Friends Association for Higher Education's Quaker Leadings in Higher Education series presents:

Deconstructing the Master's Tools:

Taking apart what was used to build the colonial-settler quaker Master's House.

Lorde's 1979 response to white women academics, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house", resonates deeply in the field of colonial-settlerism of Turtle Island. Lorde was explicit about the use of racism, misogyny & heterosexism to build the ivory tower, but how were these tools used to indoctrinate and assimilate the indigenous population of Turtle Island on the USA Reservation Agency?

Tuesday, April 25th, 2023

Presenter:
tom kunesh
Tennessee Ancient Sites Conservancy
BA, MA, MDiv.
University of Minnesota
Starr King School for the Ministry

Moderator:
Trayce N. Peterson
MA student/instructor
Human Rights Practice
University of Arizona

Agenda and Edited Chat
Welcome and introduction of the Speaker

Presentation by tom kunesh followed by slide show.

Small Group Query:

1. What questions have arisen for you in this presentation?
2. What has unsettled you?
3. What has inspired you?
4. What might be next?

Large Group Conversation:
Our group's main question: could you say more about what new tools might be helpful?

Is the idea of pausing with atheism necessary?

Our group was unsettled by the Christian issue. How can we find the essence of Christianity from the Quaker perspective--what is essential, and then let the other aspects go.

We agree that Quakers need to separate ourselves from Christianity. But that won't solve the whole problem. How can we separate ourselves, rid ourselves of white supremacy?

A possible next step -- for Quakers to engage more with indigenous spiritual practitioners to find out more about how our belief systems may be in alignment.

Tom, what do you think of the notion that Jesus was Indigenous?

Some of us came tonight hoping for practical next steps in responding to the consequences of colonization — of our legacy of harm. But, are the practical next steps of the activism we have sought examples of using the master's tools?

We were able to discuss the generational differences in experience and how world view can be effected. Could you expand upon the metaphor about the pupa, its growth and progress, and its connection to this conversation?

I suggest exploring Friends World Committee, which is precisely to create opportunities for the kind of engagement and sharing among different varieties of Quakerism (including nontheistic Quakers). It's a robust conversation that's been going on for many decades.

We also discussed how early Christianity was very different from the later power-hierarchy version, and how Quakers tried to go back to that earlier, pacifist version. And we further considered how to some people "God" is love, and belief in God can mean a belief in the power of love and goodness. Shouldn't universalism include these ways of understanding God and Christianity, alongside wisdom from other spiritual and religious traditions?

My instinct is to say that what is essential is Love - whether that comes from Christianity or atheism or ….

Spiritual fasting?

How can Quakers retain the good while letting go of what no longer serves?

Our group was clear that we want to deconstruct Empire Christianity (Constantinian Christianity), but less clear about abandoning the message and experience of the indigenous colonized Jesus. (The Black church and liberation theology decolonize without de-Christianizing.) If you remove Christianity entirely, is it still recognizable as Quakerism, and why use the same name for something quite different from the first 300 years?

What is the difference between Indigenization and appropriation?

We have our own prophets, as in Wovoka (The Ghost Dance). Tatanka Iyotanka (Sitting Bull) was considered a spiritual leader as well as a war chief.

Might restorative justice or restorative practices be helpful?

My professor of Native American Studies called Christianity a "death worship cult."

tom, are you fetishizing indigeneity?

Announcements and Resources:

Quakers, Colonization, and Decolonization
June 12-15, 2023
Hosted, in-person and over Zoom, by Haverford College, Haverford PA
To Register.

To follow up with tom:
tom@kunesh.net

Welcome and Goodbye

tom, thank you so much, this was very thought provoking

I found this a fascinating presentation and discussion — very inspiring and lots to think about! Thank you, tom, Trayce, and Walter!

Pilamayaye! Wopila Tanka!

Thanks so much Tom!

Wani'shi ta

Thanks Tom

Bio

tom was a russian & farsi linguist in the US navy, & has degrees in spanish, religious studies, & atheism & liberation theology, from the University of Minnesota & Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley. tom's mom is enrolled Standing Rock lakota & had 13 kids. He attends sweats & Nashville Friends Meeting. He currently works with Tennessee Ancient Sites Conservancy.