

## Proposed Structure and Leadership for the Undoing Racism Group of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

### History of the URG group

In January, 2015 at a Called Meeting of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, the body came to unity on the following minute of action:

“Friends tested and affirmed the work of our clerks and our elders, since being tasked during Annual Sessions in July 2014, to help discern a way forward in addressing many ‘-isms’ including-racism, sexism, genderism and classism. Friends also heartily affirmed that as a Yearly Meeting we:

- Commit to increase our consciousness as Friends about the intersection of privilege and race in our culture and spiritual community. We know our knowledge is often limited by our own experiences and that we have much to learn from each other and from outside resources.
- Commit to move forward with our entire community. The yearly meeting is the community of all our individual Friends and monthly meetings and this work needs to be done with the involvement of all of us.
- Commit to integrate this work into what we do in an ongoing way at the yearly meeting level. We want this work to become part of the fabric of what we do whenever we get together as yearly meeting members and attenders.”

The Undoing Racism Group of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting is a group that arose at annual sessions in 2014 in response to this urgent call to live out our testimonies and faith more fully by addressing racism in our midst as a yearly meeting. A group of about 30 PhYM members began meeting, created a plan and has taken leadership in moving forward the work committed to in the above minute and to address PhYM’s query (put forward at annual sessions in 2015), “What is God calling Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Quakers to do next to address racism and white supremacy in the Religious Society of Friends and beyond?” We have offered leadership on this query by providing learning opportunities, guidance and workshops during Yearly Meeting sessions, training to clerks and elders, and in developing other pathways forward for the yearly meeting.

### Our charge and structure

We believe and our experience has shown that an elemental aspect of undoing racism is decentering whiteness. To do this effectively it makes sense to place the Undoing Racism group, as the sole body within Philadelphia Yearly Meeting comprised of significant numbers of Friends of color in leadership along with white Friends who have been engaged in sustained study and practice of ending racism in a position that facilitates accountability and forward movement. In order for PhYM to fully live out its commitment to end racism in our midst, it will be essential for the body to confer with and understand that unless we are actively resisting it, a majority white body will perpetuate racism. We believe it is essential that the Undoing Racism group be placed within PhYM in such a way that it has the authority to hold the yearly meeting accountable for its stated aims.

The Undoing Racism Group (URG) requires a structure and governance that does not fit into any current category, or under any of the three councils of the new PhYM structure. Therefore, we, the ad hoc governance group and the URG clerks, recommend the following:

1. Undoing Racism Group is an autonomous group (not under any of the existing PhYM councils) of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Friends serving the yearly meeting in its calling to address racism and end white supremacy.
2. Using Friends process, whenever it is discerned that new clerks are needed, a naming group within the Undoing Racism Group will be formed to nominate Undoing Racism clerks and URG will come together for a meeting for worship with attention to business to discern how the Spirit is leading us in this matter.
3. Undoing Racism Group will meet as called (approximately monthly) and will form working groups, subgroups, sprints and collaboratives as needed/as the Spirit moves.
4. Two of the three appointed co-clerks will identify as Friends of color or of mixed race.
5. The URG group (through an appointed nominating committee) will appoint representatives to serve as members of each of the 3 councils; Quaker Life, Administrative and Nominating. The URG co-clerks will confer and consult with the councils as needed. We will give these names to the nominating committee

with the expectation that they will be affirmed.

6. There will be a support and accountability group formed, consisting primarily of Friends of Color with allies who have demonstrated their capacity in undoing racism, named by URG, to lovingly and faithfully hold Yearly Meeting as a whole and the presiding and alternate clerks in particular accountable in the area/s of addressing racism and ending white supremacy.
7. We ground our work in the Spirit. URG, itself, is an open group. Any active participant in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting community is welcome to participate and be active in our meetings for worship with attention to business, as well as the subgroups, working groups, sprints or collaboratives that form. Indeed, we hope that as has been true from the beginning, members of the councils and the clerk's table will consider themselves members of URG. However, URG co-clerks and appointed sub-group clerks (or their designees) are the official representatives for the Undoing Racism Group and have a critical role in communicating across the yearly meeting.
8. Until it is no longer necessary URG will annually name someone to be on the sessions planning committee, the Faith and Practice rewriting committee, and work with the clerks to make sure that there is at least one aspect of addressing racism and white supremacy on the agenda at sessions. The support and accountability group of Friends of Color and allies will periodically assess our progress. They will hold the responsibility to discern if and when we may be ready to lay the Undoing Racism Group down.
9. At least one of the Undoing Racism group co-clerks or their designee will regularly attend meetings of PhYM leadership (quarterly clerks, monthly meeting clerks, etc.) when they meet.
10. The Undoing Racism clerks or their designees will meet quarterly or as needed with PhYM clerks, alternate clerks, general secretary, and council clerks to consult on moving forward on addressing racism within PhYM.

Goals and objectives:

Our main goal is to eliminate racism and white supremacy in our yearly meeting, PhYM. We will do this by forming the Support and Accountably Group, consisting of Friends of Color and allies to hold the Yearly Meeting and our clerks accountable in a loving and faithful manner. We will also assist and advise the Yearly Meeting and the three councils in getting training in inclusion and diversity. We will write queries on addressing racism and white supremacy that any and all subgroups of the YM and Monthly Meetings could and should use regularly. We will advise in the writing/editing of job descriptions and search committees for all YM employees, presiding clerks, elders and leadership in general so that addressing racism is woven into all our work and roles. We will support Friends of Color in various ways including securing funding for an annual PhYM retreat for Friends of Color. We will form (and dissolve) working groups, subgroups, sprints and collaboratives as needed/as the Spirit moves us in our work.

(We forward this to the implementation committee with the recommendation that this will be included in the next version of the handbook and that it be presented at annual sessions and be circulated broadly.)