

**ITEM B.207**  
**FOR INFORMATION**

**BLACK LIVES MATTER**

In the wake of the deaths of Michel Brown and Eric Garner, "Black Lives Matter" became a rallying cry for millions of people who used the streets and social media to speak against violence in African American communities and affirm to the nation that "Black Lives Matter."

In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), we believe that all lives matter to God, as "God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God's image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community" (10.3, A Brief Statement of Faith, *Book of Confessions*). The "Black Lives Matter" movement aims to communicate the forms of racial injustice that mostly targets and deprives African American communities of basic human rights and dignity.

Presbyterians across the nation have engaged in protests and demonstrations following the Michael Brown verdict and other recent racial justice cases. Two Princeton Theological Seminary student groups held a march to protest the failure of grand juries to return indictments in the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner. Craig Barnes, President of Princeton Theological Seminary, joined the march with students from the Association of Black Seminarians and the Community Action Network. Barnes said, "The recent events in Ferguson, Missouri, and elsewhere have brought great pain, sorrow, and frustration to our community, and many of our students are seeking a constructive way to make their voices heard. I want to show my solidarity with [these students] as they advocate for the changes in our society that are necessary to prevent these tragedies on our streets."

Presidents of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seminaries, wrote a response affirming the call "to arise from the embers of silence and speak up and speak out as the prophet of old, 'let justice run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream' (Amos 5:24)."

This was in response to more than thirty African American deans and presidents of theological schools who signed the letter regarding racial justice issues. Several Chicago churches, including Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago, led protests after a Sunday morning worship service, following the grand jury decisions in New York and Ferguson. Chicago mayoral candidate Chuy Garcia announced that he would join in the peaceful protests with Fourth Presbyterian Church, St. James Episcopal Cathedral, Chicago Sinai Congregation, Holy Name Cathedral and Shambhala Center. The five churches and religious centers joined together for a walk for justice.

<http://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/Chicago-Churches-Plan-Protests-After-Sunday-Services-285012851.html>

Statements were also released by the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns and the National Hispanic/Latino Presbyterian Caucus and posted by the Presbyterian Outlook.

<http://pres-outlook.org/2014/11/statement-advocacy-committee-racial-ethnic-concerns>

<http://pres-outlook.org/2014/12/letter-hispaniclatino-national-presbyterian-caucus-re-michael-brown-eric-garner-advent>

Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly said, "This decision calls the whole church to reflect seriously about the communities and the racial climate we have created in this country. We need a society where everyone is treated with dignity and valued, where there is no fear of walking down the

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street. We and the places where we live have fallen short of that. This decision calls the whole church to reflect seriously about the communities and the racial climate we have created in this country."

<https://www.pcusa.org/news/2014/11/24/pcusa-stated-clerk-responds-ferguson-grand-jury>

In Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries in the Presbyterian Mission Agency our goal is to create an environment where racial ethnic persons, new immigrants, and women can serve fully in ministry and leadership in the church and in society. This includes offering cultural competency trainings to eliminate institutional racism and gender bias, so that there are opportunities for women, racial ethnic persons, and new immigrants, opening doors for individuals and groups. We will walk with racial ethnic persons, new immigrants, and women and share with the church that we believe that the light of Christ is in these Presbyterians. We are people who believe that the well-being of racial ethnic persons, new immigrants, women and all of God's people is connected with our own.

May our participation in valuing the lives of our African American sisters and brothers, dismantling racism and increasing cultural competency help the PC(USA) live into its calling as the beloved community of God.