**Annual Report 2025:**

**Reparations Action Working Group of BYM**

**Statement of who we are.** The Reparations Action Working Group (RAWG)’s goals are to learn more about the reparations movement in our country, including actions Friends are taking and to be a resource for the Yearly Meeting; to encourage BYM Friends to become a voice for reparations within their local Meetings, the Yearly Meeting and in the wider world; and to share our material resources so that we can support efforts for economic and social equity in our communities.

Specifically, RAWG’s work focuses on reparations for historic and present day harms to African Americans and Indigenous peoples in the United States, increasing awareness of this history and finding ways to address these so that our future can be free of such harms, and we can live together peacefully as equals. Most of our work to date has focused on reparations for African Americans, in part because BYM has an Indigenous Affairs Committee, and in part because we have African Americans in our worshiping community and addressing the harms within our community is a necessary part of reparations work.

RAWG is now under the care of the Ministry and Pastoral Care Committee.

**Spiritual state of RAWG.** RAWG members believe that working for reparations should not be controversial or worrisome. We believe that there is nothing more positive than seeking to repair harms that were done recently and in centuries past.With the desire for repair comes a deep faith that we can build the beloved community, in keeping eith the Quaker belief that there is God within all of us, worshiping and working for justice as equals, in peace, and for peace. In a world where we feel we are against so many things that are happening, seeking reparations is a process that invites us to build positive relationships, take positive actions, and build the world we would like to see.

Our working group has grown this year as individuals and as a worshiping, discerning group. At our monthly meetings, we share the work we are doing in our local Meetings and wider community, share what we are learning, and offer spiritual support to one another. We are gathered in the Spirit and have developed a sense of trust and appreciation for each other and for the ways the Spirit is leading us.

We hold a concern for reparations for the whole Yearly Meeting, and in this area we do not feel as spiritually rooted. RAWG is asking BYM Friends to join us in this reparations work. We finish this BYM year sensing that others have not yet to understand our leadings. We feel tolerated, but not understood. As a worshiping community, engaging one another’s leadings seems an important thing to do for the strength and health of our community. We hope that more Friends will come to understand our work.

**We Celebrate BYM’s first reparations action in over 120 years**. Making reparations is not new to BYM, but it has been a while. The Indigenous Affairs Committee sponsored the request that BYM provide material resources that could support a Native language rejuvenation program of the Pawnee Nation now in Oklahoma., In the later 1800’s, BYM, like many faith organizations, supported what were called Indian Schools, but which really had the goal not of educating Indigenous children but of acculturating them forcefully into mainstream American life and in lower economic classes. Following a reparations process, BYM learned the history of its historical relationship with the Pawnee and approved the first steps toward addressing this harm.

RAWG supported the IAC’s efforts by providing a workshop on a general overview of what is involved in reparations, which was followed by a workshop by the IAC giving the specific details of their request for the Pawnee Nation.

**Educational events for local Meetings and BYM.** RAWG gave several presentations on reparations and reparative justice in the past year, in addition to giving the workshop in support of the IAC request for the Pawnee Nation. We gave a talk at Alexandria Meeting, and later provided two tutorials on reparations for Sandy Spring Meeting, which is taking its first steps in learning their full history and forming a statement acknowledging that the Meeting, in various ways, participated in chattel slavery. Acknowledgement is an early step in the reparations process, which ultimately focuses on addressing the harms done by Friends in earlier and current times.

For the Yearly Meeting, we sponsored a talk by a national speaker on reparations, Rev. Dr. Robert Turner, who spoke to us about the history of reparations proposed but thwarted in the US, and explained the enduring impact of racial massacres that occurred through the last century. He pointed out ways that racism affects everyone today. He then asked us what Quakers are called to do today. He told us that he hopes Quakers will not just learn about reparations but actively work with him in solidarity for reparations for African Americans in our country to complete the work of our Quaker ancestors. Rev. Turner shared fellowship and conversation after his talk for a generous amount of time.

**Plans continue for a fund for retrospective justice.** We are planning to establish an independent non-profit organization that would create a reparative and retrospective fund.. A group now is being formed composed of people impacted by racism, who will serve as the founding board of directors and will establish the more specific purposes of the fund. This action is being taken because a separate reparations fund is not permitted within BYM]

**Working with Friends.** RAWG embraced the Friends World Committee on Consultation’s tapestry statement on ubuntu In August 2024, 500 Friends who gathered in South Africa together created a tapestry document, a statement on ubuntu, a word that “ refers to the deeply held belief, morality and custom that every person is worthy of being recognised, respected and heard, and that we as human beings are all interdependent.” We hope that Friends will find a way to share this document that speaks of repair and building equitable relationships and more nearly become the beloved community. a<https://fwcc.world/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/WPM-2024-tapestry-and-prayer_KiSwahili-Espanol-English.pdf>

We have heard from and been in touch with other local Meetings in BYM who are taking actions for reparations. We plan to have these actions listed on our BYM webpage and we will have workshops on this topic at Annual Session soon so that local Meetings can inspire and support one another.

At the end of the last calendar year we asked BYM to give a modest sum of money to the Manumission 339 and Beyond Project, an organization led by a Philadelphia YM Friend that is seeking reparations for descendants of the people enslaved by Friends in PYM and then manumitted. But funds could not be given. We hope that BYM will begin a practice of sharing our resources to support reparations initiatives.

**Witnessing to our faith in the wider world.** RAWG endorsed the Rally for National Reparations that was held in May in Washington, DC. We were the only Quaker entity listed in the endorsements. A number of our members, along with other Friends, attended the rally.

Unfortunately, our request that BYM as a whole endorse the rally was not approved at Interim Meeting because Friends were not in unity with the statement,“I pledge to respect in word and deed the people and organizations that are part of the Reparations Movement in the United States.” RAWG’s endorsement was not changed by this. We hope that Friends can find a way to join in wider efforts initiated by other organizations when the goals and processes they follow are in keeping with those of Friends.

RAWG has become a member of the Smithsonian’s Museum of African American History and Culture following a request that faith communities act in solidarity with the museum whose mission is to present the truth of African American history. A simple membership helps us to show our solidarity with the museum in a time when the presentation of this history is being threatened by new national policies.

A new pojrect of RAWG’s is our new and growing friendship with Rev. Robert Turner and supporting his ministry on reparations. Rev. Turner is the pastor of the AME Empowerment Temple in Baltimore and is part of the National Reparations Commission and other national organizations. Part of his faith witness is walking 42.9 miles from Baltimore to the White House each month, in one day. Some of our members have walked with Rev. Turner, made signs for his walks, and have been blessed by the depth of his faith and his ministry.

**Next steps for RAWG.** We plan to build a wider base of support within BYM and the wider world of Friends. We invite all Friends in BYM to look more deeply into Quaker history, both general history and the history of local Meetings, to find the ways that Friends have been both very helpful in standing against the injustices of racism, and the ways that they participated in these injustices. We need to know the full history - to gain strength from our ancestors' good deeds, address the impact of the harms that were done, and make sure those harms are not repeated.

**What can Friends do?** We ask Friends in BYM to learn more about reparations in any way they would like. Information is widely available through a simple web search. We recommend Rev. Turner’s book, *Creating a Culture of Repair; taking action on the road to* reparations, which gives a concise overview of history and the need for reparations, and gives a list of 100 things people can do. This book helps us find our way.

Please call on RAWG. We are glad to come speak to you, help you with your discernment. We will do our best to answer your questions and concerns. We want to work with all of you.

Our working group members are: Ellen Cronin, Kris Loken, Khalila Lomax, Peirce Hammond (Ministry and Pastoral Care), Phil Caroom, Jolee Robinson, Nathan Shroyer, Rae Carter, David Etheridge, Sue Marcus, Beth Haw (Working Group on Racism), Marcy Seitel (Clerk).