

Working Document of the Undoing Racism Group of PYM: Fostering Beloved Communities of Love and Justice

The Call into Beloved Community

During the 2014 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) Annual Sessions, a Friend of color (among others) observed that PYM's diversity does not reflect the diversity of our neighborhoods, and called on PYM to address the racism that still persists in our Society. In response, a multiracial group of Friends came together at Sessions and has continued to meet since, holding honest conversations and seeking way forward for PYM and its faith communities. This Undoing Racism Group shares a collective vision and proposes actions which may work to develop the kinds of beloved faith communities we wish for our Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meetings, along with other bodies under our care.

A Vision for Beloved Community

All PYM members and Meetings responsibly co-create that community which graces our Worship and other forms of Spiritual communion. As Bayard Rustin put it, "Good will and love build the sacred base of real [community], in which the dignity and equal opportunity of every person is sacred and guaranteed."

Our Current Condition

Friends yearn for Beloved Community even as we live in a world marred by racism and the huge harm it has caused for centuries. Racism belittles us all, but people of color suffer the most. Many describe the central issue as "white supremacy," which legal scholar Frances Lee Ansley defines as "a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings." Friends may not consciously collude with these systems or realize the ways we participate in supporting them. However, to the extent that we as Friends do not actively dismantle white supremacy and racism, we remain complicit with and perpetuate them.

The October 2014 issue of Friends Journal featured articles by F/friends of color who testify that racism persists within the Religious Society of Friends, including within PYM. European cultural norms, which influenced the founding of the United States and of Quakerism, continue to be dominant within PYM as they are within the larger society. But that is only part of the story. Just as the Living Christ invited Early Friends into greater "perfection," our Guide encourages us today to be open to continuing revelation and the growth it asks of us. All of us deserve Beloved Community in our meetings; yet today, Friends of color experience daily the weight of racism and white supremacy. Our belief in "that of God in everyone" holds us responsible to our God, ourselves, and other people, to undo racism and white supremacy both within ourselves and within our faith communities.

A Spirit-Led Invitation

To be a community richly reflective of all people and to assist Spirit to move freely within and between us all, will require that our meeting communities learn to embrace a world-view of wider and more varied cultural norms, to identify and dismantle white privilege, and to engage in anti-racism work within and beyond the Religious Society of Friends. The Undoing Racism Group sees this as vital spiritual work from which all Friends can benefit. We freely acknowledge that this requires long-haul commitment, and we believe that, with Divine assistance, PYM Friends can co-create sweet Beloved Community, welcoming, inclusive, and nurturing of us all. We invite Friends and Meetings to join us, as they are led.

Priorities and Plan of Action (a work in progress) of Undoing Racism Group of PYM

The Undoing Racism Group, as individuals and corporately, feels Spirit powerfully rising among us. We share the following as a work in progress with our PYM community. We have formed working groups to address each of the following four areas. We hope that you will join us in implementing the following actions, and we welcome your heart-felt prayers, thoughts, words, and actions, to help this vision become a reality.

1. **Learning communities.** We commit to put racial justice at the center of our spiritual commitments, to make changes to our structures and practices as we learn, and to:
 - a. Provide and participate in annual trainings for PYM Friends and staff, to learn models for discussing racism and white privilege. These will include separate spaces for white people and for people of color, as well as opportunities for these groups to join together.
 - b. Provide and participate in trainings for white Quakers to learn effective ways to identify and lovingly interrupt instances of racism. Create and nurture ongoing support circles for white Friends committed to this work.
 - c. Provide ongoing programs for Young Friends and Middle School Friends to learn about racism and ways to address it in their own lives.
 - d. Encourage participation in the White Privilege Conference in Philadelphia, March 2016.
 - e. Provide a library of related resources on the PYM website.
 - f. Examine and revise our Quaker practices and structures, based on discerning that which is essential to Quaker faith. Pare away those artifacts of white, class-specific culture we may find there.

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2. **Support Friends of color.** We commit to finding practices that actively support Friends of color so they may feel welcome and safe to grow as fully engaged members and leaders of our faith communities, by:
 - a. Supporting Friends of color through the development of leadership, support committees, travel committees along with providing childcare to enable meeting participation and active involvement.
 - b. Providing opportunities for Friends of color to gather together.
 - c. Developing and implementing a clear process to respond early, humbly, firmly, and lovingly to support both Friends who experience racist behavior among Friends and Meeting communities which, wittingly or not, commit it.

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3. **Connect with communities of color.** We commit to reaching out and learning more about people and communities of color in our surrounding neighborhoods, seeking to find how Friends can be supportive and collaborate more effectively with these neighbors, and to:
 - a. Teach and support meetings to find effective and spiritually grounded ways to connect with and companion those local communities most impacted by oppression.
 - b. Learn ways to develop meaningful relationships with people of color in the communities in which we reside, knowing that real love is a motivator for change, and that our inevitable mistakes may become the source of our greatest learning.

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4. **Hold ourselves accountable.** We commit to hold ourselves accountable to co-create a new kind of PYM community committed to undoing racism and examining and ending white privilege within PYM. Toward that goal, we will work to implement the following mechanisms:
 - a. Assess annually our progress in undoing racism and eliminating white privilege among PYM.
 - b. Assist a portion of the state of the meeting reports to reflect on meetings' efforts to understand and address racism and white supremacy.
 - c. Advocate time is allocated for this work annually at PYM Annual Sessions throughout the 5-year implementation of the Long-Range Plan, with the assistance of PYM's clerk and the Sessions Planning Group.

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