

Baltimore Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends
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Dear BYM Friends,

Let's continue our conversation about racism, anti-racism, and Friends at Interim Meeting on Saturday. Time will be set aside for us to hear from those who have taken some kind of action in their Meetings to work against racism and bring more equity and wholeness to their Meetings.

Through these months of discussing race and racism at our Interim Meetings, I've also had the chance to read Marcelle Martin's book, *Our Life is Love: the Quaker Spiritual Journey*. I admit, recovering from hip surgery has given me extra time to think in these last few months! In this book, Friend Marcelle writes about the commitment that early Friends had to creating an equitable worshipping community. Words and gestures that in any way would put some people above others were removed from the practice of their life together. And early Friends gave up a lot, enduring great hardship, to live into this nascent testimony of equality. And it wasn't so they could take political stands - it was to live a life closer to the Spirit. Here we are today, looking at issues of inequality, this time in the form of racism. We are carrying forward work that began long ago. And we have the chance to work on our life together, and grow closer to each other, and to the Spirit.

In November, we had conversations in small groups about the terms racism and antiracism, and some groups talked about experiences they had of racism in their Meetings. Some of what was shared was in turn shared in the Business Meeting. We ended the day with a sense of calling to go do something, to take these words and turn them into actions. Perhaps this has not been easy for some Friends - perhaps it has been. When we gather, we can share what has worked well, what our challenges have been, and what we as Meetings feel we need to be more effective in taking some kind of action.

At the end our time of sharing, we will talk about the Change Groups that are being planned for our Meetings by the Working Group on Racism and the ad hoc Growing Diverse Leadership Committee.

For some, these conversations are welcome and even exhilarating. For others they cause uncertainty and even anxiety. It's good to have a loving community for sharing ideas so we can all walk together in the journey toward more wholeness.

I look forward to seeing you Saturday. If you have thoughts you'd like to share but will not be at Interim Meeting, please be in touch with me - my email is below and my phone number is in the directory.

With best wishes,

Marcy Baker Seitel
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