**Update on racial justice Change Group work**

**for BYM Fall 2022 Interim Meeting**

 Note: This and all previous Change Group updates are available at <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1r9gVD3uuJEfkdKRcJ19Hc_7FEHiiusWs>

**Adelphi**

The Change Group convened a group focusing on Resmaa Menakem’s *My Grandmother’s Hands.*  that group continues to choose and discuss relevant books. Another group met to be accountable to each other for anti-racist practices.  Also, on the first Friday of each month, two members of the Change Group convened a discussion of a selected film (several of which are listed below).

Yet another group learned about a “court watch” project in Prince George's County and decided to join in. This project watches pre-trial hearings (via Zoom) where bail is set for defendants. Watchers were trained to note consistencies and inconsistencies in judges’ rulings, and factors that appeared to make a difference in bail-setting. Their reports were pooled and analyzed, and the observations were then shared in letters to individual judges. Their work continues.

The watchers observed that the appearance of family members and other character witnesses -- which was more possible in these virtual hearings -- seemed to make a difference. (Family members of lower income defendants – largely people of color – were often unable to take a morning or afternoon off from work to appear in support of a defendant but were able to be present – virtually - to give their statements.) This small group then encouraged the rest of the Meeting to support legislation to continue the practice of offering virtual pre-trial hearings where needed, and prepared a letter to legislators from the meeting, which the meeting approved.

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The activities of the Change Group itself included the reading of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting anti-racism queries at the beginning of each Meeting for Business and encouraging Friends to hold these queries as we approached each decision.  We met monthly to assess our direction and next steps.

The Change Group focused on preparing an anti-racism statement for and with the Meeting.  Beginning with open-ended questions to each of the small groups and to the whole Meeting through the newsletter and Silent Announcements, the Change Group asked what should be included in such a statement.  In the spring, the Change Group brought a proposed statement to the committees on Ministry and Worship and on Peace and Social Concerns.  After incorporating the recommendations gleaned from those reviews, the Change Group brought the proposed statement to Meeting for Business for a first reading in May.

Anticipating that there would be a lot of interest in discussion of the proposed statement, the Change Group scheduled a threshing session for the week following the first reading.  The threshing session surfaced several questions and concerns about the meaning and intent of language, and the purpose of the statement.  The Change Group invited all Friends to contact the main authors of the statement with questions and suggestions. The Change Group received and processed numerous comments.

In August, the Change Group brought an amended statement back to the Meeting for “a further reading,” not seeking agreement at that time. The Change Group scheduled another threshing session on October 23 and anticipates asking the meeting in November to discern whether it is ready to adopt the statement. This process has been careful, educational, and revealing.  At its end, whenever that is, the Change Group – and all of us – will be more aware of *where we are* vis a vis a commitment to strive to be an anti-racist meeting.  A simpler, less pointed statement might have been approved easily last spring, but we would not have tested the ground of commitment.

While the Change Group was engaged in developing the statement on anti-racism, other committees and groups within the Meeting undertook, encouraged, and announced ways to learn more and do more to challenge and disable white supremacy.  For example:

·       The Continuing Quaker Education Committee offered a year-long study of the many ministries of Bayard Rustin.  Each month we learned a new aspect of the man – his work in civil rights, his work for peace and against nuclear armaments, his witness against colonialism, his LQBTQ ministry, his work for labor rights and economic justice, and training and leadership in civil disobedience and direct action.

·       Peace and Social Concerns Committee researched and proposed several avenues for “mini-reparations,” to help us begin to think through the meaning and practical applications of that term.

·       A member of the Continuing Quaker Education committee posted an explanation of the use of personal pronouns, when it appeared that some Friends did not understand their significance, and a member of the Outreach and Fellowship Committee provided pronoun “stickers” to be added to name tags.

·       Change Group organized a few “one-off” discussions for Friends who could not commit to a long series of discussions on anti-racism.  A few pop-up groups also formed on their own, such as a recent one to examine Vanessa Julye’s pamphlet, “Radical Transformation.”

·       In Silent Announcements, we offered, encouraged, and simply announced many opportunities to broaden horizons and deepen our knowledge of our own counties, and deep histories of our region and this country.  These included:

o   A panel presentation on healing from the damage done to Indigenous peoples in the “boarding schools” they were forced into.

o   Lists of free videos and lesson plans to help children learn more about Native people and the environment, and anti-racist resources for parents.

o   An article reframing the “traditional” (settler) view of the origins of the Thanksgiving feast, told from the eyes of the Wampanoag, who met those first settlers.

o   The Black Quaker Lives Matter interview series presented by the Black Quaker Project

o   An upcoming Pendle Hill webinar on land reparations

o   The Poor People’s Campaign March on Washington in June

·       We encouraged advocacy for the effective inclusion of Indigenous women in the protections of the Violence Against Women legislation, and for the approval of a federal commission to examine the federal role in the boarding schools for Indigenous children, and their impact on survivors and their descendants.

 Samples of First Friday Movie Discussions:

*100 Years:  One Woman's Fight for Justice:* Elouise Cobell, a banker and a member of the Blackfoot Confederacy, struggled with the federal government to recover the profits from oil leases, mining, and other uses of Native lands that were supposed to be retained in trust funds for more than 100 years.

*Sisters on Track* about the achievements of world-class athletes and how the lack of resources affects their chances to develop their skills and talents.

*They Ain't Ready for Me,* a film about a Black rabbinical student's efforts to organize against gun violence.

*Olympic Pride American Prejudice*, the untold story of Black Athletes participating in the 1936 Olympic Games.

*Cowboys*, a story of a trans boy struggling to be his authentic self with his (separated) parents who just don’t seem to get it.

*Miss Juneteenth*, an award-winning film about the daughter of a former beauty queen whose mother pushes her to compete for this title.

*Killer of Sheep*, a mosaic of an austere working-class existence of a man who works in a slaughterhouse and sees no future in his life.

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**Alexandria**

June 2022 Books read and discussed; *Do All Indians Live In Tipis*? by the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, podcasts discussed; *The 1619 Project.* We talked about the tradition of African American Memorial Day in Harper’s Ferry, West Virginia.

July 2022 Books read and discussed: “*Becoming*” by Michelle Obama. The group also listened to the podcast, *The 1619 Project* and discussed how Black farmers had lost their land due to racism. We discussed how museum exhibits can be updated to eliminate racist references and cultural insensitivity.  We talked about the document, “Ideas for Lowering Racial Barriers in our Meeting” beginning with individual actions.

August 2022 Books read and discussed: *Hood Feminism* by Mikki Kendall and *As They were Led* by Martha Catlin. We also talked about the Pendle Hill Pamphlet *Radical Transformation* by Vanessa Julye about generations of racism, and the podcasts *Oprahdemics* and *This Day in Esoteric History*.  We discussed issues surrounding the Afghan refugee family that the Meeting supports.  We talked about the Pope’s apology for indigenous boarding schools and the Quaker responsibility for institutional racism.

September 2022 – We all attended the author event to hear Nikole Hannah-Jones discuss her book, “*The 1619 Project*” in lieu of our regularly scheduled Change Group meeting.

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**Annapolis**

In September, Meeting for Business approved establishment of a new "restricted fund" for Retrospective and Restorative Justice (formerly discussed as a "reparations fund."  We look forward to additional discussions and decisions as to how much money to transfer into the new fund & how logistically to organize future fund-raising to maintain the fund for the future.

St. Philip's Episcopal Church (a neighboring mostly African-American congregation) has invited Annapolis Friends to participate with them (and other area churches) in their Racial Reconciliation Ministry. Discussions are ongoing to discern whether this might include a "community conversations" group and how it would be organized.

Responding to the May "Quaker Call to Action" in support of our democracy, we also are in the midst of discernment as to the best means that individual Friends can support voting rights of other citizens challenged by voter suppression efforts in Maryland and in battleground states.

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**Bethesda**

The Meeting is still working with reparationWorks to set up Our Collective Journey to Redress Systemic Racism. The opening retreat is set for Dec. 3.

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**Goose Creek**

The Change Group hosted a viewing of [Segregated by Design](https://www.segregatedbydesign.com/) for the Meeting, followed by a potluck lunch. The event, in July, was well attended and received. In addition, it has hosted two workdays at a local historic AME church that is fundraising  for restoration.

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**Langley Hill**

Several of our members continue to participate in the monthly Allyship Group calls sponsored by the Loudoun County NAACP Religious Affairs Committee.

\* We had the leaders of the Interwoven Congregation speak with our group about their mission to connect Black and White Religious Congregations.

\* We donated our unused budget to the Mary Jane Simpson Fund, Bridges to Independence, and STRIDE.

\* We had a Meeting movie night on the life and work of Bayard Rustin, followed by a second hour discussion of the movie.

\* We are planning a movie night for Backs Against the Wall, the story of Howard Thurman.  This will also be followed by a second hour discussion of the movie.

\* We are planning to celebrate Kwanzaa at a December second hour.

\* We are starting the process of having the Meeting adopt the BYM Declaration to become an Anti-Racism Community.

\* The BYM Change Group monthly message on racism is published in the Newsletter.

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**Midlothian**

The racial justice study group at Midlothian Friends Meeting has been meeting for approximately two years via Zoom. We have read and discussed several books, including **Caste** by Isabel Wilkerson, **How to Be an Antiracist** by Ibram X. Kendi, and **White Fragility** by Robin DiAngelo. Over the pasts few months, we have focused on **The 1619 Project**, and we are constantly amazed that this often-heartbreaking history was never taught in school. We hope that future generations will be better informed.

In addition to reading, we had the opportunity to discuss racial justice issues with an African American minister from Powhatan County. Rev. Dr. Gregory L. Beechaum, senior pastor at Little Zion Baptist Church, joined us for a discussion one evening. We appreciated his perspective and hope to visit his church when we feel more comfortable with the Covid threat.

Our study group also walked the Richmond Slave Trail one hot summer afternoon, and we could barely fathom how emotionally and physically devastating this must have been for the men, women, and children who were kidnapped and brought to Richmond in chains. We visited the Richmond Slavery Reconciliation statue and found it in disrepair. After contacting government officials, we were pleased to see that the memorial was refurbished. Our group has also toured the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of VA.

We continue to look for ways to actively work for racial justice in our community while being cognizant of the Covid threat. Our Thrifty Quaker thrift store provides grants to local nonprofits, and we often select charities that benefit underserved Black neighborhoods and recent immigrants in our area. Some members of our study group recently wrote nonpartisan postcards to “get out the vote” in primarily Black communities.

As we learn more about our country’s racial history, we continue to grow in understanding and compassion. Our discussions have helped us recognize and address past and present racial attitudes in ourselves. Our study group is grateful to share this journey together, and we believe that greater insight has strengthened our resolve to address racial injustice wherever we see it.

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**Patuxent**

The Meeting is one of the 25 organizations in Southern Maryland who partner together on the **Big Conversations to Dismantle Racism and Privilege in  Southern Maryland.**  Two members from Patuxent Friends serve on the Steering Committee to plan this program. Among their responsibilities is to provide the trained facilitators for the small breakout groups. Both are trained mediators and facilitators for the Community Mediation Centers of Calvert and St. Mary’s Counties in Maryland.

The annual Big Conversation Community Forum for 2022, ***Living and Coping with Trauma: The Unseen Force*** took place on **Sunday, September 11 from 2:00-5:00 p.m.  This program focused on racial trauma.** There were approximately 150 community participants who took part in the program. There was nearly 50/50 racial diversity.

 After the 1-hour presentation from experts on racial trauma,  participants went to 13 different breakout groups with two facilitators in each group. Facilitators were diverse in race and gender.

 All participants were given a Resource Booklet when they filled out their survey. Notes from facilitators, notes from Steering Committees members, and surveys will be compiled into an Executive Summary of the event and sent out to all who participated. We will use this info to decide what our next Big Conversation will be about.

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**Richmond**

·       Race & Culture Film Series. Refusing to be Enemies: The Zeitouna Story

·       BYM Anti-racism minute:  Continue reading the Antiracism Queries before each meeting

·       Informed RFM of the ASFC Black Quaker Project, the movies “Making a Killing” and “Racially Charged”.

·       Provide a meal on a quarterly basis to families in the local chapter of the Circles organization, a national group that works to assist people to find their way out of poverty.

·       P&SC approved the Minute in Support of the Truth and Healing Commission for Native Peoples and to move it forward to Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business.

·       Fall Retreat: presentation by Barb Adams called: First Look - Pathways to Right Relationship with Native People

·       Ongoing section in the Newsletter called Thinking About Race.

The Fall Retreat led by the Ministry and Worship committee was well attended and amply supported by the Committee on Adult Spiritual Education who provided a wonderful lunch. The workshop, “Seeking Right Relationship with Indigenous People,” led by Barb Adams, directed us in a process of self-examination, learning, and listening. While this retreat was a ‘success,’ creating energy and connecting us, we acknowledge it as only one step, and only one piece of a larger process of becoming more whole.

Specifically, in addition to questions about appropriate next steps in our work on right relationship with indigenous peoples, questions arose as to how we can deepen our Meeting’s collective understanding of other marginalized experiences in the United States, including that of Black Americans, Latinx Americans, and Asian Americans. Do we seek to listen first or always jump to solutions? Do we give issues concerning all people of color equitable and careful consideration?

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**Sandy Spring**

On June 17, Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting held its second annual Juneteenth event. Organized by the Change Group, the event drew about 30 people present in the Lyceum and in a zoom audience. Several people from Sharp Street United Methodist  Church attended and participated in the program. Roxanne Jarrett and Cheryl McLeod hosted the event. Roxanne sang and Cheryl led a libation ceremony. The freedom proclamation from 1865 was read and everyone joined in singing “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”  Delicious desserts that followed the tradition of red coloring were served along with hibiscus tea and other beverages. A video of the celebration can be viewed at [Juneteenth — Sandy Spring Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends](https://www.sandyspring.org/juneteenth)

The Change Group is actively preparing for a one-day Crossroads Antiracism Seminar on November 12.  This educational seminar is part of our efforts to educate the Meeting about our role in supporting systemic racism to build a foundation on which to get Meeting support for a wider equity assessment.

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**Shepherdstown**

The Meeting continues its participation in the years-long monthly vigil in a nearby town to protest the murder of a Black man by police. The Meeting also financially supports the Berkeley County NAACP fund for legal redress for Black people subjected to racial discrimination and the Alternatives to Violence Program in Liberia. It also continues to bundle funds for medication and other needed supplies for Friends in Cuba.

Some Meeting  members have donated money for the building fund of the Detroit Friends. The Meeting is considering including such a donation in the next year's Meeting budget.

Several Friends have completed a group discussion of the book, *Caste.,* and recently took the Trust Group training by Clinton and Kathryn Pettus of Friends for the Future. The Meeting plans to implement the Trust process in smallish groups within the Meeting. Following Covid, there is a need to reconnect socially and rebuild trust as the whole Meeting is engaged in anti-racism activities that may create discomfort.

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**Stony Run**

In late 2021, the loosely organized Stony Run Change Group initiated a series of Trust Circles designed to provide participants with opportunities to share views in response to queries about social justice, othering, being an effective ally, and similar issues. Participants are urged not to try to fix things for others but to fix themselves so that others will feel comfortable sharing who they are, how they feel about things they experience in their lives, and what their wants and needs are. Trust Circles seek to help participants be less judgmental, listen more deeply to others, and focus on building trust by being trustworthy.  Friends in the Change Group are planning to hold a 2-session discussion of the new Pendle Hill pamphlet by Vanessa Julye titled *Radical Transformation: Long Overdue for the Religious Society of Friends.*

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**Friends Meeting of Washington**

The FMW Change Group for Racial Equity sponsored a Juneteenth Celebration after Meeting for Worship with a Juneteenth cake, red drink, an explanation of the history of Juneteenth, and a discussion of Quakers and white privilege. On September 25 about 20 Friends participated in a discussion of Vanessa Julye’s Pendle Hill Pamphlet, *Radical Transformation: Long Overdue for the Religious Society of Friends* and discussed potential next steps for FMW.