

## MFSA Organizational Racial Audit Executive Summary

### Introduction

“We seek to create loving communities of kinship precisely to counteract mounting lovelessness, racism, and the cultural disparagement that keeps us apart.”

Greg Boyle, Tattoos of the Heart

What is our Christian response to injustice?

What is the response of Christians to injustice within their own social justice organizations?

These two questions have been the focus of the work of the Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) for the past two years. They are both significant questions for us to explore. Our work is not complete without addressing both questions.

Over the years, MFSA has encouraged the denomination to live into our Social Creed and the Biblical mandate of Jesus to love God and love neighbors, to respond to issues of injustice both within The United Methodist Church and within society. The chosen issues have often been issues that affect the lives of those without power and privilege, and while MFSA has worked to be a voice for others, we have found ourselves failing to include those voices in decision-making.

Elevating these voices means speaking the truth to power. Power is alluring and can bring short term satisfaction to those who seek it. However, the deeper meaning of speaking the truth to power is examining reality, accepting the challenges that point to change, and taking action to begin the journey of transformation

Becoming aware, as MFSA, of the voices that are speaking truth to our power, the board has started to hear these voices and has recognized the harm that we have done as an organization. We have not been effectively addressing issues of race as an organization. We addressed racism in superficial ways, recruiting People of Color to the board but ignoring the embedded white-dominant culture of our organization. This resulted in harmful dynamics that caused most of the People of Color to leave the board. We also started to recognize a pattern of behavior resulting in harm to People of Color during high stress situations like General Conference.

MFSA chooses to remain radically Methodist and to live into the traditional class questions of John Wesley: How have we lived since we were last together? As an organization, we find ourselves asking: How have we failed to live into holiness as a Methodist organization? Examining ourselves as an

organization has led us to undertake this Organizational Racial Audit. We need to reach deeper into who we are and how we work to eliminate injustice not only externally in our world but within our own organization. In this audit, MFSA seeks to understand more clearly the patterns of white dominance and seeks to begin transforming our organizational structure and culture to be anti-racist.

## Racial Audit Themes

Theme 1: MFSA prioritizes white comfort, focusing on “[white saviorism](#)” and being “the good white ones”. This behavior results in [performative allyship](#). It commodifies and renders People of Color invisible.

Theme 2: MFSA functions as an organization of and for white progressives, prioritizing white power and control, which results in a lack of investment in and abdication of responsibility to be accountable to People of Color communities.

Theme 3: MFSA deflects responsibility by comparing itself to the UMC which leads to complacency at times, and at other times self-righteousness. These attitudes insulate MFSA from the critical self-assessment that would lead to the deconstruction of white dominance.

Theme 4: MFSA’s organizational structure and cultural norms are white-centered which prevents it from recognizing and confronting racism. These structures and norms also cause MFSA to burden and undermine People of Color leaders.

Theme 5: MFSA’s scarcity mindset draws attention away from advocacy for racial justice and toward practical measures that center organizational preservation and limit its sense of what is possible

Theme 6: MFSA members tend to operate out of self-righteousness which results in feeling good about themselves without needing to change, take action, and/or be in an accountable relationship with people of color and people of color communities.

## Recommendations

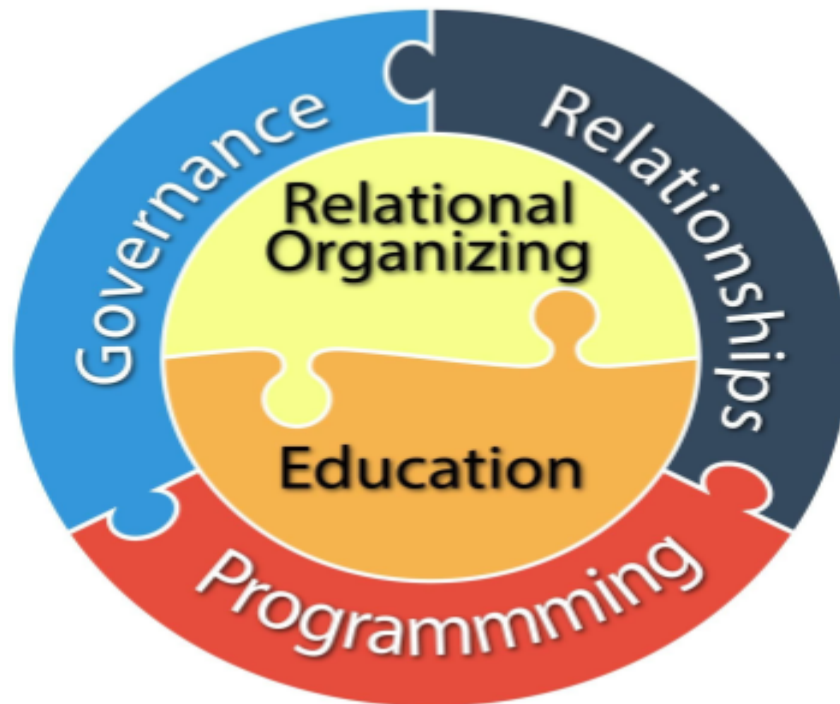
These recommendations are not a checklist to be checked off and forgotten but a transformational shift in MFSA's ways of being. This report is not the conclusion of MFSA’s transformation. It is a roadmap to move us toward transformation. While our audit was focused on white supremacy and racism, we recognize that systems do not exist in a vacuum; therefore, we are also working to dismantle hetero-patriarchy, colonialism, ableism, and all systems of oppression. Our commitment is an intersectional commitment.

All these recommendations are grounded in the commitment that this racial audit work will move MFSA towards the work of dismantling white supremacy within the organization. As we carry out this internal work, we will continue to confront white supremacy in the wider denomination with greater integrity and effectiveness.

This is an imperfect roadmap. It includes timeframes and also allows for the flexibility that is needed to change the culture at its root. This process requires slow, intentional work, and consistency. [Here is a recommended timeline resource.](#)

## Map a way of being...

The first two recommendation areas are centered around a relational organizing model and education and should be seen as foundations from which the other three recommendation areas (governance, programming, and relationships) emerge. It is anticipated that work on a relational organizing model and education will inform and guide how we live into recommendations around governance, programming and relationships. Board and Chapter leadership participation and attendance at Program Council meetings are pivotal to nurturing anti-racist cultural change throughout MFSA



### Recommendation 1 - Relational Organizing Model

MFSA will create a Racial Audit Implementation Team that is a diverse group of board and program council members to help lead the work of implementing the audit recommendations.

#### Part 1A - Relational Organizing Model

##### What will MFSA do?

MFSA will immediately adopt and begin to develop an alternative relational organizing model that...

- moves away from...
  - white male dominated targets
  - the binary view of who is with us and who is against us
  - transactional relationships
- and towards...
  - authentic, accountable, and equitable relationships.

### **How will MFSA achieve this?**

MFSA will achieve this by experimenting with the Board and Program Council in regard to practices around...

- meetings
- consensus building, and
- decision making

that are...

- anti-racist
- anti-colonial, and...
- rooted in authentic, accountable, and equitable relationships

### **Part 1B - How we Evaluate/Self reflect/Assess, Give Feedback, and Cultivate Accountability**

#### **What will MFSA do?**

MFSA will develop a culture of self evaluation/assessment, feedback, and accountability that is implemented throughout all areas of the organization.

#### **How will MFSA achieve this?**

- MFSA will develop and implement specific practices of self and group evaluation as well as giving and receiving feedback used either before, during, or after meetings (online, in-person, and hybrid) at specific times during the year. These practices will lean into curiosity and discomfort, understanding that we don't learn and grow if we only stay within our comfort zones and that the greatest and fastest growth occurs when we challenge ourselves to grow.

### **Recommendation 2 - Education**

#### **What will MFSA do?**

MFSA will continue to educate ourselves on

- white supremacy, colonialism, cis-hetero-patriarchy, and [capitalism](#)

and find ways of...

- practicing liberation and
- interrupting and dismantling these systems of oppression

#### **How will MFSA achieve this?**

MFSA will develop a critical collective intersectional systemic analysis and lens in order to more readily recognize and interrupt patterns of white supremacy culture at all levels of the organization. We will engage people in ways that build capacity, create shared language, and introduce people to foundational concepts and frameworks of anti-racism so that we can move towards having movement wide and denominational wide conversations that address the root core issues of white supremacy and systemic racism so that we can make real systemic change.

### **Recommendation 3 Relationships**

#### **What will MFSA do?**

MFSA will cultivate reciprocal, supportive, and accountable relationships with people of color-led communities within the UMC and beyond. These relationships are the foundation for sustained, shared work for intersectional justice.

#### **How will MFSA achieve this?**

MFSA Board, Program Council, and Chapter leaders will intentionally connect with, educate themselves on, and actively support the work of the racial and ethnic caucuses at the Annual Conference level and national level. MFSA will also establish and/or deepen relationships with People of Color-led organizations beyond the UMC. MFSA will bear the weight of this relationship building, seeking to minimize the additional work for People of Color-led organizations.

### **Recommendation 4 Programing**

#### **What will MFSA do?**

MFSA will increase investment in reciprocal, supportive, and accountable partnerships with organizations of and for People of Color. The relationships and understanding that are generated in this work will strengthen legislative advocacy in its season.

#### **How will MFSA achieve this?**

Moving away from white saviorism and toward reciprocal, supportive, and accountable partnerships, MFSA will seek opportunities to collaborate in program creation and legislation. MFSA will actively support the programs and legislation of partner organizations.

### **Recommendation 5 Governance**

#### **What will MFSA do?**

Reform the organizational structure and cultural norms of MFSA so that it will support people of color leaders and recognize, confront, and interrupt white supremacy and racism.

#### **How will MFSA achieve this?**

MFSA will increase intentionality in its recruitment and onboarding, with a specific focus on the experience of people of color and commitments to anti-racism. MFSA will revise organizational documents to interrupt and dismantle white supremacy.

*For more detailed information here is a link to the full report*

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DP26tD3nYAB915e4LvxpU8R8xqxstkTUCLvxHb2y1Z8/edit?u>