**Reparations Action Working Group (RAWG)**

**Annual Report**

**August 2024**

*How are BYM Friends led to witness for peace and repair in a world torn by inequality? How can we take in all the harms of racism and find our path to do what is ours to make things better for those who suffer the harms of racism?* These are some of the queries that guide the Reparations Action Working Group (RAWG).

We are nurtured and inspired by the work in BYM Monthly Meetings and in other Yearly Meetings. Friends have found very different paths to address some aspects of reparations, in truth-telling and otherwise working for a more economically and socially just society. We want to support these efforts by letting everyone know how other Meetings are led so they can join in this work. We added links to more resources for anyone interested in learning about reparations and taking action. Feel free to send us other meaningful resources you have found and let us know what your Meeting is doing. We encourage Friends to learn from our webpage and talk with us and with one another. We are glad to support any ideas and initiatives you may have in mind.

We began the past year with an Annual Session Reparations workshop. The workshop brought Friends with expertise in issues around Reparations, and also brought out tensions that Friends feel about making repairs in relation to racism. During the workshop we understood that our words can be hurtful, even if it is not our intention.

This year, we shared work with many other BYM committees. We also have continued to pursue our leading to establish a fund for retrospective and restorative justice; discerning the best logistics for this has taken a while. The BYM Staff and Trustees Committee made it clear that such a fund cannot readily be housed within BYM at this time. With advice from other Friends, we also have explored options to establish a fund outside the Yearly Meeting.

Since the fund we envision remains in the planning stages, RAWG requested that BYM share our material resources via a donation to a national organization that supports truth-telling and memorializes the Black lives lost in lynchings and other state sanctioned violence. RAWG first worked with the Stewardship and Finance Committee and BYM Staff to discuss this request, and then brought the request forward for all of BYM at the Fall Interim Meeting. BYM approved sending $2,000 to the *National Memorial for Peace and Justice.* BYM has added its voice to those who are committed to a full and truthful telling of United States history.

This spring, Faith and Practice Committee (FPC) contacted the three BYM entities that focus on antiracism, Working Group on Racism, Growing Diverse Leadership Committee, and RAWG, for guidance in revising the Faith and Practice sections that focus on prejudice and discrimination. Over the course of five meetings, RAWG and other Friends urged that we clarify the words we use to discuss racism, and to be open to both the negative and positive actions Friends have pursued as we seek our way forward.

Also this spring, the Indigenous Affairs Committee (IAC) shared with RAWG its plans to request that BYM funds to support a recently-established Pawnee Language Restoration Program for the Pawnee Nation, in Oklahoma, to address the harm that BYM Quakers directly took part in during the late 1800’s. This is the first time that we know of that BYM has been asked to make institutional reparations for a specific historical situation that brought harm. RAWG provided a letter of support for this request and will encourage BYM Friends’ support for this request.

Working on the fund and other initiatives brings us to a big question: Can we, as BYM, support a faith witness for repair of the deep inequalities of racism and the harms that result? When we share our resources as individuals, no one knows we are Friends. RAWG believes that we can be more effective and work better with others if we put our financial and other resources together and create a more public spiritual and community witness for this important peacemaking. A fund would be one important way to realize this goal, and there are other paths as well.

Seeking repair of the harms of racism creates a path to peace and a strengthening of our community, and especially our Beloved Community that was envisioned by Martin Luther King and other social justice and religious leaders. We find this work deeply spiritual. In our regular meetings, we both share what we are learning and resources we find helpful, and we share our ministry with one other. We support one another in this faith journey. As a BYM Working Group, we hold space for reparations in our Yearly Meeting and Monthly Meetings that are not yet convinced about the importance of reparations. We welcome the participation of more Friends who, like us, are led to pursue this work.