**BYM Working Group on Racism  
Annual Report (2023)**

**Major activities**

Two years ago, the Working Group on Racism recommended that the Yearly Meeting hire a consultant to conduct an antiracism audit of BYM. A group of Friends in BYM leadership positions asked the Interim Meeting in March 2022 to approve requesting proposals from potential consultants to do that audit. The Interim Meeting decided to lay over that request while Friends explored whether the work could be done without hiring a consultant. That exploration led to the development of an ”antiracism roadmap,” which was presented to Interim Meeting in March 2023. The group that developed that roadmap is now working on an effort to listen to the thoughts of BYM Friends about using the roadmap to guide their antiracism work in lieu of an audit by consultants.

Throughout 2022 the WGR sponsored the One Book Project encouraging BYM Friends to read and discuss *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson. WGR Friends Kris Loken, Barbara Bezdek, Peirce Hammond, and Ellen Cronin organized the *Caste* Online Reading Group. Fifty-eight Friends from around the Yearly Meeting registered for the sessions that were held on a mostly biweekly basis from September to December 2022.

Several WGR Friends helped design, organize, and contribute to an online programmed Meeting for Worship with a Concern for the Impact of Slavery in March 2022. About 70 Friends attended on Zoom.

During Annual Session several Friends of Color over several days gave clear messages about White Friends’ lack of movement to dismantle the racism within BYM causing them harm. The BYM Presiding Clerk called a Programmed Interim Meeting entitled “Rising from the Ashes” on December 3, 2022, at Stony Run Friends Meeting. During that Meeting several Friends of Color gave powerfully moving vocal ministry. Another component of that event was the posting and reading of testimonies of complicity in racism from White Friends, including several WGR members. About 50 Friends attended the Meeting for Worship in the Stony Run Meetinghouse while around 100 Friends attended online. WGR members Barbara Bezdek and Marcy Seitel are conducting a follow-up program to help more Friends write their own testimonies.

Powell House of New York Yearly Meeting asked BYM Friends to contribute one thousand dollars so that it would not have to charge people who attended BYM STRIDE Coordinator Khalila Lomax’s presentation on “Equality.” The Growing Diverse Leadership Committee (GDL) and the WGR successfully raised the funds to make that presentation free for everyone.

The Working Group developed a statement entitled, “**Why Should White BYM Friends Do the Hard Work of Overcoming Their Racism?” That statement is posted on the BYM website.**

**The Working Group regrets the loss of its sole member of color and is reflecting on that loss.**

The Yearly Meeting allocated $20,000 in its 2023 budget to the WGR for antiracism training and racial trauma healing. Of that amount the WGR has allocated $10,000 for racial trauma healing work and the other $10,000 for antiracism training. The BYM Global Majority Caucus is designing racial trauma healing work, which will begin with a workshop in late July 2023. Individual Global Majority Friends will then be supported financially in participating in racial trauma healing work that meets their individual needs. Five organizations responded to the WGR request for proposals for antiracism training. The Working Group selected Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training to do that work. Crossroads is scheduled to have sessions for BYM on September 16 and October 14, 2023.

**The 2022 BYM Annual Session Workshops**

The Working Group sponsored three workshops for the 2022 Annual Session. One workshop facilitated by Peirce Hammond and David Etheridge was a “Connecting Local Meetings” session on efforts to lower racial barriers in local Meetings. Another workshop facilitated by Sabrina McCarthy and David Etheridge was entitled “Quaker Response to Enslavement in BYM Territory.” The third workshop, facilitated by several members of the Working Group, invited Friends who have read or are reading *Caste* to share their experiences and ways they may feel stuck.

**Change Groups and Related Activities**

Much of the Working Group’s focus has been on encouraging and supporting racial justice Change Groups within local Meetings. Some Meetings have established or are working on establishing formal Change Groups. That process itself has occasioned a focus on racial dynamics within those local Meetings. Other Meetings have done racial justice work without forming a Change Group. The WGR serves as a clearinghouse, soliciting updates on local Change Group activities shared three times a year to facilitate exchange of information and inspiration as to what may be possible.

**Workshops for 2023 BYM Annual Session**

The Working Group has agreed to do three workshops for the 2023 Annual Session. David Etheridge and Peirce Hammond continue to facilitate a “Connecting Local Meetings” session on efforts to lower racial barriers in local Meetings. Sabrina McCarthy and Ellen Cronin will facilitate a Mini-Spiritual Formation Retreat – Anti-Racism as a Core Spiritual Practice. A workshop on Quaker Faith and Political Action will be led by Carol Marujo and Tad Jose.

**Within the Working Group on Racism**

Before doing other business, the Working Group makes time at its monthly meetings for Friends to share their recent experiences with respect to race. Friends share books, articles, films, and presentations on the topic of race that have come to their attention as well as personal experiences. Friends feel it is an invaluable component of their meetings. Each month the Working Group also takes time to consider and discuss a different aspect of how “white supremacy culture” affects its work and that of the Yearly Meeting as well as what can be done about it.

**Communications within BYM**

The Working Group is under the care of the BYM Ministry and Pastoral Care Committee. The clerk of the WGR keeps that committee updated on Working Group activities and concerns and consults with the committee on WGR work. Several Working Group members participate actively on GDL and the Reparations Action Working Group (RAWG). The WGR Clerk is a member of the GDL Committee. The GDL Clerk and a RAWG Co-clerk are members of the WGR.

The Working Group maintains a list of Monthly Meeting liaisons who receive a monthly item for their newsletters or other means of dissemination. It also maintains a Google group for distributing information about WGR work and resources related to racial justice to about 175 interested Friends.