot afford to seek ways to replenish our storage of institutional programs to enrich our organization and ensure the survival of church programs while starving the minority constituencies, gutting transformative entities, and further risking the viability of struggling educational missions. We simply cannot afford to divert much needed free will offering from the needs of the predominantly “non-white” disadvantaged minority in order to enrich the organizational interests of the predominantly rich majority “white”.

In the second part of the paragraph the Task Force presents a confusing stance: “The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board and the General Assembly have reaffirmed the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s commitment to the church’s support of racial ethnic education through the Institutional Relationship Agreement between the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Historically Presbyterian Racial Ethnic Institutions and through disbursements from the Christmas Joy Offering.”

While it is admirable to make such a statement, how does the Task Force recommend to divert much needed funding away from this stated commitment to an internal mission agency (PMA) by 2024?

How can we affirm our commitment to support racial ethnic education but end our financial commitment to Historically Presbyterian Racial Ethnic Institutions? Diverting much needed funding will only signal a continued commitment to seek the survival and self-interest of one of our mission agencies while risking the demise of our R/E Schools.

We urge PMA Board to reject this recommendation and acknowledge that it is time to double up and multiply our financial commitment and every other means of support to help transform our communities by meeting the needs of marginalized communities to break free from the vicious cycle of poverty and disenfranchisement. Diverting much needed financial support to PMA is self-serving and inwardly focused.

The main objective of the Task Force was: “develop a brief strategy document that describes the characteristics of racial ethnic schools and colleges that produce racial ethnic leaders in today’s intercultural society.”

This objective was met as described in Task Force recommendations. However, the Task Force recommendation # 2 that calls for diverting much needed funding by 2024 to PMA is counterproductive and detrimental to the Historically Presbyterian Racial Ethnic Institutions, and is not in anyway related to the main objective of the Task Force.

Recommendation 2 also is detrimental to the stated objective because this objective to “produce racial ethnic leaders in today’s intercultural society” is the primary function and objective of the Historically Presbyterian Racial Ethnic Institutions in the form of higher education. Meanwhile, other church run leadership programs, like any other PMA programs, are limited by scope, reach, and therefore by influence. PMA programs are largely designed to focus on the church programmatic needs with little room for complex and specialized needs that are met by a college or university. Church programs generally target and impact mostly the Presbyterian membership, while educational institutions reach out to all members of society irrespective of their religious, faith, or non-faith-based orientation. Hence, our Historically Presbyterian Racial Ethnic Institutions are able to influence and impact the daily societal needs and realities, which a church program will largely miss. It is a comparison between a college education/degree and a conference or seminar on Christian/Presbyterian leadership. It is the difference a college can make by offering discounted tuition or scholarship towards an education/degree versus a discounted registration or scholarship to attend a church conference. It goes without saying that college education is more practical, foundational, and instrumental than a leadership development conference or seminar.

Again, the report highlights how Recommendation 2 contradicts with the Task Force’s self stated

**PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY BOARD**  
**April 15-17, 2013**  
**Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns**

objectives:

The Historically Presbyterian Racial Ethnic Institutions Task Force met in the fall of 2014 and considered:

- 1) How the PC(USA) can remain true to its commitment to Historically Presbyterian Racial Ethnic Institutions while considering how other Presbyterian racial ethnic educational institutions can become related to the PC(USA) and be considered for support;
- 2) and to define and interpret the standards for racial ethnic schools related to the PC (USA) and determine the characteristics of schools that produce racial ethnic leaders in today's multiracial society.

“Remaining true to its commitment” cannot be implemented by diverting a free will offering to benefit PMA. There is a clear conflict of interest in requesting PMA Board to approve such a self-serving measure while alienating racial ethnic constituencies and risking historic contributions to enrich a church leadership program. In addition, “define and interpret the standards” does not explain diverting away financial resources in the form of a popular and successful free will offering for a programmatic church function already funded by the church.

The Task Force report documents that only FIVE out of EIGHT schools are still operational. It is no secret that the THREE Historically Presbyterian Racial Ethnic Institutions Schools were closed and/or lost accreditation mostly due to lack of funding.

The Task Force report already documents that the church pursued double standards when it comes to education:

“For many years the church discouraged racial ethnic schools and colleges from building endowments. The historical document from the former PC (USA) General Assembly Mission Council, *Strategy for Minority Education (1975)*, states, “Endowment funds for those institutions formerly related to the Board of National Missions of the United Presbyterian Church are virtually nil since the Board always told those institutions that the church was their living endowment.” Such an approach distinguished minority institutions from other church-related institutions, and, as a result, when church action made them independent decades ago, they had few actual reserves and faced significant challenges in developing themselves. Therefore, the leaders of these institutions have needed to devote enormous time and energy to address financial issues.”

Moreover, here again it is obvious how Recommendation 2 could be viewed as disingenuous and counterproductive to the mission and future of the remaining five racial ethnic schools. Given the ethos and objectives of the Christmas Joy Offering as a free will charitable giving that is designed to supplement the mission of the church that does not benefit from other sources of church funding. If approved, the original recommendation could be interpreted as a hostile and greedy takeover by a church program agency, which despite reduction in funding remains well endowed and supported entity of the church. The Christmas Joy Offering is an opportunity for Presbyterians to give joyfully a freewill offering that affects directly specific needs, and was not designed to fund church programs that already benefit from multiple established sources of income from the church.