Update on racial justice Change Group work for BYM Fall 2024 Interim Meeting

Note: This and all previous Change Group updates are available at this link.

Adelphi

Our anti-racism work at Adelphi seems to rest on a web of durable and flexible routines, with forays into new experiences.

We have continued to host monthly discussions on films on topics of justice and inclusion and, whenever possible, select options that are available through free streaming services. We also convened one “pop-up” discussion over a potluck lunch after Meeting, to hear about the connection of BYM Quakers to the Pawnee.

We have small groups – fewer than last year but lasting in the bonds they build and the depths they can explore. Four of these are now organized as “faithfulness groups,” deepening our spiritual engagement with racial justice.

We urge Friends to stretch and learn more, even when the effort would take us beyond our comfort zone: two members of our Meeting convened a series of four open discussions on an article they were writing to explore white supremacy’s role in Quaker business meetings. Two Change Group members led a second-hour discussion on expanding the possibilities of worship in a series hosted by the Ministry and Worship Committee.

The meeting continues to reach out to our surrounding community, in small and sometimes more significant ways. We participate in a back-to-school shoe drive for our neighboring Prince George’s County elementary school, Mother Jones. We round up school supplies each fall for families who rely on the food pantry operated by St. Camillus parish near us.

Our Peace and Social Concerns Committee develops and sustains relationships in the larger surrounding community, looking for opportunities to offer “mini reparations” to help patch some of the inherited wounds of racism. Each year the Meeting sets aside a small but healthy chunk of its budget to support our mini reparations. For example:

- assistance to African American *doulas* to support healthy births among Black mothers, and
- continuing our support to programs in Prince George’s County Community College that provide a boost for students completing their studies and looking for that first professional or licensed job.

We make effective use of our weekly “Silent Announcements” to share resources for learning, opportunities for action, and news of events that would help us heal from racism. We also use our networking channels to encourage action – whether in events or in Congress – toward goals that are important to Indigenous peoples and people of color. We provide a link each month to the Native American Legislative Update, featuring an action where the Friends Committee on National Legislation is finding some traction in Congress. Our organized “couch potato activists” post lists of living-room actions people can take to make the world better for all.

Several of our Change Group meetings this season reflected on the Woolman Hill Remonstrance. We examined where our Meeting has improved and what results we think we’re seeing, and tested ideas about some of the places we have not yet begun to explore. We drafted a response to the remonstrance and shared it with the Ministry and Worship Committee for their consideration, and then took it to the Meeting for Business, where it was accepted.

As we move into the fall season, we are working to increase the skills among Friends in Adelphi to confront and heal racism – in ourselves and when we see it in others – and to increase openness to more diverse experiences. We are also led to engage with Friends in our Meeting who have not yet experienced the integral connection between their spiritual lives and the limitations imposed by the disease of racism. In response to these concerns, we are exploring ways to create various “drop in” opportunities, perhaps over a meal, to discuss relationships and spirituality.

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Alexandria

We participate in Trust Circles. We were trained by Kathryn and Clinton Pettus in April of 2023, and we began meeting in a Trust Circle over that summer. In September 2023, we welcomed more people into the group, and we formed a second Trust Circle that meets on Zoom. Each Trust Circle has 6-8 members and meets once a month. These two Trust Circles continue in 2024 and are open to new members.

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Goose Creek

Our committee continues to meet on a regular basis. We have been fortunate to forge a connection with some local indigenous people who have recently created a pop-up museum locally. Our committee visited the museum and participated in a community program they offered. In addition, we led a teen RE discussion on indigenous issues - including Indian agency superintendent Samuel Janney (of Goose Creek), BYM IA

committee and the local presence. This was followed by a teen field trip to the museum where they were able to meet with a local Lumbee tribal member as well as tour the museum.

We also continue to provide short articles and links to pertinent issues in our Meeting newsletter.

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Gunpowder

Gunpowder Friends Meeting Working Group for Racial Reconciliation (WGRR) was one year old in August. While an ad hoc group has worked for over a decade to bring forums and initiate discussions on the topic of racism, this group was formalized in August of 2023. We grieve the loss of Bob Fetter (1930-2024) whose deep personal and family commitment to making reparations for slavery continues to hold our work up to the Light. And it's a great joy to welcome three new members to the working group.

The charge of this Working Group was and remains as follows:

- Strengthen Gunpowder's beloved community
- Provide education and raise awareness about matters pertaining to racial reconciliation
- Enhance communication within the Meeting on matters pertaining to racial reconciliation
- Build community partnerships outside of our Meeting to foster collaboration and strengthen relationships

The work of our Meeting for racial reconciliation is the work of the whole Meeting, not only of the WGRR. Therefore, while the WGRR plans and presents forums and initiates discussions, others in the Meeting carry out other aspects of the work and the WGRR attends to these. We continue to publish the Thoughts About Race (TAR) column in our monthly newsletter.

We have continued our work with our One Book, *Healing Resistance* by Kazu Haga, in which we have focused not on shaming, punishing, and eradicating racism, but rather on building beloved community.

Our Meeting's work with the McKim Community Center in Baltimore has continued including hosting several days of summer camp at Gunpowder, an annual McKim Youth and adult leadership retreat at Gunpowder in which some Gunpowder Friends participate, and we participated in the regional McKim Community Games held at Frederick Douglass High School this April in Baltimore.

Our Meeting has concluded our refugee resettlement work with two resettlements of families from Sudan and Syria. Gunpowder continues to offer financial support to BYM Camping/STRIDE programs, the McKim Community Center, and the Baltimore Peace Movement.

We look forward in the coming year to a possible book study using the 2023 One Book, a forum in December of 2024 on reparations, continued work with McKim Community Center and continued financial support of BYM programs, McKim Community Center, and the Baltimore Peace Movement.

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Herndon

The Antiracism Working Group (ARWG) at Herndon Friends Meeting had a vendors table at a Juneteenth event in June, where they displayed a petition advocating for the language on a historical marker (regarding the history of our Meeting House) to include accurate information about segregation. The Town of Herndon has created a draft of the language that includes accurate information about segregation which will be on a new marker. An ARWG member recently shared correspondence from the Town of Herndon, stating their intention to work with the group in charge of historical markers to do a final draft of the language and plan for production of the new marker.

In August and September, the Antiracism Working Group, along with the Peace and Social Concerns Committee, participated in a Get Out the Vote (GOTV) postcard campaign coordinated by the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy. Several members of both groups, additional Herndon Friends, and a few family members and friends of Herndon Friends, completed and mailed approximately 860 postcards. The postcards (non-partisan,) which encourage people to vote and include voting information, were sent to BIPOC voters in Virginia.

One ARWG member who is on the Political Action Committee (PAC) of the Fairfax County NAACP participated recently in a voter registration drive put on by NAACP. The PAC is currently planning a Souls to the Polls event on October 27th, which will encourage people to vote.

Finally, Herndon Friends continues its monthly vigils for peace, justice, and equality.

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One attendee participated with the NAACP Essex County Branch President and Essex/Richmond Democratic Chair in an event highlighting the importance of voting. This took place at the Ebeneezer Baptist Church in Essex County which draws its congregation from surrounding Black communities. A handout with local voting information was created to share with the congregation.

The same attendee worked with the NAACP Essex County Branch President to create a handout with specific voter information for Essex County and it included key points that National NAACP have highlighted from Project 2025 that will negatively affect Black communities. This handout is being distributed at various events including voter registration drives.

Two members worked with the NAACP King & Queen County Branch at two voter registration events.

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Maury River

On Sept. 24th, co-clerks Dave Walsh and Kathy Fox met with Glasgow's new town manager Allyson Finchum to help with applying for a grant to help with the problem of flooding in Glasgow. We talked about local people and ways they can help to approach the problem.

With the Rockbridge NAACP, we had a good turnout and fun for the Green Pastures potluck---a local outdoor recreation center for African Americans.

Kathy sent out email reminders to MRFM before the time of the Juneteenth celebrations. There were celebrations locally Saturday June 15 at Lexington, Richardson Park and on June 14th at the community Center in Glasgow

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Roanoke

The Anti-Racism Interest Group is alive and well in the Roanoke Quaker Meeting. Since our last report, we reviewed anti-racism efforts by BYM Friends Meetings as listed on the BYM website. We have begun a series of activities to involve Roanoke Friends in anti-racism work. In early September we hosted an online session on antiracism and white privilege which began with watching a video of a TED Talk interview with Ibram X. Kendi, followed by worship sharing. In early October, we launched our effort to learn about our local history and get to know our neighbors. First, we hosted an online talk by Jordan Bell on Roanoke history and the devastation of Gainsboro and other

neighborhoods caused by urban removal (which James Baldwin called “Negro Removal”) during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Next, in mid-October we had Jordan lead twenty of us on an enlightening and eye-opening walking tour of Gainsboro. Jordan is recognized throughout our community as an excellent historian and activist for his work regarding racist policies in Roanoke. We received a grant from the BYM Working Group on Racism to support Jordan’s talk and tour.

Some of us are active in the Roanoke Reparations Group, and last academic year we sponsored and participated in the Reparations Book Group. In September we began the second year of that book group, which we are renaming the Anti-Racism Book Group. That group involves people from various congregations, and we rotate meeting once a month at their churches and at the Meetinghouse.

Activities for the coming months tentatively include a discussion with a panel of guest African American speakers from our community, an evening of worship sharing of Friends’ Experience with Racism, and a guest speaker on Quakers and Slavery/Racism. We also plan to draft an Anti-Racism Statement for our Meeting’s approval.

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Washington

In August 2024 the FMW Antiracism Spiritual Friendship Group (ASFG) met to watch and reflect upon a TED talk by Loretta Ross entitled “Don't call people out -- call them in.” In October 2024 a group of 25 Friends attended a workshop led by Garrett Bucks based on his book *The Right Kind of White: A Memoir*. The ASFG is also sponsoring a talk on January 19, 2025 by Debra Bruno about her book, A Hudson Valley Reckoning: Discovering the Forgotten History of Slaveholding in My Dutch American Family.

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York

We have been reading and discussing *One Day in the Life of Abed Salama* by Nathan Thrall. It gives a different perspective and history of the Palestine/Israel conflict and occupation through the experience of a Palestinian father searching for his son who was injured in a school bus accident. It is eye-opening, brutal at times, and reminiscent of James Baldwin in 1960's America.