

# Challenging Racism

## Position Paper

Challenging Racism Common Concern Network  
Iona Community

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The Iona Community's Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commitment reminds us 'that the Gospel commands us to seek peace founded on justice and that costly reconciliation is at the heart of the Gospel.' This includes justice, peace and equity for all peoples. Stories of the woman at the well (John 4: 4-42) and the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37) compel us to follow Jesus' command to learn from 'the other' and to embrace difference. This is our Christian calling and commitment.

## **Our context**

We acknowledge that the membership of the Iona Community is predominantly white. This influences how we operate, the liturgies we create and the programmes we offer. We continue to work to address these challenges and opportunities for inclusive practice.

The Challenging Racism Common Concern Network (CCN) is passionate about projects which advocate for the end of racial injustice in churches and wider society. We seek to develop strategies which challenge racism in all sectors of society including in the church and religious organisations.

This CCN supports Iona Community Members who are challenging racism in their life and work, finding places where racism has gone unchallenged and uncovering hidden or unconscious bias. We accept we may well be the first who need to change.

This position paper is written in response to the rise in racist ideologies across the globe, particularly in the UK, Europe and the USA; the continuing influence of structural racism in UK institutions; and the legacy of slavery which has affected our views on institutions, land, monuments and buildings locally and globally.

We challenge racism at all levels and hope to see an end to endemic racism. We acknowledge that much progress has been made in respect of other historic prejudices. However, for many people from racialised minority ethnic groups significant barriers remain. Through this paper we hope to equip our membership in their own efforts to confront racism and inspire the wider church.

## **Our Acknowledgement**

For Christians committed to love and justice, the increase in racist environments pose a call to action: that we stand against structures of oppression and affirm the dignity of all people. In resisting racism, we embody Christ's vision of a reconciled, inclusive community.

We acknowledge that we have failed in many ways to live up to our Christian calling.

- As a people of faith, we are learning that the only appropriate path to healing and reconciliation is to acknowledge the wrongs that we, the Iona Community as part of the institutional church structure, were and are complicit in perpetuating.
- We understand that the presence and persistence of racism in ourselves and our institutions is the result of the sin of slavery.
- Black lives have been devalued since the era of slavery, and their human dignity continues to be undermined through the economic and legal systems that remain embedded in institutional racism globally. We apologise for benefiting from and continuing to participate in this social, economic, and legal construct.
- We recognize that racism and ethnocentric perspectives can only perpetuate harm.
- We seek reconciliation, recognising the need to building trusting relationships between all peoples, including those from the global majority.

## Our Commitment

**We strive to uphold narratives which heal** rather than promote division, believing that understanding and mutual growth does not happen in polarised discussion.

**We seek to become a listening organisation** by hearing voices from different contexts and building relationships with care, patience. We will ensure our island programmes are reflective of that listening and relational work.

**We will more deeply examine the Community's socio-economic profile** and ask whether its own historic and/or current structures and activities may perhaps be too heavily weighted towards wealth and privilege.

**We will adopt the term global majority** (coined by educator Rosemary Campbell-Stephens) to describe people who are Black, African, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, and update official Community terminology as appropriate.

**We will learn from those within our membership and movement** with personal, professional and collective experience of people who are Black, indigenous, people of colour and those who self-define as the global majority

**We will seek to understand** the ways in which people of different heritage are marginalised and oppressed by exploring our own attitudes and feelings around privilege.

**We will continue to build close relationships** with those of other faiths and backgrounds in our own communities.

**We will review the language** we use in our worship and public communications ensuring that it is inclusive.

**We will review Iona Community liturgies**, recognising and celebrating the work which has historically foregrounded the global majority. We will ensure that future liturgies honour ancestry and heritage giftings.

**We recognise the urgent need to address the ongoing legacies of colonialism and empire** in Europe, North America, the Antipodes and across the African continent. As part of this commitment we will engage with and amplify the voices of Associate Members and others who live with the enduring impact of these histories.

**We will stand alongside those who challenge the increasingly divisive rhetoric** and measures used against all who oppose and challenge government policies. We will therefore:

- Train staff, volunteers and members on diversity and anti-racism.
- Build more and stronger alliances with anti-racist organisations.
- Acknowledge the gap between holding anti-racism values while displaying micro-aggressions, and learn from this to ensure best practice within our Community.
- Use our influence and reach to be advocates for promoting equality among all people regardless of racialised identities through our publications, programmes and communications.

**In all of our work and worship**, we will encourage our membership to reflect on the question: "How can the Iona Community be a better ally with people who are Black, indigenous and people of colour?"

## Contact us

Challenging Racism Common Concern Network

Iona Community

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The Iona Community is an ecumenical Christian movement seeking new ways of living the gospel in today's world through working for peace and social justice rebuilding community and in the renewal of worship. Company No: SC096243  
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