**Update on racial justice Change Group work**

**for BYM Spring 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**

Spring has seemed quiet so far for our Change Group at Adelphi. But actually, since our last report in March, we have

* hosted two more Friday-night film discussions,
* convened our Change Group for a half-day retreat,
* concluded (for now) our series of readings and discussions on reparations, and
* taken up a review of the Meeting’s assessment of where we are in our journey toward becoming an anti-racist meeting.

In addition, the Peace and Social Concerns committee continues its planning for “mini-reparations grants” for this year.

**Films and Discussions**:

Two members of the Change Group select these films, which are almost always available for free through the library-based system, Kanopy, and then host the monthly discussion about the film. In March and April, they were:

* *The Boy Who Harvested the Wind –* a true story of a 13-year-old boy in Malawi who helped his village recover from a famine caused by climate change by inventing and leading the construction of a wind-powered water pump.
* *Minari* – a story of a Korean family who settled on a farm in Arkansas and worked through the climate- and socially-caused traumas they experienced as they developed the farm.

**Change Group Retreat:** The members of the Change Group met for a retreat at the end of March. We took some time to hear each other’s stories with respect to our own encounters with racism and anti-racism work. Though we’ve deeply appreciated our work together, we realized that we had not yet paused to ask each other “where are you coming from? And how did you get here?”

These questions -- and our shared answers -- led us to think more deeply about how Friends in our meeting see the relationship between faith and anti-racism. We are exploring avenues for this possible path forward.

Recently, two Friends who participated in the yearlong Nurturing Faithfulness program have guided our meeting in the formation of “Faithfulness Groups.” These groups provide a structure for deep personal explorations of faith and living, supported by small groups of Friends who meet to listen to each other. Three of our existing small groups that were focused on anti-racism, as well as a newly formed group, are now taking up the Faithfulness Group process to deepen their spiritual grounding in this work.

During the retreat, we also reviewed carefully what we learned in the January all-meeting assessment of our anti-racism journey and from our recent series on reparations. We shared a sense that the discussions on reparations, while engaging and hopeful, tended to lead us *externally* to the support of specific projects in our community and away from the internal spiritual change that we believe is still needed among Friends.

As we looked toward next steps for the Meeting’s anti-racism journey, we were guided, in part, by the Anti-Racism Remonstrance, a challenge that arose out of the Woolman Hill gathering of the 2023 Nurturing Faithfulness cohort, to be shared with Friends across seven yearly meetings. We are drafting a formal response to the remonstrance, which we hope to bring to the Meeting for discernment.

**Juneteenth Celebrations:**

We are now beginning to publicize Juneteenth related events and resources to celebrate the big day next month.

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**Annapolis**

1) Both AFM Meetings for Business and some committees' meetings begin with review of anti-racist queries.

2) AFM, in May, has agreed to replace our most recent Black Lives Matters banner that is displayed along the road outside our Meeting House as the old one has become weather-beaten and tattered.

3) We have welcomed a few African American visitors from the community to our Meeting for Worship and we attempt other outreach efforts, such as that at the local Kunte Kinte Festival.

4) Having previously created a "Retrospective and Restorative Justice Fund for harms of racism," our Meeting for Business approved disbursements of 1) $1,000 to the American Indian College Fund, 2) $1,000 to the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, and 3) $5,000 to the Anne Arundel Community College Foundation (J&J Christofel Teaching and Nursing Scholarship) directed for scholarship support with preference for male African American students who seek to become local public-school teachers.

5) AFM continues to participate in our local churches network known as the Racial Reconciliation Collaborative (RRC). In late February 2024, we sponsored a "Community Conversations" program entitled "Does Voting Matter?" aimed towards encouraging young people to understand the historic struggles for U.S. voting rights and to become involved in voting and election support efforts.

6) AFM continues to participate with another local churches network known as "Arundel Connecting Together (ACT)," which annually uses a democratic process to select priorities for best assistance to disadvantaged African Americans and other minorities. Ten Friends attended a recent organizational meeting. This year, the top ACT priority is affordable housing. Ongoing legislative and zoning efforts are planned.

7) Individually, Friends play active roles in nonprofit organizations that help many disadvantaged community members, who disproportionately are impacted according to their race, in various ways. These include: the Anne Arundel Conflict Resolution Center (free and means-tested ADR), Annapolis Light House Shelter (housing and job assistance), Center of Help (immigration counseling), Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (policy advocacy as to criminal justice problems), and others.

**Bethesda**

The BFM Collective Journey group has been actively engaged in fostering deeper understanding and action on systemic racism.

Building on our previous work, the Collective Journey has formed a subgroup specifically focused on exploring the concept of financial reparations. This group is committed to discerning how BFM can contribute to healing the wounds of racial injustice. Their focus is on reparations for individuals and communities of color who have suffered the ongoing consequences of slavery and white supremacy. The group's discernment process is informed by the experiences and learnings of other faith communities. They are actively researching and learning from reparations initiatives undertaken by other Quaker monthly meetings and faith-based organizations.  In addition, the Meeting is active in deepening relationships with two local organizations - one in Maryland and another in DC - that serve predominantly African and African American clientele.

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**Goose Creek**

Our committee had two projects of note during this period of time.  The committee sponsored a pizza/movie/discussion with our teen FDS group.  We watched the movie, STEP, about a group of young women in Baltimore during the Freddie Gray demonstrations as they tried to navigate their senior year of high school and gaining college admission.  In addition, we invited the authors of the book:  Dirt Don’t Burn - an exploration of the advocacy of black parents in their attempts to gain equality and eventually integration into Loudoun County Public Schools.  The event was advertised to the public as well and we had a good turnout.

We continue to explore ways to collaborate with the Loudoun County lynching project.

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**Herndon**

The Antiracism Working Group at Herndon Friends Meeting has been discussing how best to reach out to and possibly establish relationships with three local churches, two of which are African American. One member of the Antiracism Working Group continues to be in correspondence with the Town of Herndon about progress on changing the wording on a Historical Marker (regarding the history of our Meeting House) to include accurate information about segregation. Two other ARWG members continue to serve on committees in the Fairfax County Chapter of NAACP -Women in NAACP and the Political Action Committee.

In addition, Herndon Friends Meeting continues its monthly vigils.

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**Langley Hill**

The Langley Hill Friends Meeting Anti-racism Working Group continues to present a short article for the monthly Meeting newsletter on issues of structural racism.

We also are encouraging meeting folks to take part in a non-partisan postcard writing project with Reclaim Our Vote.  This campaign focuses on largely rural minority occasional voters during this primary election season urging them to vote.

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**Maury River**

For some time now, MRFM has been moving in the direction of helping our neighbor Glasgow, Virginia. Recently, we had a large showing of people of color who have homes that are being damaged by the flooding in Glasgow. The meeting was co-sponsored by the Concerned Citizens of Glasgow. Several were there from the Peace and Justice Committee and Maury River Friends Meeting as a whole. We are working on follow up plans—including seeking a grant for mitigation efforts for the damage from flooding in Glasgow.

Related to participation in Rockbridge NAACP activities, Kathy and Eli saw the impressive flying banner described in the News Gazette with upbeat welcoming diversity in the southbound lane near Raphine and Fairfield. The banner may be moved soon.

The education committee of the NAACP has published a notice in the recent local News-Gazette seeking local interested teachers of color. They are offering grants to help with teacher training.

The Racial Equity Coalition (of which MRFM is a member) sponsored a well-attended “Walk, Talk, and Eat block party at Diamond Hill/ Green Hill recently. The Coalition has noted signs of hunger and homelessness and wants to be mindful in encouraging people to make use of local resources that are available.

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**Richmond**

Since submitting our report on March 1, 2024, Richmond Friends Meeting has been involved in the following activities related to race and racism.

* Our Ad Hoc Committee on Race and Racism, now in the second phase of their charge are currently meeting with each RFM committee to discuss how each can live out the commitments made in our minute.
* We just had an outstanding program with historian and activist Ana Edwards who is an Assistant Professor at the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). Her talk, “Progress and Pushback: The challenges of changing a race-based society” followed by Q&A then a discussion, was powerful and provocative. The future programs discussed in the report are on track, and new initiatives are being planned.
* VCU recently instated a Racial Diversity Initiative requiring all students to take certain classes about race and racism as a graduation requirement. Governor Youngkin and the Board of Visitors just struck down this requirement. Members of RFM have been involved in letter writing to the governor to express their unhappiness with this decision.
* We are in discernment about becoming involved with RISC (Richmonders Involved to Strengthen our Communities) a social justice action group, which has more than two dozen faith-group members, including many congregations of color.
* Our Peace & Social Concerns Committee (P&SC) held a fundraising and information sharing luncheon for Daily Planet, a local organization providing health and other support for the unhoused.
* P&SC has an upcoming fundraising luncheon for Coming Together Virginia, a nonprofit that promotes dialogue regarding racism and works towards healing racial wounds.
* P&SC has prepared a minute to support preservation of the Richmond Community Hospital, which was created about a century ago by the Black community to provide the Black community with timely medical care.  Before this, many were helped only in the basements of white hospitals and Black doctors were often under- or unemployed.
* P&SC will be alerting the meeting to a rally to curb gun violence. They are also supporting and publicizing events for the Virginia Interfaith Committee on Public Policy, a regional group that mostly lobbies to overcome race-based and other injustice.

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**Roanoke**

A group of us in the Roanoke Quaker Meeting are planning a nine-month-long series of discussions and presentations to begin in September to help Roanoke Friends become more involved in anti-racism activities. We may form a Meeting Anti-Racism Group or a Change Group, described by AFSC as a place to “deepen the connection between social change and spiritual growth.” We want to educate ourselves about our local history and get to know our neighbors. Individuals in our Meeting have been involved in anti-racism efforts, but now we hope our Meeting will take the next steps.

In April 2024, the BYM Working Group on Racism approved our grant proposal to pay an honorarium to Jordan Bell for his presentation to our Meeting and a walking tour of Roanoke’s Gainsboro neighborhood in October. He is probably best known as the preeminent historian of Roanoke's historic Gainsboro neighborhood. He will be educating us on Roanoke’s Urban Removal (or “Negro Removal”) in the 1950s, ‘60s, and early ‘70s, which decimated African American neighborhoods in northwest and northeast Roanoke. African American doctors, lawyers, educators, and business owners all lived in this community, but hundreds of homes, churches, and businesses were destroyed. Our Quaker meetinghouse is only a few blocks from the Gainsboro neighborhood.

In addition to this planning, the number of Roanoke Quakers becoming involved in anti-racism efforts is increasing. We are active in the Roanoke Reparations Group and a Reparations Book Group. For the third year, our Meeting is co-sponsoring Groceries Not Guns, a gun buyback initiative for gun-violence reduction; we are deeply concerned about local shootings, homicides, domestic violence, and suicides. Friends in our Meeting are active in the Roanoke Branch NAACP, and one member of our Meeting works with TAP (Total Action for Progress) which serves several counties in Southwest Virginia.

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**Stony Run**

Stony Run Friends Meeting is a member of the Interfaith Coalition for Black Lives in Baltimore and some Friends participate in the monthly demonstrations of this group at various locations in the city.

Daquanna Harris of Adelphi Friends Meeting spoke at an adult forum in January about what her meeting is doing around reparations.  This was a hybrid session.

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**Washington**

The FMW Antiracism Spiritual Friendship Group formed last fall has been meeting monthly with leadership rotating among its members. Topics addressed include conflict avoidance, responding to injury with repair, replacing white guilt with racial resilience, and conversations between psychotherapist Resmaa Menakem and Zen priest angel Kyodo Williams.

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**York**

York Friends participated in  the YMCA walk against racism that happened in April.  Fifteen Friends from ages of 8 to 80 walked, ran, or strolled the 5K and raised $415 for the Y's effort.  We also finished reading and discussing "Just Mercy" by Brian Stevenson.

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