**Update on racial justice Change Group work**

**for BYM Spring 2023 Interim Meeting**

 Note: This and all previous Change Group updates are available at this [link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1r9gVD3uuJEfkdKRcJ19Hc_7FEHiiusWs?usp=sharing).

**Adelphi**

The Change Group at Adelphi is a working group formed at the request of Baltimore Yearly Meeting. The working group is under the care of the Ministry and Worship Committee.

Last year, we worked from January to December to ﬁnd unity in the Meeting on a commitment to become an anti-racist Meeting. The eﬀort included initial brainstorming sessions with small groups, several “readings” to the Meeting as the draft statement evolved, and then a ﬁnal reading where we asked whether the Meeting was clear on the commitment.

We were. On December 11, the Meeting adopted a statement of commitment to anti-racism (see below), including commitments to set goals for our anti-racist work each year, and to review our progress annually as a Meeting when we consider the spiritual state of the Meeting.

In January, the Change Group hosted a Meeting-wide conversation about possible goals for our anti-racism work this year. We are preparing to bring language about the goals for our work back to the Meeting, and we anticipate creating and supporting strategies to carry out the named goals.

This year, we have improved coordination with the Peace and Social Concerns Committee through the participation in our meetings of one of the co-clerks of P&SC. The P&SC committee focuses on outward expression of our work toward anti-racism, such as the "mini-reparations" donations that the committee researched and implemented last year. Change Group focuses inward, on the meeting's own processes and on learning about how racism operates among and in us.

Following up on the “court watch” work initiated by one of our small groups last year, and endorsed by a letter from the Meeting, an Adelphi Friend testiﬁed in favor of re-introduced legislation in the Maryland House and Senate to continue remote access to pretrial hearings. Friends wrote individual letters to their delegates and senators in support.

We have continued the monthly viewing and discussions of ﬁlms relevant to racism and related impacts of colonization. Since October, we have viewed:

"*Voices of Baltimore*", a documentary about life in Baltimore from the Jim Crow era to the 21st century.

*“Gather,”* which oﬀers an intimate portrait of a growing movement among Indigenous Americans to reclaim their spiritual and cultural identities by re-asserting sovereignty over their ancestral food systems.

“*How It Feels to Be Free*,” a documentary that tells the inspiring story of six iconic African American women entertainers – Lena Horne, Abbey Lincoln, Nina Simone, Diahann Carroll, Cicely Tyson, and Pam Grier – who challenged an entertainment industry deeply complicit in perpetuating racist stereotypes.

In our twice weekly “Silent Announcements” we have promoted Friends Journal articles and Pendle Hill events on Quaker roots in slavery and the need and call for reparations, and a Quaker speak video on how culture aﬀects the ways we worship. We’ve shared news of the Black Quaker Project’s "Black Quaker Lives Matter Film Festival and Forum," and several events oﬀered locally in Prince George’s County.

Early this year, the Meeting’s consideration of the queries about the Spiritual State of our Meeting evidenced heightened awareness of the importance of healing from racism, and of earning the work of anti-racism. We continue to read the anti-racism queries as we begin each meeting for worship for the conduct of business. At our most recent meeting, four Friends not in the Change Group rose to read one query each.

**Adelphi Friends Meeting Commitment to Anti-Racism**

**Approved in Meeting for Business, December 11, 2022**

The members and attenders of Adelphi Friends Meeting are called to reject any system that lays heavier burdens and restrictions on the lives of people identiﬁed as Black, Brown, Indigenous, Asian American, and Paciﬁc Islander -- who make up the Global Majority -- or elevates people identiﬁed as White into a privileged group. This is one way we seek to "walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone." (George Fox)

We do this in the context of a society that has often taken the opposite approach. Race is a social construct, but its consequence, racism, is real. We live in a nation built on enslaved labor and land appropriated through genocide. Racism has been pervasive and systemic for centuries and its beneﬁciaries continue relentlessly to exploit those who are identiﬁed as the Global Majority. Many Quakers have been staunch allies in struggles for human and civil rights. However, Quakers have also been complicit in the violence that is White supremacy, sometimes through action and sometimes through inaction, sometimes knowingly and sometimes not.

Adelphi Friends Meeting renounces complicity in White supremacy, the conviction that people identiﬁed as White are inherently superior to people identiﬁed as other; and the social, economic, and political systems that collectively enable White people to maintain power over people of other races. A country free of racism will not only liberate the Global Majority from unjust oppression but will also enable all Friends to experience the Spirit more fully.

As individuals, we will identify and acknowledge in ourselves the beneﬁts that come to us while they are denied to others due to racism.

As a Meeting, we will examine and change those of our practices that do not foster equity, inclusion, and a sense that every Friend belongs in, and is essential to, our faith community.

As a community, we will listen to, support, and join with each other as we challenge practices, laws, and social and economic structures that disadvantage the Global Majority. We will participate in healing harms of past and current oppression.

Adelphi Friends Meeting will set annual goals for our anti-racist work – both within our Meeting and in the wider world – and hold ourselves accountable for their accomplishment, including reﬂection in our annual Spiritual State of the Meeting report.

Above all, we will listen to the Spirit and embrace the messages of universal love and care that we hear. We want to witness change in ourselves and in our community. We will hold ourselves and one another to these commitments with ﬁrmness, tenderness, and love. We move forward with truth as we understand it right now, knowing that continuing revelation, deep listening, and lived experience will change who we are. We will revisit this statement every year as our understanding grows.

**AFM Endorsement of Declaration by Baltimore Yearly Meeting as an Anti-Racist Faith Community**

Adelphi Friends Meeting is in unity with the Baltimore Yearly Meeting August 3, 2019, declaration, with the understanding that our work in becoming an anti-racist faith community is very much still in progress.

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**Alexandria**

**October 2022**

Books read and discussed: *My Grandmother’s Hands*

We discussed Native Americans’ voting challenges and the difficulty of voting on reservations. We talked about post office issues and voting, and about the upcoming election.

We discussed how to make the Meeting more racially diverse and the challenges of that.

**November 2022**

Books read and discussed: *As They Were Led* by Martha Catlin, *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson

We discussed the Nikole Hannah-Jones presentation that we all attended at Arlington Public Library.

One of our members attended the BYM discussion group on *Caste* and talked about impressions from that group.

**December 2022**

Documentaries discussed: PBS documentary on Native adult adoptees who reclaim their tribal heritage.

We talked about jurisdiction on Tribal lands, and the recent Supreme Court decision that a tribe had the right to prosecute.

We discussed the BYM antiracism statement, and whether we should adopt an antiracism statement for our Meeting. We agree with the sentiments of the BYM antiracism statement and want to recommend that AMM adopts that as its own antiracism statement and to have that minuted.

**January 2023**

Topic: The BYM antiracism statement and how to develop and adopt our own statement.

Some people have objections to the BYM statement, and we couldn’t come to an agreement on how to proceed.

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**Bethesda**

Last year Bethesda Friends Meeting decided to invest in a Journey to understand what internal work we need to undertake - in our mindset, behavior, words, processes, and systems - to avoid unwittingly perpetuating systemic racism in ourselves as we seek to take collective actions to uproot it in the external world. We eventually settled on contracting with Lucy Duncan and Rob Peagler of reparationWorks to guide us in this process. Twenty-nine members of the BFM community (the cohort) have signed up for an intensive set of sessions from January through May 2023. What the Meeting hopes to gain from this process is, among other things, a common vocabulary; a shared understanding of the scope and nature of systemic racism; a recognition of the role each and all of us play in perpetuating its impact; a safe and loving space within which to develop the emotional and moral fortitude to withstand the discomfort and range of feelings such efforts would inevitably evoke; and a commitment to this work that is spiritual in nature – not just to benefit others but to evolve our own spiritual nature to undertake the difficult work ahead. The Journey is both the process the smaller cohort of 29 are participating in and the aspiration of the entire Meeting.

The Journey began with a full day retreat in person at the Meeting House. We had a morning of deep sharing, an introduction to Heart Listening, and the beginning of a conversation around “White Supremacy Culture.” Everyone is part of a small group of four, which will meet between large group gatherings, where we will continue the Heart Listening. The large group will meet approximately every three weeks into May and then return to the full Meeting to start to discern where to go next.

A major concern while setting up this process was to keep the entire Meeting connected to it, so that we are all on the Journey. Several approaches have been set up to facilitate that connection. Everyone in the cohort who wants one has a Friendly Listener/Journey Buddy to process the large group meetings with. We will regularly report to the Meeting through the newsletter, Business Meeting, and coffee hours.

People have expressed an interest in our reading assignments. So far – January 22 and February 12 – our readings have been White Supremacy Culture: Still Here (and antidotes) by Tema Okun along with a tool for noticing how both the characteristics and antidotes show up; a paper from Beverly Daniel Tatum on Racial Identity Development, and a short video from Sonya Renee Taylor called White Trauma Becomes White Violence – Do Your Healing Work!

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**Dunnings Creek**

The Dunnings Creek's Peace and Social Concerns Committee Speaker Event back in September was a huge success). After the holidays the committee resumed planning for another Speaker Event to be held April 16 at 2:00 PM at the Meetinghouse. The speaker will be a local woman, Delores Myers, who will speak about her growing up, and living today in a rural town, and telling her story as a Black woman. Her title is "Love, Justice, and Peace”. Area publicity will begin mid-March. Ellen Prentiss Campbell will be in contact with BYM for announcements and submit comments for the Summer Interchange. Our next plan is to approach Jonathan Sprout of [Force for Good](https://www.forceforgoodmusic.com/), hopefully for an event in August of this year.

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**Goose Creek**

Our committee continues to provide relevant material on anti-racism issues and activities to our monthly newsletter and our committee webpage on the Goose Creek website. Our Meeting sends out a mid-week meditation each week on Wednesdays, and for the month of February, our committee sent out the meditations - which was a lovely way to reach all members of the Meeting. We are currently in the planning stages for a Second Hour discussion on March 12: Racial Equity Activities in Loudoun County: Then and Now. We will also be talking about activities in our Meeting and other BYM Meetings.

And finally, we helped to sponsor a February 22 presentation from Johns Hopkins University graduate students who have researched Johns Hopkins. (He was a Quaker whose mother was a member of Goose Creek.)

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**Gunpowder**

Gunpowder Friends Meeting is a dynamic, welcoming, inclusive, and affirming Meeting, which actively cultivates diversity of experience in all its dimensions. We share a commitment to building and sustaining a diverse, peaceable, and resilient community, both within our Meeting, and among our wider community relationships.

* We engage with the McKim Community Center in the Jonestown area of Baltimore City through a partnership which supports their goals and leadership. We also give significant financial support both as a Meeting and from individual members.
* We support the BYM STRIDE work as a community and as individuals in the community with donations to its camping initiative.
* We held a Forum that included sharing some audio excerpts from an On Being interview with John Lewis, followed by small group sharing in response to queries.
* We have researched the presence and use of the Meeting House grounds by indigenous peoples prior to colonial occupation and ownership of the land.
* We consistently publish the BYM monthly Thoughts about Race in our newsletter.
* In the past year we worked to settle 12 families of Afghan refugees in the Baltimore area. Working through the International Refugee Committee's Welcome Home project, we provided a fully furnished apartment and fully stocked kitchen for each family.
* A number of our members are involved in peacemaking work related to promoting racial justice*, e.g*., working with the Baltimore Peace movement (formerly known as Baltimore Cease-Fire). Our Meeting supports that work among members of the Meeting.
* We recently honored member Elizabeth Koopman for her ministry with Indigenous peoples which we have supported for many years. She recently retired from that ministry but continues to contribute resources to the Meeting.

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**Herndon**

Herndon Friends Meeting Anti-Racism Working Group History Committee: A member continues research related to Native American land acknowledgment, including the history of Tribal Nations who inhabited land in Virginia, with the goal of learning about which Tribal Nation/s inhabited the land on which Herndon Friends Meeting sits. Another Friend wrote a letter to the editor which was published in the Washington Post, responding to John Kelly’s February 1st column about the book, “Desegregation in Northern Virginia Libraries.” In her letter to the editor, the Friend explained how the HFM Meeting House used to be a library which implemented segregation and that Herndon Friends Meeting has been doing research on the racist history of our Meeting House.

Racial Healing Subgroup: Book discussion sessions on “My Grandmother’s Hands" were held in November and February. The next session will be in April.

Racial Justice Subgroup: Members have begun to follow and become involved with the issue of the revision of the Virginia History Standards of Learning. They are against the recent conservative revision of the Standards of Learning.

Herndon Friends Meeting continues its monthly vigils at the Meeting House for Peace, Justice, and Equality.

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**Little Falls**

Little Falls Friends stand firm in our commitment to anti-racism. Our meetinghouse displays a double-sided sign that reads “Stand Against Racism and Bigotry. Honor That of God in Everyone.” Our newly formed Peace and Social Concerns Committee was charged with developing a list of organizations to receive donations from the Meeting. The 2021 list highlights several groups who work toward an anti-racist society, including Coming to the Table, the Hosanna School Museum, the Revolutionary Love Project, and the Innocence Project.

While our Meeting as a whole does not pursue anti-racist work, many of our members and attenders pursue this work on their own.

Below is part of the Meeting’s minute on racism, adopted in September of 2020:

“As Quakers, we are part of a long tradition of working for peace, social justice and equality. We, the members and attenders of Little Falls Friends Meeting, intend to recommit ourselves to those efforts. As members of a group that is predominantly white, we realize it is first necessary for each of us to examine our own racial identity, inherent biases, and privilege, to establish a starting point for our work in racial justice.  Some of us will work to further educate ourselves about these issues. Others will commit to organizing for political change. Still others will focus on criminal justice reform. But all of us will dedicate ourselves to listening carefully and compassionately to those who are impacted by the social ills resulting from systemic racism and seek in whatever ways we can to dismantle it.”

Many of our members have read books, watched videos and participated in workshops and discussions to question and learn more about our own internal biases and how systemic racism impacts our lives and our society. Some of our members regularly attend and facilitate Coming to the Table meetings. Some of our members are participating in a multi-racial group, Harford Racial Justice Family and other groups focused on racial issues. It is our hope that our members bring back to our Meeting their experiences with these groups. Some members are working on criminal justice reform issues by advocating for relevant bills in the Maryland state legislature.

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**Maury River**

The year started out with a big snowstorm which kept us from our local parade honoring Martin Luther King Jr., but we always honor him in our hearts.

We have been guided by the BYM Call to Action Against Systemic Racism. We have been kept informed about the situation at Rockbridge County High School (RCHS) related to racial justice by a member of the NAACP and the Racial Equity Coalition and her daughter, who is a student leader at RCHS. There have been examples of racial injustice against and by students at RCHS. There have also been student groups with leaders working on racial justice. Last year and into early this year a few in MRFM had been attending School Board meetings to give support for the students who want to ban confederate symbols from clothing.

Early this year, the Peace and Justice Committee (P & J) reported that it wanted to do a MRFM Statement as a letter to the editor, and also to members of the school board, to support the students at RCHS who are wanting to have a change to the dress code banning confederate symbols. We worked and brought different examples of statements to MWB over several months, which in the end were not accepted. MWB approved P & J to make a statement and send it as only approved by the Peace and Justice committee. By June, P & J had written and approved a statement and sent that as a letter to Dr. Michael Craft, Principal of RCHS.

Dr. Craft asked if any of the Quakers would be interested in being part of a group to improve the environment of the high school. We said “yes,” but this was in November, and nothing started. We decided to wait until after the holidays.

Dr. Craft reported that they had mandatory sessions for the teachers and staff with Dr. Jamica Love, the diversity officer with the Virginia Military Institute.

We have continued to follow and support the Rockbridge NAACP represented by a few MRFM people. Also, funding comes both from MRFM and individuals. It is good to hear about the health committee, working to facilitate health programs at the Glasgow community center. In addition, the NAACP is a part of the Racial Equity Coalition and is working to hire more educators of color.

The group “Coming to the Table” came to a sad close this year. A few MRFM people had been actively involved in this communication experience for several years. One of the problems was the difficulty attracting more people of color in addition to the two devoted people who shared.

The Racial Equity/ Justice Coalition started last year and has been quite active. MRFM is a member and there is a photo of our sign with the Meeting House as part of the logo. We have also contributed funding individually and as part of MRFM to this group. They have appreciated MRFM involvement with supporting students working for racial justice. A big goal for the group has been hiring more educators of color. They are setting up a structure and part time staff to be more inviting to have educators of color to come here. In the past two years, two educators of color have been hired locally. The new group was not the sole reason for the hiring but had a positive influence on the result.

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**Patuxent**

The Steering Committee for the Big Conversation gathered for a retreat on February 8 to determine how to go forward. We are in our sixth year of organizing Big Conversations and follow up programs. All agreed that this project is well worth the effort and has been meaningful for our Southern Maryland community. We are committed and will continue this work.

Patuxent Friends Meeting Peace and Social Action Committee is also exploring how we might recognize and honor the Piscataway Indian Nation on whose ancestral land our buildings now stand. We put the following on our website:

Patuxent Friends Meeting recognizes and honors the Piscataway Indian Nation on whose ancestral land our buildings now stand.

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**Richmond**

Richmond Friends Meeting continues to publish the Thinking About Race column prepared by the BYM Working Group on Racism in each monthly newsletter.

At its twelfth-month 2022 Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, RFM approved the formation of an Ad Hoc Committee on Race and Racism. The clerk named committee members at the business meeting in January 2023.

The committee's charge is to 1) develop and engage the Meeting in an inclusive and open discernment process to learn what our Meeting is led to do around race and racism -- within ourselves, within our Meeting community, and within the larger community; and 2) Using the learning gained from the discernment process, develop an action/implementation plan that engages committees/individuals within the Meeting. This should include the scope and timeline for the committee's work.

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**Roanoke**

Friends in the Roanoke Friends Meeting have addressed racism as a spiritual concern in multiple ways over the last twelve months. The Religious Education Committee offered discussions and workshops focusing on issues related to racism. We read and discussed Vanessa Julye’s Pendle Hill pamphlet “Radical Transformation: Long Overdue. . . .” We hosted a discussion on Reparations, and several of us are active in the Roanoke Reparations Group. As a Meeting, we co-sponsored Groceries Not Guns, a Roanoke initiative for gun-violence reduction focused especially on low-income communities, where our city has seen the most incidents of gun violence, but we are also deeply concerned about guns being a huge problem in all communities. The Meeting took part in Roanoke City’s successful application to the Equal Justice Initiative to commemorate the lynchings of two Black men in the city in the 1890s. This effort led to an historical marker being erected in a prominent place on Franklin Road. More steps will follow. Individuals in our Meeting have been active too: we supported the effort to create a statue in downtown Roanoke in honor of Henrietta Lacks, a Black woman who died of cancer in the 1950’s and whose genetic material is still being used for cancer research. Friends are active participants in numerous ways with the Roanoke Branch NAACP and TAP (Total Action for Progress) which serves several counties in Southwest Virginia. Local Friends are active on Baltimore Yearly Meeting committees which are addressing the concern about racism in our Society. We may take the next steps to form a Change Group in our Meeting, described by AFSC as a place to “deepen the connection between social change and spiritual growth.”

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**Sandy Spring**

The Change Group has expanded its membership. We invited all participants to our Systemic

Racism workshop last November to join us on an ongoing basis. We extend that invitation to

join our efforts to all members of the Meeting.

In January the Change Group met to plan for the coming year. We started by reviewing the

outcome of the November workshop. At our Introduction to Systemic Racism workshop with

Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training in November 2022 participants were organized

into small groups to reflect on where Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting fell on a continuum of

becoming an antiracist multicultural institution. Options ranged from being an exclusive,

segregated institution to being a fully inclusive, transformed institution in a transformed

society. The consensus of the groups was striking.

There was broad agreement that the Meeting currently occupied a space of symbolic change.

Characteristics of this kind of institution include making official policy pronouncements

regarding multicultural diversity; seeing ourselves as a “non-racist”; institution with open doors to People of Color; and having an expanding view of diversity that includes other socially oppressed groups such as women, disabled people, elderly people, children, the LGBTQ+ community, and citizens of developing nations. These kinds of institutions can be

uncomfortable with those who make waves; embrace little or no contextual change in culture,

policies, and decision-making; and be unaware of continuing patterns of privilege, paternalism,

and control.

The groups also saw the Meeting moving towards the next stage of the continuum: identity

change. These institutions have a growing understanding of racism as a barrier to effective

diversity; develop analysis of systemic racism; sponsor programs of antiracism training; are

conscious of institutionalized white power and privilege; develop an intentional identity as an

“antiracist institution” begin to develop accountability to racially oppressed communities; and

increasingly committed to dismantle racism and eliminate inherent white advantage. These stages are at the center of the continuum outlined by Crossroads, where institutions are

tolerant of racial and cultural differences but still struggling to see such differences as assets.

Goals for the future of our Meeting would include embracing structural change and becoming

fully inclusive.

Moving forward we are planning many different activities, including:

* Host potluck and presentation on work estimating reparations for transatlantic chattel slavery (February 18),
* Another workshop with Crossroads for the SSMM community,
* Direct consultations with Crossroads to advise specific steps we can take to become more inclusive,
* Create dialog groups modeled on Friendly Eights,
* “Decorate” the lyceum halls and classroom with diverse paintings, quotes, posters etc,
* Work with the Library Committee to highlight books by BIPOC authors - especially during the affinity months (Black History, AAPI, Native Americans etc.),
* Offer Authentic Relating workshops (led by Roxanne) over several months,
* Host movies, friendly discussions in Lyceum for a wider audience, an
* Continue our Juneteenth celebration.

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**State College**

The Racial Justice Working Group at State College Friends Meeting has been somewhat dormant in recent months, though individual and community efforts are continuing at a somewhat slower pace. In early 2022 the RJWG was able to do a session entitled “Patterns of Oppression in Meeting: Identify, Reflect, Act,” and to collaborate with the Climate Justice Working Group for a program “Climate Racism: Unequal Impact.” Several committees at SCFM continue to include queries on racial and climate justice on each agenda. Two meeting members served on the local Police Oversight Board in 2022, and two others attended meetings of the local NAACP.

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**Washington**

The FMW Change Group for Racial Equity arranged a visit to the National Museum of African American History and Culture to view its exhibit, Religion in Black Music, Activism and Popular Culture entitled “Spirit in the Dark.” That viewing was followed by a group discussion of issues related to racism. The Change Group also facilitated a workshop on writing testimonies of complicity like those that were part of the “Rising from the Ashes” called Interim Meeting that took place last December.