**Update on racial justice Change Group work**

**for BYM Winter 2024 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).

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**Adelphi**

Since our last report in October 2023, we have undertaken a four-part series of readings and discussions on reparations, continued our monthly series of films and discussions focusing on members of oppressed communities, reached out to our local neighborhood community, and continued to offer anti-racism resources through our twice-weekly Silent Announcements. Finally, in January, we convened our first annual review of our anti-racism work, inviting the whole meeting to a second-hour discussion.

**Reparations series:**

October, session 1: What was broken?

November, session 2: Embracing the joy of reparations

January, session 3: What’s the difference between reparations and charity?

February, session 4: Reparations and relationships

Though some of the reparations discussions were thought-provoking and significant, these sessions consistently drew a small number of Friends.

**Films and Discussions**:

October – *Salt of the Earth* – Mexican American Miners in Northern New Mexico

November – *Medicine Woman* –Native healers and the first Native American woman to become a doctor in 1865, Susan La Flesche Picotte

December – *The Mask You Live In* – challenging America’s narrow definition of masculinity

January – *Union Maids* – the story of three women who lived through the sit-downs, scabs, unemployment, hunger marches, and violence of the beginning of unionizing in the 1930s in Chicago.

February – a special in-person showing of *Rustin* at the Meetinghouse

March – (coming up soon) – *Not Done: Women Remaking America*

These films are almost always available for free on Kanopy. Friends are encouraged to watch the film before gathering for the discussion – but to come anyway if they haven’t seen it. The film discussions seem to draw in people who haven’t otherwise been participating in small groups or other Meeting-sponsored anti-racism activities.

**Anti-Racism Resources:**

In our twice weekly Silent Announcements, we continue to offer resources (both events and readings) for adults and children.

**Anti-Racism Assessment:**

During Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business in December 2022, Adelphi Friends Meeting approved and minuted its commitment to anti-racism. The minute concludes with a promise:

*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.*

In January 2024, we held our first annual accountability session, attended by approximately 30 Friends. The session was framed in terms of the *Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Institution* by Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training. (<https://crossroadsantiracism.org/>) That document presents columns of characteristics that might describe the actions and attitudes of a community, business, or organization on a path toward becoming anti-racist.

Column 3, for example, titled "Symbolic Change," describes a meeting that sees itself as non-racist and has made official pronouncements to that effect, and is taking steps to be more inclusive in participation, leadership, and committees. But a “column 3” Meeting is still mostly unaware about how the systemic facts of power and privilege play out in day-to-day interactions and in “policies and procedures.”

Column 4, titled "Identity Change," on the other hand, describes a Meeting that is beginning to take on institutional structures and systems that sustain racism. The Meeting sponsors anti-racism training, begins to be accountable to racially oppressed communities, and moves toward identifying itself as anti-racist rather than merely “non-racist.” But the structures of power in a “column 4” Meeting still haven’t changed much.

Last year, the Change Group estimated that Adelphi Meeting was in column 3 (Symbolic Change) – which was a step or two away, we thought, from where we started. In our first annual assessment, we asked Friends to look at these characteristics and share their thoughts about where we are now as a Meeting. Our discussion was rich and encouraging. We heard reflections on many aspects of our work together:

* There was acknowledgment and appreciation of a cultural shift – that we are beginning to embrace a community-wide identity as an anti-racist institution, including being more aware of and “anti” our own individual racism.
* The work of preparing for and adopting our Anti-Racism statement last December helped us come to see a unity of vision that had not been clear to us before.
* Some Friends saw a measurable change in our policies and decision-making and the “twinkling” of an awareness that we ought to be examining “continuing patterns, privilege, paternalism, and control.”
* We have had anti-racism trainings – at the “101” level but not the “201” level. The “201” level would be oriented toward action and change.
* The small groups organized in 2020 – many of which continue now – have been the locus of personal change, and many people now feel invested in seeing the Meeting make systemic changes.
* Making use of the BYM Anti-Racism queries - in Meetings for business and in committee work - can help us to focus on the need for systemic changes in our discernment and actions. Perhaps embedding these queries in the language of the testimonies they carry out would help us to see more clearly how integral they are to our faith.
* We have a longish history of being visibly and vocally inclusive of LGBTQ+ folks and these Friends are well incorporated into the Meeting’s activities and “governance structure” such as it is. Likewise, people in the Global Majority need to see others from Global Majority communities here, in order to feel welcomed and comfortable in Meeting.
* It would be helpful to know more about the work that people in our Meeting are doing in the community, to get to know each other better and to learn more about the ties we may already have with our surrounding community.
* The level of participation in this anti-racism journey is mixed. Some have not started their own journey yet but keep participating in a Meeting that has taken on this journey as a core value.

One member of the Change Group reports that, in their small group discussion on anti-racism assessment, the group felt that there was *actual, palpable change in the AFM community*—feeling a growing identity as an antiracist community. The group talked about their greater comfort with talking about race (vs when the anti-racism small groups first began in the fall of 2020) and a greater willingness to sit with discomfort as we are challenged to become more and more aware of our own entanglement with White supremacy culture. The group felt that this sense of forward movement doesn’t lead to resting on our laurels; instead, it engenders hope that change can actually occur – and *that* fact spurs more action. We are finding more Light.

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**Alexandria**

Alexandria Friends Change group is in abeyance while we participate in Trust Circles.  We were trained by Kathryn and Clinton Pettus in April of 2023 and we began meeting in a Trust Circle over the summer.  In September, we welcomed more people into the group, and we were able to form a second Trust Circle.  Each Trust Circle has 6-10 members and meets once a month.  These Trust Circles continue in 2024.

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**Bethesda**

Bethesda Friends Meeting completed the first formal stage of its Collective Journey of Inward/Outward Healing as it pertains to Systemic Racism in June.

The desired outcome of the process was a declaration of BFM’s identity and shared defined commitments re systemic racism. BFM is committed to confronting and healing from systemic racism, using practices learned, and adopting one or more Meeting-wide projects to help repair past and present injustices. Overall, participants rated their experience of the journey at 4.48 out of 5 in a survey conducted at the end of the process.

Next steps include incorporating anti-racism into existing processes and committee work; building a repository of resources for discussions and education; and forming three action groups, one focusing on community nurturing and education, one on reparative work, and one on working with other organizations.

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**Dunnings Creek**

Since last November, we planned for and had our fourth *Still Listening* speaker event. We hosted Michael Corle, a museum designer who helps local museums reimagine their sites. He spoke of the new information that has come to light regarding the people who first inhabited Pennsylvania and surrounding states. This information has helped to reframe narratives involving stories often told here and what really happened and why.

We are planning to have our fifth event on May 19th when Dr Garnell Washington will speak on the topic of:

“Reckoning with Our Understandings and Misunderstandings of History: The Lone Ranger was Black and Who was Tonto?”

**Gunpowder**

As noted in our last report we have continued working as a Meeting with our “One Book,” *Healing Resistance: A Radically Different Response to Harm* by Kazu Haga, which we agreed to read, share, and discuss this year. In October and November, we held forums in which we further explored the concepts and principles in our “One Book” as our community has been drawn to the capacity of principles of nonviolence to work toward the building of beloved community among us and beyond our Meeting House.

At this time the Working Group on Racial Reconciliation is planning to offer further work with *Healing Resistance* in the form of a book discussion later this Spring.

We continue to support the McKim Community Center in Baltimore in their work to strengthen their community. Gunpowder’s McKim Partnership Working Group follows the lead of staff and volunteers at McKim to coordinate a variety of activities, including several days when we host the McKim summer camp at Gunpowder. We host an annual McKim youth and adult leadership retreat at our Meeting House in which some Gunpowder Friends participate. This year Garfield Thompson, Executive Director of the McKim Center, and Miss tree turtle, co-director of the Baltimore Wisdom Project (a partner of the McKim Center) presented a forum on the work and philosophy of the McKim program in strengthening community to support young people to become leaders and peacemakers. Gunpowder Friends will again participate in the regional McKim Community Games held at Frederick Douglass High School this April in Baltimore.

Longtime Baltimore resident and co-founder of The Baltimore Peace Movement (formerly known as Baltimore Cease Fire), Letrice Gant, met with the Gunpowder Community at a forum in February to share the story of the Baltimore Peace Movement, how it came to be, how it operates, the work it does and its importance in the work of reducing violence, creating peace, and building community.

Gunpowder continues to offer financial support to the BYM Camping/STRIDE program to help diversify our camps.

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**Herndon**

The Antiracism Working Group at Herndon Friends Meeting planned and hosted a dinner/movie event at Herndon Friends Meeting House on February 17th. A group of about 18 members and attenders watched the movie, *Rustin*. Afterwards, everyone ate dinner provided by the ARWG (with a couple of desserts brought by others) while discussing the movie. Queries previously planned by the ARWG had been written on index cards and placed on all the dinner tables; these were used to guide the discussions.

A member of the ARWG History Committee/subgroup (which works on researching and addressing the local legacy and racist history of the HFM Meeting House) reported in January that the Planning Operations Manager of the Town of Herndon contacted him regarding their efforts to change the wording of a historical sign (near the HFM Meeting House) to include accurate information about segregation. The Planning Operations Manager stated that personnel from his office had talked to persons who had been affected by segregation of the Fortnightly Library (which eventually became the Herndon Friends Meeting House) and the Planning Operations Office is working on the language for the new historical sign; they are trying to complete this process by the end of March.

A member of the ARWG Racial Justice Subgroup (which works on social/racial justice issues,) plans to continue her work on the Political Action Committee of the Fairfax NAACP.

In addition, Herndon Friends Meeting continues its monthly vigils for peace, justice, and equality at the Meeting House.

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**Homewood**

After previously being laid down, the Homewood Change Group efforts restarted in 2023 with three people. Soon after, two of us attended the Crossroads Anti-Racism Training sponsored by the BYM Working Group on Racism. In December 2023, our Monthly Meeting for Business approved our re-formation as the HFM Dismantling Racism Change Group under the care of the Meeting as a whole. In early January 2024, we sponsored a viewing of the film “Rustin”. Later that month, we co-sponsored, along with Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) and Interfaith Action for Human Rights (IAHR), a Criminal Justice Reform Community Forum. It was attended by over 100 people, some at Homewood and some virtual. At Meeting for Business in February we brought forward and the Meeting minuted approval of support for the Correctional Ombudsman Bill and the Mandela Act (to severely limit solitary confinement), two items before the Maryland legislature in this session. In the last few weeks, several more members and attenders of Homewood have joined the DRCG. This larger group recently shared what draws us to this work and brainstormed how we want to move forward. A film and discussion event, actions in support of the two bills mentioned above, and a field trip were prominent ideas.

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**Langley Hill**

Our Anti-racism Working Group is smaller and meets less often than 1-2 years ago.  Several members have left the Meeting and one died.  We  have scaled down activities and did the following since Fall 2022:

- led the Meeting to adopt a Declaration on inclusiveness and diversifying our faith community and working to identify patterns of racism and pursue peaceful solutions to counteract these patterns. These Queries are stated at the start of each business meeting and posted in the Meetinghouse.

- wrote short articles for the monthly newsletter on race-related issues and new books

-  encouraged all to watch the film *Backs against the Wall* on the life of Howard Thurman and followed this with a second hour discussion led by Michael Conklin who studied under him.  Howard Thurman was a mentor to Martin Luther King Jr.

- we also encouraged folks to watch the powerful new feature-film movie *Rustin* about the life of Quaker Civil Rights leader Bayard Rustin.

-  some members attend a regular Saturday vigil on racism at the Falls Church Presbyterian Church and join the monthly Allyship discussions on Zoom led by the Loudoun Co (Va) NAACP Religious Affairs Committee.

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**Mattaponi**

Ours is a very small Meeting with members and participants from five rural Virginia counties and two European countries, therefore, it is difficult to participate as a group in any one effort. With that in mind, the kinds of efforts individuals have made in their own communities include:

• One participant is on the Executive Meeting of a local NAACP Branch producing communications in support of its programming and attended a special Sunday service at a local Black Baptist Church honoring trailblazers in the local African American community

• Through their roles as political committee chairs, and election workers and observers along with efforts for voter registration, securing signatures on ballot petitions, and canvassing; individuals in our meeting are supporting voter participation and fair elections, as well as local, state, and national candidates—including African American, Hispanic, and White— whose platforms address the needs and concerns of minority communities.

• One couple regularly contributes ecologically sustainably grown produce to their local food bank and so has a part in providing equal access to nutritious and chemical free food that normally is only available in restaurants and high-end grocery stores.

• Our meeting joined the West Point Minister's Association which is an Interfaith Ministerial organization made up of all of the churches—both black and white—in the local community which supports interfaith dialogue and efforts in the community like a food bank.

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**Maury River**

The joyful, diverse MLK parade happened in Lexington on Jan. 15th. It was reported that hundreds with much diversity participated. A few from MRFM were there with a simple MRFM sign.

MRFM as a whole supports and has members supporting and doing activities with the Rockbridge NAACP. There are many activities such as the education committee working to hire more educators of color in the school system locally. They are working to get professional people of color to do a simple program to translate their professional experience into teaching young students.

They have a large, beautiful, full of diversity welcoming billboard with Martin Luther King to answer the large confederate flag recently planted in the area.

MRFM is a member of our local Racial Equity Coalition. They are supportive of the MRFM efforts to help with the flooding problem in Glasgow. At our January 22nd meeting it was reported that there was more hunger and homelessness of Blacks and Whites than we were aware of. We are making efforts to facilitate such new programs that are providing meals weekly in communities throughout the area.

We are planning to do a “Walk, Eat, and Talk block party in April, in honor of MLK’s dream of “mutual acceptance, interpersonal living, and shared power”.

Some of our peace and justice committee have spent time supporting local Glasgow VA with their persistent flooding in a sector of the community in which the population is predominately African American. We are making progress with contact with people in the community with direct damage from the flooding, holding public office, working with official programs, and working on a grant which could donate significant funding.

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**Midlothian**

Midlothian Friends’ Racial Justice Study Group continues to meet monthly.

At each meeting we discuss reading selections made the previous month. Over the past year we’ve completed:

* *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*, Ibram X Kendi
* *Letter From Birmingham Jail, I Have a Dream*, Martin Luther King
* *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Malcolm X
* *Richmond’s Unhealed History,* Benjamin Campbell

We’ve become more active in our community during the past six months:

* We supported Run Richmond 16.19*,* an educational/sporting event hosted in September by the Djimon Hounsou Foundation. The Foundation’s goal is to reconnect the African Diaspora and combat modern slavery. The Run passes sites important in Richmond’s Black history and explains them through a phone app available to runners. As one of many Community Partners, Midlothian Friends:
  + Promoted the Run by posting signs at MFM, Thrifty Quaker, and Richmond Friends Meeting and recording announcements for a local radio station.
  + Raised funds to cover entry fees for 11 low-income youths.
  + Fielded three runners/walkers from our Meeting.
  + Set up, staffed, and took down a race water station.
  + Initiated new connections with various social justice groups in Richmond.
* We encouraged voter participation in the 2023 November elections:
  + Involved Meeting members beyond our Group to mail postcards to registered but infrequent voters in African American neighborhoods around Richmond, encouraging them to vote in the general elections.
  + We posted signs at our Meetinghouse and Thrift Store with information about voter registration.

We’ve already started planning our 2024 activities. We expect to :

* Lead a field trip for the Meeting in late March to:
  + Richmond’s Valentine Museum’s newest exhibit*: Sculpting History at the Valentine Studio: Art, Power and the “Lost Cause” American Myth*
  + The Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site. Maggie Walker was a Richmond-based civil rights activist and entrepreneur who chartered a bank, a newspaper, and a store during the Jim Crow era and 7 years before American women had the right to vote.
* Convene a presentation for our Meeting in June by Benjamin Campbell author of *Richmond’s Unhealed History.* Partnering with Richmond Friends Meeting in a series of presentations on systemic racism.
* Repeat our participation in Run Richmond 16.19 in September.
* Mail voter encouragement cards before the November 2024 general election.

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**Richmond**

Our ad hoc Committee on Race and Racism wrote a minute describing our commitment to antiracism through a careful process of discernment described by our previous Clerk Lynda Perry, in her report last year. Richmond Friends Meeting approved this minute (attached) enthusiastically and earnestly.

* The ad hoc committee will now engage in education as a bridge toward action. The first educational program will be led by Ana Edwards on the evolution and purposes of anti-Black racism and White supremacy in the United States.
* The second will consider the historical Quaker response to race and racism, both nationally (internationally) and in our Meeting. The committee would like to include indigenous people who lived on the land we now occupy, as part of their investigation.
* And the third will link spirituality and the focus on race and racism. This will probably involve working with our Ministry & Worship Committee for our Fall Retreat program.
* Our intention is to coordinate a fourth program with Midlothian Friends Meeting which is planning a talk in June with author Ben Campbell (“Richmond’s Unhealed History”).

The committee is now trying to determine the best way to implement Meeting-wide action. As a start, committee clerks have all been sent copies of the minute and lists of the actions gleaned from last year’s sessions to get them started or encourage them to move forward.

In addition to the work of the ad hoc committee, Richmond Friends Meeting continues to publish the Thinking About Race column prepared by the BYM Working Group in each monthly newsletter.

Our People of Color Fiction Book Group continues to be very popular, lively, and quite meaningful to those who participate.

We are planning on partnering with Midlothian Friends Meeting in support of Run Richmond 16.19, a race/walk through Richmond’s Black history, which will be held on September 21, 2024.

Our Peace & Social Concerns Committee is involved in education and advocacy with and for the Global Majority. Some examples are:

* Providing dinners to Circles RVA, an anti-poverty program
* Watching and discussing the movie *Rustin*
* Marching for Peace on International Day of Peace,
* Sending a large amount of medical and hygiene supplies to Cuba.
* Selling olive oil and soap in support of the people of Palestine in Israel controlled territories
* Supporting Quaker House, VICPP,  Grace Inside, and World Central Kitchen.

Richmond Friends Meeting

Minute on Race and Racism

(revised 28 January 2024)

As Friends, our belief that there is “that of God” in everyone grounds our practice of upholding the worth of each human being. Each person is guided by an Inward Teacher toward truth; each has the capacity to experience and be transformed by Spirit. The fullness of our lives – as individuals and as a community – unfolds as we live into these spiritual truths. Just as we value each person, these core beliefs lead us to value the diversity of culture, race, and ethnicity that enrich the human family.  Richmond Friends Meeting commits to being a faith community of deep hospitality for and inclusion of all people.

We recognize that inequality and injustice based on race are deeply rooted in our society. Richmond Friends Meeting commits to challenging and repairing racism and racial bias in ourselves as individuals, within our Meeting, and in our Meeting’s relationships with the wider world.

We embrace these commitments as guides for our personal lives, our life as a community, and our Meeting’s engagement in the wider world. Living more fully into our commitments will require listening, humility, and a willingness to be transformed. It will require holding the creative tension between discernment and the urgency to right action. We hold this minute as a guide as the Meeting seeks to live into our commitments in these ways:

·       RFM will make it a clear, strong priority to understand and act on issues related to race and racism.

·       We will be undergirded by our Quaker faith as we embark on this work, seeking to reflect and strengthen our relationship with Spirit.

·       As expressions of our faith, our commitment to justice, love, and compassion — and our testimonies of equality, community, peace, integrity, simplicity, and stewardship — will guide our work.

·       We seek to be in community among different races to provide positive opportunities for mutual learning and spiritual growth.

·       Living with integrity means consistency between our actions and our deeply held beliefs. The actions we take will make clear RFM’s stand against racism and will uphold our commitment to nurturing a community inclusive of all people.

·       RFM will research and reflect on our history as a meeting in order to discern right response to any past harm and injustices, as well as to be emboldened by previous Quaker efforts at racial progress and healing.

·       We will seek to understand the history – and we lament the ongoing realities – of systemic racism. This understanding will be fundamental in discerning action.

·       RFM will collaborate with groups and organizations that promote racial healing and seek to dismantle some aspect of structural racism.

·       We will seek to support and learn from the initiatives of people of color and those of Quaker organizations that are addressing issues of race and racism.

·       We recognize that this is an ongoing process, and we will hold each other in the Light and accompany one another as we seek to learn, to be transformed, and to be of service.

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**Roanoke**

As individuals we’re involved in the Roanoke Branch NAACP, the Roanoke Reparations Group, and the Reparations Book Group. Now we are asking if our Meeting should do more. If we want our Meeting to establish our own anti-racism working group. We are asking questions like “Where do we start?” “What is BYM doing as well as other Quaker meetings?” “How do we raise awareness in our Meeting?”

One approach we are thinking about is perhaps planning four events over the next year to help Roanoke Friends get involved and raise awareness. The first of these might be to have someone from the WGR or others from BYM talk with Roanoke Friends perhaps in a Zoom meeting.

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**York**

We have been reading the book *Just Mercy* in the months of January and February with lively discussions third First Day before Meeting. Bryan Stevenson's powerful writing and dedication to justice have been inspiring to us all and provide an example of passion and dedication to the Truth.