

WDC Anti-Racism Audit Team  
Audit Report Summary, October 2022

**I. Review of WDC demographics, constitution, bylaws, and policies**

A. Demographics:

1. 23% of WDC congregations (12 of 52) are made up primarily of people of color. These congregations' membership make up 7.9% of WDC membership (491 of 6,233).
2. 24% of active credentialed leaders (18 of 75) are people of color, while 15% of positions on elected leadership groups (6 of 40) are filled by people of color.
3. 25% of WDC staff members (2 of 8) are people of color, making up 29% of the FTE (1.45 of 5.05)

**II. Interviews with BIPOC staff and credentialed leaders in WDC**

A. 21 BIPOC leaders in WDC were invited to be interviewed, with 15 participating. These included WDC staff, elected leaders, chaplains, agency directors, and congregational ministers. (Details on process and questions provided in the full report.)

B. Major Themes:

1. Appreciation for WDC. Many interviewed leaders expressed this. They say that they have had positive experiences and relationships within the conference
2. Language competency and language barriers
  - a) Discomfort with English limits access to resources, relationships, leadership
3. Rich gifting of BIPOC members within WDC, for a wide range of tasks and roles
4. Difficulty with conference meetings: scheduling and participation (especially for pastors who have a job outside the church)
5. Theological Concerns
  - a) Several interviewees expressed discomfort with the decisions made at the MCUSA delegate assembly in 2022.
6. Difficulty with education, competence, and intercultural awareness of White members of WDC
  - a) Ignorance of diversity within WDC and within Hispanic population
  - b) Little awareness of how decisions affect those of other cultures
  - c) Lack of engagement with BIPOC colleagues in conference meetings

**III. Assessments from Staff and Leadership Groups**

- A. The Executive board does not have an actionable short- or long-term plan to dismantle racism in WDC, or to develop accountability to communities of color within the conference. There are no formal institutional relationships with groups doing anti-racism work in our region
- B. In 2021, many members of WDC leadership took the IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory), and anti-racism training with Widerstand
- C. Interpretation and translation into Spanish has been an important part of WDC's intercultural work, both translation of documents and interpretation at meetings
- D. WDC has two Hispanic staff members who work regularly with the Spanish-speaking constituency, especially in connecting them with resources and activities
- E. WDC relies heavily on its staff (administrative and ministerial) to support intercultural efforts within the conference.

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- F. The WDC Resource Library has a Texas branch that features mostly Spanish-language resources
- G. The Gifts Discernment Committee attempts to reflect the conference's diversity in the candidates they bring forward for elected positions. It has been noted that further work is required to make Board, Commission, and Committee meetings effective and positive experiences for people of color.
- H. The Boards, Committees, and Commissions have had a widely varying amount of conversation and energy given to questions of intercultural competence and anti-racism.

**IV. Review of WDC constitution, bylaws, policy, and written history**

- A. Constitution, Bylaws, and Policy:
  - 1. Article II, "Our Common Faith and Mission" of The WDC constitution includes the following paragraph: *The Western District Conference seeks to foster a biblical, multicultural vision of the missional church by being inclusive of, walking with, and learning from many cultural and racial/ethnic groups. Desiring to follow the way of Jesus, we seek to dismantle racism and prejudice in our congregations, conference, institutions and communities.*
  - 2. The remainder of the Constitution, Bylaws, and policy do not set out further structures, policies, or procedures that specifically address these commitments.
- B. History:
  - 1. Audit Team member Vicki Penner reviewed the centennial history of WDC, *Prairie People*, with an eye to racism and anti-racism. See full report.
  - 2. The Audit team discovered one article, [Exploring Race and Ethnicity in Western District Conference](#), by John Thiesen.

**V. Suggested Next Steps**

- A. Continue conversations within conference membership on Anti-Racism as this audit was limited in time and scope
- B. Invite an outside entity to build on this audit by doing further assessment and recommendations, in order to get a more objective opinion about how racism has shaped WDC and its constituency, and action steps for moving forward
- C. Ensure that resources available from WDC are available in both English and Spanish
- D. Celebrate the various cultures that exist within WDC by recognizing holidays and/or traditional celebrations
- E. Tell the story of BIPOC involvement in WDC, past and present
- F. Recognize that we have expressed our Anabaptist faith and commitments through a Euro-American cultural lens, and consider how to express our faith in a way that embraces our full cultural diversity
- G. Educate about white supremacy, political/social dynamics, power, dominant culture and how they impact our congregations and communities
- H. Make full report available to constituency.