

Racism is a Violation of HUMAN RIGHTS

GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 1904 of 20 November 1963¹

"Alarmed by the manifestations of racial discrimination still in evidence in some areas of the world, some of which are imposed by certain Governments by means of legislative, administrative or other measures, in the form, *inter alia*, of *apartheid*, segregation and separation, as well as by the promotion and dissemination of doctrines of racial superiority and expansionism in certain areas...."

The General Assembly proclaims:

"Discrimination between human beings on the ground of race, color or ethnic origin is an offence to human dignity and shall be condemned as a denial of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as an obstacle to friendly and peaceful relations among nations and as a fact capable of disturbing peace and security among peoples."

CAMPAIGN ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

The World Council of Churches (WCC) and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA) are co-sponsoring a year long campaign with three phases - education, hearings, and a program of action - to investigate human rights violations in the United States. The objectives of the campaign are 1) to raise the level of awareness of racism as a violation of human rights; 2) to challenge local congregations and ecumenical bodies to become more effective instruments in confronting violations of human rights resulting from racism; 3) to expose human rights violations in the United States, and 4) to take the case to the United Nations by providing detailed and precise information to the UN Special Rapporteur on Racism and by testifying in the 1995 UN Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva. Although racism has long been identified as one of the most serious violations of human rights by the international community, the concept of human rights within the U.S. and racism as a violation of human rights is not well understood or accepted. Thus, there is a real challenge to have people focus on human rights issues and human rights violations in the U.S. context. We are trying to change the discourse/the conceptualization of the struggle. In so doing, we also raise the struggle from a domestic to an international level and many feel it is this level of discourse and pressure that is needed now in the struggle for social justice in the United States.

THEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, which was held in Nairobi in 1975, observed that "the struggle of Christians for human rights is a fundamental response to Jesus Christ. The gospel leads us to become ever more active in identifying and rectifying violations of human rights in our own societies, and to enter into new forms of ecumenical solidarity with Christians elsewhere who are similarly engaged." The General Board of the National Council of Churches resolved in 1993 that "The Universal Declaration on Human Rights states "Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which... rights and freedoms... can be fully realized,"" and has declared that it is the duty of Christians "to help create a worldwide community in which governments and peoples treat each other compassionately as members of one human family."

¹ United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.