

Annual Report from the Growing Diverse Leadership Committee

Introduction

The Growing Diverse Leadership Committee (GDLC) is pleased to present its annual report to the Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM). This year, we dedicated ourselves to cultivating a more inclusive and engaged BYM community. Our focus areas included fostering leadership development for Young Adult Friends (YAFs), advocating for a more authentic Faith and Practice, and promoting anti-racism initiatives.

Welcoming New Leadership and Seeking Diversity

The committee welcomed Michael Wallace as its new clerk as well as Katie Bliss as a new committee member. The committee continues to strive for greater diversity, particularly with the inclusion representation from the Young Adult Friends (YAF) community. To achieve this goal, we formally requested the Nominating Committee to prioritize finding a Young Adult Friend member to join us for the upcoming year.

Empowering Young Adult Friends

A central focus this year was on increasing Young Adult Friends engagement with BYM. Young Adult Friends are both the present and the future of our faith community, and their voices and leadership are essential. We are actively seeking a YAF representative for the committee and are gauging interest among Young Adult Friends for a YAF Gathering in 2025. This gathering will foster fellowship, explore the needs and interests of YAF's, and identify ways in which BYM can better listen to their concerns and provide a supportive and nurturing community. This in turn, may provide a way open for further leadership development within the Yearly Meeting.

Reconciling the Past, Shaping the Future: Faith and Practice Update

The GDLC participated in revising the prejudice and discrimination section of the Faith and Practice document. Upon review, we identified a crucial issue: the existing historical narrative was inadequate and even inaccurate. This flawed foundation made it difficult to fully address prejudice and discrimination in a meaningful way. Accordingly, we proposed a comprehensive revision of the history section. This revision will serve as a cornerstone for the entire document, ensuring it aligns with the Quaker spirit and provide a platform for our own truth and reconciliation about our Quaker past and present.

Juneteenth: Honoring the Past, Continuing the Conversation

In recognition of Juneteenth, the GDLC compiled information about Juneteenth festivities and celebrations throughout the BYM region. The weblinks for these events were featured in the BYM bulletin in late May and early June with the aim of sparking educational conversations and ongoing commitment to anti-racism initiatives within BYM.

Rejuvenating Our Anti-Racist Queries Through Shared Practice

During the annual meeting, the GDLC will facilitate a workshop titled "In What Ways are Our Anti-racist Queries Transforming your Worship Community?" These queries may start to become too routine and lose their power to guide discerning actions. To address this, the workshop will foster a space for Friends to share how the anti-racist queries are being utilized in their meetings, worship communities, and committees. Through open discussion, we will explore how these queries influenced decisions, discussions, and discernments. Ultimately, the workshop aims to assess whether the queries are effectively creating a more inclusive and welcoming BYM community.

Supporting RAWG and STRIDE

The GDLC continues to provide support to both the Reparations Action Working Group (RAWG) and the Strengthening Transformative Relationships in Diverse Environment program through cross-committee participation and liaison representation on the Camping Program Committee.

Looking Ahead

The GDLC is energized to carry this momentum forward in 2025. Our priorities include:

- Ensuring the success of the 2025 Young Adult Friends Gathering
- Advocating for the revised Faith and Practice document
- Developing new workshops and resources to further BYM's anti-racism efforts

We remain committed to fostering a thriving and diverse BYM, where leadership skills are cultivated across generations, and the needs of all Friends are met. We encourage your continued feedback and suggestions. Please feel free to contact us at gdl@bym-rsf.org to share your ideas on promoting diverse leadership within BYM.

Thank You

The GDLC extends its sincere gratitude to the BYM for its ongoing support. We look forward to a year of collaboration and progress toward a more just, inclusive, and vibrant BYM community.