

GDL Final Report for 2022 to Baltimore Yearly Meeting

1. General

The Growing Diverse Leadership Committee (GDL) meets monthly except in August. Five to 15 people join each call. We begin our meetings in worship and read portions of the *Declaration of BYM as an Anti-Racist Faith Community*. We next hear from our STRIDE Coordinator, Khalila Lomax, discuss current issues, reports from STRIDE liaisons, liaisons to the BYM Working Group on Racism and the Reparations Action Working Group, and conclude with silent worship.

Membership: Nominated members are St. Clair Allmond, Tronette Anochie, David Etheridge, Peirce Hammond, Chester McCoy, and Michael Wallace. Members representing other committees or *ex officio* are: Elizabeth “Betsy” Roush (Camping Program Committee), Margaret “Meg” Boyd Meyer (BYM Interim Meeting Clerk), and Stephanie “Steph” Bean (BYM Presiding Clerk). Peirce Hammond serves GDL as clerk and Betsy Roush as recorder. We have been joined several times in this year by Sarah Gillooly, BYM General Secretary, as well as by Marcy Baker Seitel, co-Clerk of the Reparations Action Working Group. While David Etheridge is a nominated member of GDL, he also clerks the BYM Working Group on Racism and represents that Group. Other Friends have been kept apprised of our activities through receipt of our agendas and minutes.

GDL’s 2022 and 2023 budgets: GDL’s 2022 budget of \$500 was not spent. For 2023, the Committee has made a request for \$2,000 to support activities related to celebrating Juneteenth in 2023. For 2023 we also supported the “Aspirational Budget” submitted by the Working Group on Racism (WGR), to be shared among WGR, GDL, and the Reparations Action Working Group (RAWG) to support training and facilitation in continuing the Anti-Racism work, including an Audit of Anti-Racism work and Practices in BYM.

2. STRIDE (Strengthening Transformative Relationships in Diverse Environments)

A separate report on STRIDE activities has been prepared by the STRIDE Working Group. Please review it for details about this increasingly effective effort to extend the diversity of the body of BYM campers and services provided in portions of the cities of Baltimore, Philadelphia (where STRIDE originated), and the District of Columbia.

STRIDE Coordinator

We are very pleased with the work of Khalila Lomax, STRIDE Coordinator. We support Khalila’s desire for further professional development. Further details about Khalila’s contributions follow.

Working with the Camping Program

GDL held our first discussion with Brian Massey, BYM’s new Camp Director, focusing especially on issues related to Jesse Miller’s letter:

- Talking with families specifically about concerns about safety of camp for children of color
- Setting as the top priority the physical and emotional safety of children
- What would it look like if we centered camp around the physical and emotional safety of Black children?

Brian indicated that there was a balance needed between “trusting Way to Open sometimes and placing guard rails sometimes.” He mentioned being specifically focused on:

- improvement of EDI training for staff and *all adults who might have contact with campers*,
- incident response protocol for all types of harmful incidents, including transparency,
- programmatic design with caucus and affinity groups carefully woven in with institutional support and restorative justice practices that work in a camp environment, and
- broad accountability and inclusivity of input to revamp the camps’ feedback and evaluation system to enable improvement/ growth including the staff evaluation system.

We asked how discipline and punishment decisions will be documented so we can analyze data to see if there is equity. Brian responded that they would employ standardized incident reports with a tier system and being more explicit about our values to employees *and families*.

We also asked how the hiring process for camps *and ongoing support of staff* will ensure inclusion of diversity? Brian told us that there is still work to be done to improve the pipeline for the hiring pool and that another area of weakness is developing supportive structures to ensure safety and growth for both gender nonbinary staff and campers.

3. Highlights and Learning from GDL Committee Meetings

There is a tension between the role BYM plays as a business enterprise running camps, tending to property, raising money, celebrating 350 years of existence as a “funding opportunity” and BYM’s role as a spiritual community practicing and promoting social justice, hearing how we are led to become, increasingly, an anti-racist faith community, ministering, providing pastoral care, eldering, and drawing attention to our short-comings so we may grow as we follow our leadings.

There are places where these two roles overlap, including BYM’s STRIDE Program, our Reparations Action Working Group, and efforts by our Camping Program Committee and the staff leadership of the camps to emphasize anti-racist efforts.

In 2021-22, as in the previous year, GDL has been active in following the leadings that have been abundant in our committee meetings. The principal leadership of our several deep discussions about race and racism were two Black women, Tronette Anochie and Khalila Lomax. Each exhibited vulnerability, courage, intelligence and vision. They acknowledged the pain they felt and called on us to hear them and to support their efforts to work through it.

Khalila Lomax came to BYM as STRIDE Coordinator in 2019. As the pandemic shook the world and forced BYM to close our camps in 2020, her job was threatened. Clearly BYM faced deep budget cuts and those would affect personnel with some sorts of reductions. Khalila's boss found excuses to make her "first to go." Those excuses were discovered and Khalila has remained. And she has thrived and taught STRIDE to do the same, even as its fund raising was seized. Recently those funds have been restored to the STRIDE units. This coming year, STRIDE is contributing more added diversity to our community of campers than ever with more than 20 campers returning from last year and STRIDE's first camper ever to attend Teen Adventure. The original vision of Dyresha Harris, Alison Duncan, and the other camp alums who founded the program with imagination, impetus, encouragement, and sustenance is being realized through Khalila and the STRIDE chapters in Baltimore, the District of Columbia, and Philadelphia.

Khalila does even more for BYM. She promotes listening, community help, and learning; celebrates Black heroines and heroes; teaches us about Juneteenth and other achievements in Black history; and shares her strength and hope.

Those traits are also evident in Tronette Anochie. When Tronette began attending Sandy Spring Friends Meeting regularly in 2020, she soon followed that by attending our Annual Sessions that same year. When those yearly sessions ended with an open "worship sharing" experience, Tronette responded first by telling us what a painful experience hearing so many white Quakers express our racism was. And then she got to work within BYM to (1) bring the implicit bias against Black people to white Quakers' attention and (2) to provide some healing from racial trauma for Black Quakers. Tronette worked with David Etheridge and Sabrina McCarthy on these two efforts. In addition, she built her own skills by embarking on a training program with Dr. Amanda Kemp.

Several months ago, Tronette opened a discussion that has not ended. It had to do with noticing, noting, and naming enslaved Black people who had stood up for their rights. Tronette had begun to examine reports that were gathered by the federal government during the Great Depression from previously enslaved people. The Federal Government had interviewed some of these survivors in the 1930s. A portion of the resulting material appeared in the book *A Question of Freedom: The Families Who Challenged Slavery from the Nation's Founding to the Civil War*, by William G. Thomas, III. As its title suggests, that book features Black families that sought freedom and the end of slavery as early as the 1700s. Tronette asked several of us on GDL, the Working Group on Racism, and/or the Reparations Action Working Group to see what we might find in the way of similar reports. As we discussed this, Khalila called attention to the fact that she had ancestors who has been enslaved and that their names were as deserving of

being called as those of anyone else. She expressed her pain that this had not happened. As we held discussions over a few months, we discovered others, outside of BYM, who were doing similar work. Here is how one portion of the Programmed Meeting for Worship for Listening to Experiences of Friends of Color, held March 12, 2022, described what one group was doing:

In preparing this programmed Meeting for Worship we wondered how we could tell the truth about these painful and traumatic events without causing further trauma. We found at least a partial answer in a podcast series sponsored by the National Geographic called "Into the Depths." It focuses on a group called "Diving with a Purpose" composed of Black SCUBA divers who find ships that sank while transporting enslaved people from Africa to the Americas. They found a way to heal from the trauma of their work when they told a community in Mozambique that they had discovered the remains of the São José-Paquete sunk at Cape Town South Africa while attempting to take people from that Mozambican community to be enslaved in Brazil.

Here is how the GDL minutes for March 14, 2022, related our experience

Appreciation was expressed for the leadership and vision of Tronette despite or because of her pain; appreciation for Khalila bringing forward the pain of ancestors that deserved to be honored; Marcie tied all the pieces together. Peirce feels this event should serve as the basis for this year's GDL report. [Divers with a purpose](#) signaled a way forward.

Painful but transformative. People are bearing the truth with you.

Noted: people who don't usually come to things but are in monthly meeting change groups attended; as well as others who might not be as involved and knowledgeable

73 screens attended despite short notice

Meeting for Worship style mitigated some of the risks of a discussion.

Future need for more opportunity for small group while in worship.

4. Summary of Items Considered in 2021-22

During the past year, several items and issues emerged that we wish to record:

Early in the year, we were still concerned about the process used when the COVID-19 pandemic made closing camps necessary and grants raised by STRIDE were summarily "repurposed" without consultation with those who raised them (mainly STRIDE members), those for whom they were raised (communities of color in urban areas within Baltimore and Philadelphia), or the STRIDE Program. Later in the year, the funds that had been seized were returned with apologies to the STRIDE units that had raised them.

In September, we continued discussions with BYM General Secretary Sarah Gillooly about the manner in which staff, particularly STRIDE Coordinator Khalila Lomax, were being evaluated. We considered the open-ended process then in place to be biased against people of color according

to research on bias and fairness in staff evaluation methods. Sarah informed us that the issues we raised had been helpful to them as they redesigned the standard process for evaluating staff performance. We also joined a discussion that the BYM Working Group on Racism (WGR) had begun on the need to develop a process to achieve a fully diverse staff for BYM, since the previous four hires were all white.

In October, we received from Sarah Gillooly the draft evaluation protocol promised in September, which included monthly feedback using specified measures. We were pleased with the draft and, in due course, found its application satisfactory.

In November, we continued to pursue the development process for achieving a fully diverse BYM staff, joining with WGR and STRIDE representatives and meeting with Sarah and with BYM Supervisory Committee co-clerk Adrian Bishop for discussions.

In December, we again joined with WGR, this time to request consideration of an Equity Audit of BYM designed to assist the Yearly Meeting to become free of bias, especially as applied to current employees and retirees. We noted that BYM is both an employer and a religious organization. We must stop any honoring of enslavers and **apologize** for that which we have done.

In January, we agreed to request two additional nominated members for GDL. This followed our agreement to discern ways for BYM, local Meetings, and Committees to welcome and support participation by all Friends with “a focus on cooperating to promote equity, outreach, friendship, and wholeness to all persons in order to build an anti-racist, multi-cultural faith community.” Later that month, we requested that the BYM Nominating Committee select the two additional members of GDL that Interim Meeting had approved and asked that Black Friends be chosen who were qualified and who would further the diversity of GDL’s membership.

In February, we supported the “aspirational Budget” that had been proposed by WGR to enable a fully diverse staff to be hired by BYM. We also joined planning with WGR and the Reparations Action Working Group (RAWG) to create an event using historical records to create a programmed Meeting for Worship focused on the experience of enslavement and how individuals got themselves through that horror. We read excerpts from transcripts of interviews and written reports (e.g., from Frederick Douglass) to guide our worship experience.

In March, we held the Meeting for Worship for Listening to the Experiences of Friends of Color planned in February as described above. We found the experience extraordinarily moving and were grateful to all who participated in the event.

In April and May, we welcomed two new members to GDL, Chester McCoy and Michael Wallace and greeted them warmly. We also anticipated supporting and joining Juneteenth celebrations as an emancipation event that could become the Independence Day recognition that Frederick Douglass famously asked about.

In June, we were delighted with the publications created by Khalila that described and promoted the Juneteenth celebrations. We also celebrated the recent hiring by BYM of its first full-time Camp Director, Dyresha Harris and Administrative Coordinator Lucy Azenga, each of whom brought BYM closer to achieving our goal of a fully diverse staff. We recognized Juneteenth ourselves, considered the Equity Audit, Anti-Racism Workshops scheduled for Annual Sessions, and antiracism therapeutic work, still to be scheduled.

Peirce Hammond, Clerk, for the Growing Diverse Leadership Committee of Baltimore Yearly Meeting, July 10, 2022