

Update on racial justice Change Group work for BYM Spring 2021 Interim Meeting

Note: This and all previous Change Group updates are available at this [link](#).

In January, the **Bethesda Friends Meeting** Diversity Change group led a workshop with about 20 people to develop personal queries around their experiences with racism. We have worked with Meeting committees to develop an extensive worksheet of ideas on how to become a more anti-racist community at personal, committee, and community levels. We are working on setting up a Meeting threshing session on systemic racism to explore who we aspire to be and what work we are willing to do to get there. We are looking for a facilitator to help us through our blind spots.

Friends of **Dunnings Creek Friends Meeting** have made quite an effort to educate themselves about White Supremacy and Racism. Reading books, articles, (many from Quaker Engaged to End Racism). One friend talked about her experiences growing up in Lancaster County, and how it is now where she lives in Blair County (neighboring county of Bedford). They just had Dr. Garnell Washington present this [video and discussion](#). He is a member of the Black community of our county.

They send letters to the editor - sometimes individually and sometimes as the Meeting. They have reached out in the past to Mt Pisgah AME Zion Methodist Church in Bedford but have not successfully connected.

They have decided to start their own Working Group on Racism. Nine people so far want to be in that group.

The **Frederick Friends Meeting** book group is currently reading THE TROUBLE I HAVE SEEN: CHANGING THE WAY THE CHURCH VIEWS RACISM by Drew G. I. Hart.

Since October, the **Goose Creek Friends Meeting** Antiracism Committee has:

1. Established a lending library of books on antiracism that lives on the porch of the Meeting House. People can check out and return books without going inside the Meeting House.
2. Recommended to the Monthly Meeting that it adopt antiracism queries as a part of its regular practice It was approved in Business Meeting.
3. Researched and produced a statement of land acknowledgment of the indigenous people that were on our land prior to the Meeting. That was approved in Business Meeting. The Meeting donated to the Mattaponi tribe as recommended by BYM Indian Affairs Committee.
4. Established and led an All Community Read on the book **Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and You** - a series of five well-attended sessions.

5. Wrote episodic notes on pertinent issues for the Meeting newsletter.

An historic African American church in our area that is in disrepair and the subject of current fundraising efforts was built on land donated by Quakers. In addition to donating to the restoration efforts, the Meeting is looking for other ways to be more connected with this group - as way opens.

Gunpowder Friends Meeting Change Team Activity

Since we last reported in October 2020 we have conducted the following activities:

- We held a monthly gathering entitled “Worshipful Conversations on Race and Justice”, a series of eight (September 2020-April 2021) conversations around race. These conversations are meant to be spacious, spiritually grounded conversations held in the Light of Spirit and in the hope of insight. The intention is to listen deeply and share honestly rather than find solutions or fix problems. At our first gathering, on September 3rd, we generated a list of topics related to race that Friends feel drawn towards; at subsequent meetings, we chose a topic from that list, and broke into small groups of three or four people to discuss that topic, followed by sharing in the large group.
- In our Spiritual Formation program large group gathering (22 people) in February, we reflected on the words of John Lewis in excerpts from his book Across That Bridge.
- Some GFM members continue to attend Coming To the Table – Baltimore gatherings.
- We are planning a Forum in May that will include sharing some audio excerpts from an On Being interview with John Lewis, followed by small group sharing in response to queries.

The Anti-Racism Action Team of **Herndon Friends Meeting** (which includes the Change Group,) has met monthly meeting since September.

Since October, the team has organized into three sub-teams. The first sub team, The History Committee: Story Collection Project, researches the history of Herndon Friends Meeting House and Its effects on current residents and local religious communities.

The second sub team, Racial Justice Connections, focuses on connecting/engaging with organizations such as the Fairfax County NAACP and taking actions which advocate for racial justice/equity in various areas, including police reform.

The third sub team, Racial Healing Practice, seeks to strengthen the anti-racist culture within Herndon Friends Meeting, through multiple measures, including training/education and literature on implicit racism, and examining procedures and protocols of Herndon Friends Meeting.

Homewood Friends Meeting convened a small Change Group in late Spring 2020 after approval from business meeting. A few months later, a Second Circle was formed of people with representatives from

each of the committees who are interested in racial equity at Homewood and who carry the lens of equity back to their committees. The Change Group falls under the supervision of Ministry and Counsel.

In late fall, the group discussed how the Meeting welcomes visitors and does outreach to people of color. They considered a report on the focus groups conducted by Clinton Pettus. This was followed by a presentation by Clinton in early January called “How to Be An Anti-Racist.” Continuing to define our focus, the group used both Clinton’s recommendations and comments from the session evaluations to move forward. Clinton recommended that we do an audit of our policies and processes.

Currently, the work is as follows:

- modifying existing equity audit instruments with plans to bring the final form to business meeting in a couple of months
- seeking a presenter for a workshop on implicit bias
- Working to modify the queries to Homewood’s needs

Online activities have been held to continue to engage Homewood’s members and attenders on the topic of equity:

- Watch party on the film “A Most Beautiful Thing” about a Black rowing team
- Watch party on the film “The Black Candle,” about Kwanzaa
- Discussion of the book, The Black Butterfly, about redlining and other issues in Baltimore
- Virtual Tour of the Lillie Carroll Jackson Civil Rights Museum, where Homewood’s Margaret Carey played an important role.
- Book Club discussion on PH Pamphlet 465, Race, Systemic Violence, and Retrospective Justice, by Harold Weaver.

Hopewell Center Meeting starts each business meeting with a Continuing Quaker Education lesson based on the White Supremacy Culture characteristics listed in *Dismantling Racism* by Jones and Okun (2001). Each month we do a different characteristic discussing each item's manifestations and antidotes. This month we did Defensiveness.

One Hopewell Center member is on the planning committee of the Washington Friends Conference on Religion and Psychology. Its annual conference this month was entitled *White Privilege: Naming It and Its Complex and Confronting It to Build an Equitable Society*, featuring Dr. Sean Fitzpatrick, head of the Jungian Society of Houston, as the plenary speaker. The Conference had the largest attendance ever at 68, representing the entire nation and three countries. The single largest attendance came from Hopewell Centre meeting with five attenders.

One Meeting member is currently planning a series of community FRED talks, like the ones they did a couple of years ago, specifically aimed at providing a community forum, hosted by the Meeting, to explore and reveal white privilege within the community and with the goal of resolving its effects and tensions in building toward a blessed community existing with justice for all.

Here is a summary of **Langley Hill Friends Meeting** Change Group activities since October:

Book group discussions: *White Fragility*, *The Warmth of Other Suns* (two sessions); *My Grandmother's Hands*.

They are watching the Black Church series on PBS and with a group reflection about it March 1st.

Khalila Lomax has led three second hours. The topics included: Code Switching; Micro-aggressions; Black Lives Matter. One of LHFM members had done extensive research on Black Lives Matter and she shared that information with the group during the second hour.

They had a worship sharing second hour to reflect on what it would mean to be an anti-racist Meeting.

LHFM Members have joined community groups such as NAACP and the Poor People's Campaign.

One Member has been active in Arlington regarding changing the names of schools and roads.

They are discussing establishing a relationship with a local African American Church. There is great interest in this.

They created signs for the front of the Church: Black Lives Matter and End the Death Penalty were the signs used recently.

One member has volunteered to be the LHFM representative for the Reparations Group.

Several members participate in a silent anti-racism vigil every two weeks in Falls Church.

The Change Group is working to establish a Social Justice Fund for trainings, books, etc.

Several Change Group members did the second 21-day Racial Challenge.

The Meeting Archivist has researched Langley Hill's historical connections with the African American Community in Northern VA during the 1950's through 1970's and the 1996 effort to rebuild burnt churches in Alabama.

The Change Group is going to meet with the Social Concerns Committee to reflect on how to respond to the information regarding racial issues at the BYM Camps. Langley Hill has been sponsoring two children to attend the camps. These are usually children of color and the Meeting wants to ensure their safety when at camp.

Midlothian Friends Meeting has sponsored several antiracism activities during the past year:

- Our Peace and Social Action Committee sponsors an anti-racism book study group. During the past few months, they have read and examined "White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism", by Robin DiAngelo; "How to be an Antiracist", by Ibram X Kendi; and "Caste", by Isabel Wilkerson.
- Our meeting published a Welcome All Statement and distributed it to local newspapers.
- A statement regarding "Love Thy Neighbors – No Exceptions" was drafted and approved. It was distributed to Richmond Friends Meeting, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, and the Powhatan County

Chamber of Commerce (for further distribution to Powhatan businesses). Here is the statement that was approved:

"Quakers in our area invite you to join them in their efforts to spread Light within our community. We have found that a simple way to live a purposeful life is to just let your own inner Light shine to all. That Light is contagious and can literally change the world. During these challenging times with so many conflicting voices all around us, you will find it calming to take a few moments of silence out of your day to consider how you might contribute your inner Light to others by sharing your spirit of love, compassion, and forgiveness. Whether someone you come across is experiencing unequal treatment due to the color of their skin, their sexuality, their gender orientation, their nationality, their age, or their religion - don't ever underestimate the power you hold just by providing your support for a world of Light and love for all."

Patuxent Friends Anti-Racism Work February 2021

Patuxent Friends Meeting along with 21 organizations comprising the Big Conversation on Dismantling Racism and Privilege in Southern Maryland created a 3-hour online program call *Many Wounds to Heal: Health Care (In)equity*. The next activity planned by the Big Conversation partnership will be a webinar in the fall for healthcare providers as well as the public. It will focus on healthcare disparities and reducing barriers to equitable care. It will help people understand the value of socio-ecological considerations in developing culturally competent systems of care.

At this point the change group for **Shepherdstown Friends Meeting** is loosely organized. We have established a book discussion group that is reading "My Grandmother's Hands". We have taken up special collections for a donation to the NAACP Legal Redress Committee, our first step on reparations. We plan to have workshops on racism and white supremacy at the annual WV Quaker Gathering, which we are hosting this year. Some of us have taken workshops from Dr. Amanda Kemp (with financial assistance from BYM) and Dr. Loretta Ross, which were very instructive and helpful. We continue to participate in the monthly Say Their Names/Movement for Black Lives vigil which we note has grown in numbers over the last year.

State College Friends Meeting Racial Justice Working Group Activities:

- Starting February 20th, an educational series to help educate our Meeting on issues of race. The first session is called "Addressing Racism among Friends" introducing this topic to the Meeting, the concept of Anti-Racism. It will include discussions about Friend's own experiences with racism and how the Meeting wants to proceed.
- In reaction to hateful racist Zoom bombings on local Penn State communities of color, as well as other hate speech in the area, the Meeting wrote a letter to the editor of the local newspaper denouncing these acts and pledging to continue anti-racism work.

- They have started to reach out to local racial justice organizations. Two racial justice working group members have joined the local NAACP chapter and plan to start attending meetings in the coming months to learn more about their efforts.

As of the end of February 2021, the **Stony Run Friends Meeting** Change Group has met 12 times. The structure, so far, is informal; there is no clerk, but rather a core group of Friends who “keep it going” and ask others to facilitate the monthly meetings. Everyone is welcome to attend Change Group sessions. There have been as many as 50 people in attendance, and consistently more than 25 in recent months. A Google Group is being formed to give members a choice in how they communicate within the group.

From October 2020 through January 2021, Change Group meetings have focused on anti-racism and micro-aggressions. Clinton Pettus has been asked to lead the discussions and two Stony Run parents (one Black and one white) have contributed with video-taped role plays about micro-aggressions. In December, they planned to move more in-depth consideration of ‘What is my Meeting called to do?’ However, the Meeting’s concern about recent revelations of Quaker and “abolitionist” Johns Hopkins having owned at least four enslaved men became the major focus of the December meeting and subsequent email conversation. Questions raised included 1) are we here to focus on an individual Quaker, or on becoming an anti-racist faith community? 2) Is our Change Group focused on becoming anti-racist within the Meeting, and/or within the Baltimore community?

Starting in February 2021, the focus of the Change Group has turned towards building deeper trust and respect in relationships with people who are part of the Stony Run community. They are working to build a structure/process which will be called “Trust Circles” and to train facilitators who will work with small groups to use the trust circle process. Trust Circles are designed to help people listen more deeply to one another, develop a better understanding of one another’s needs and wants with regards to SRFM, and to give rise to relationships that we hope will be more satisfying and perhaps longer lasting.

The **Friends Meeting of Washington (FMW)** Change Group on Racial Equality sponsored four monthly workshops based loosely on Dr. Harold Weaver’s Pendle Hill Pamphlet, *Race, Systemic Violence, and Retrospective Justice*. The first session focused on U.S. Quakers’ mixed history of anti-racism work, starting with the Abolitionists. Special attention was paid to FMW's history--what was done as well as what was left undone. The second session was on systemic violence. The third in January focused on reparations and the last one in February was a presentation on the history and contributions of Historically Black Colleges and Universities by two college professors who are alumni of Howard University.

The Change Group also prepared a history of Racial Equality work at Friends Meeting of Washington, It was shared on the Meeting’s email lists and in the Meeting’s newsletter.