

Minutes Supporting an FGC Institutional Assessment

Minutes of Support

10 Monthly Meetings: Ann Arbor Friends Meeting, Birmingham Monthly Meeting, Cambridge Friends Meeting, Cannon Valley Friends Meeting, Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Chena Ridge Friends Meeting, Fort Wayne Friends Meeting, Fox Valley Friends Meeting, Mountain View Friends Meeting, Oberlin Monthly Meeting

3 Yearly Meetings: Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, Northern Yearly Meeting

Ann Arbor Friends Meeting

July 17th, 2016: The AAFM supports the request by Friends of FGC/Spiritual and Institutional Accountability Working Group for an institutional audit of FGC to identify and provide recommendations to correct any structural racism and/or implicit bias within the organization.

Why an Audit for FGC? Friends of Color say they have long experienced bias within FGC, where their concerns and participation have been routinely marginalized or excluded. A few examples:

- FGC's decision-making body has historically been predominantly white, with a few Friends of Color.
- Friends' committees responsible for populating FGC's decision-making body—yearly meetings' Nominating Committees—are largely white. This includes FGC's own Nominating Committee.
- For a Quaker organization, FGC's structure is overly hierarchical. Key bodies that deal with issues important to Friends of Color are locked inside subcommittees of committees within the governing body, which can result in gatekeeping.
- While white members can, and sometimes do bring up concerns of Friends of Color, white decision-makers often seem unaware of the importance of those issues.

For example: In order for Quakers to serve on FGC's governing body—Central Committee—Friends must be available for a 4-day business session once a year and serve on a subcommittee, which usually holds one or more face-to-face meetings as well. Given the significant overlap of people experiencing economic barriers and racial barriers, that's a lot of time away from family and work/school -- all to be immersed in a predominantly white & professional middle-class body that corporately isn't very far along in its racial awareness journey.

Another example: at the 2016 FGC meeting, Friends of Color felt unsafe at the location that had been selected (College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, MN). Some individuals were singled out for surveillance by law enforcement during ordinary activities such as photographing flowers and setting up a sleeping tent, resulting in mistrust, weariness, and spiritual and emotional

drain. If Friends of Color had been part of the decision on the location of the gathering, they might have chosen one that was more hospitable to all.

A third example: At the 2016 FGC meeting a white Friend asked FGC staff to cancel afternoon and evening activities in order to organize a trip to the Twin Cities (just 90 mins away) in support of Black Lives Matter protests after the killing of Philando Castile. Ultimately, administrators said no. Friends of Color and white allies ask, “Was Black pain not strong enough? Was white comfort and predictability around schedules prioritized over time-sensitive action around solidarity?”

Birmingham Monthly Meeting

August 2016 Some folks at the 2015 and 2016 FGC gatherings experienced serious issues related to race and it appeared that FGC did not listen. A group has formed to deal with these issues in FGC. American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has already gone through an institutional audit on racism issues with productive results. Over 300 signers (some individuals, some meetings) are currently on this petition. Donations are helpful to fund this effort at FGC. People can sign this petition online and Marvin will send a link by email. We can only go forward and we need road maps for what can be done. Quakerism ought to appeal to a lot of people – but most meetings are not diverse. Even in Detroit, we don’t have a huge amount of racial diversity

Terminology in this petition about “our white supremacist culture” troubles some of us. White privilege could be substituted and seems to be less inflammatory language. This petition seems to have been written in the heat of a moment and is going in the right direction. The Clerk can sign this petition in the name of Birmingham Friends Meeting (BFM) with a note that some are troubled by the phrase “our white supremacist culture” and prefer the term “white privilege”. A donation of \$500 to FGC earmarked for the institutional audit on racism is suggested. This audit by a professional consultant might cost \$25,000 or more. This donation by BFM would be made after the FGC Central Committee has approved the audit.

Cambridge Friends Meeting

September 11, 2016: Tom Sander, co-Presiding Clerk, read the following statement: “This past year we’ve seen a continuation of the racial violence, anger and protests that marked 2015. Unarmed black men, women and children are the target of some police officers, protests are overturning cities and police are being fired upon. These actions stem from deep-rooted racism found across our country. All of this violence and hatred threatens the core values and beliefs of Quakerism – that there is that of God in everyone and that they should be treated accordingly. These continuing affronts to our values demand that we consider how we can respond in love and in social justice.

For many of us such violence is not part of our day-to-day lives (either as perpetrator or victim) and discussions of how our actions connect to these outbreaks of violence may feel foreign or a reach. In addition, it is profoundly difficult to acknowledge that actions by others contrary to our beliefs could somehow be our responsibility. Yet we must start with our privileged and thoughtless language, the inhospitality of our institutions, and our refusal to be uncomfortable if we are to change the racist fabric of our country. The mythologist Joseph Campbell reminds us, ‘Dig where you stumble, for that’s where the gold is.’

The harder and more uncomfortable this task, the more necessary it is.

We must acknowledge that our refusal to actively fight racial inequity in our own lives, in our own privilege, and in our own institutions, may seem harmless but allows the culture of racism and white Supremacy to grow both in our institutions and beyond day by day.

Polly Attwood, clerk of FORJ (Friends for Racial Justice), presented the Minute as passed by New England Yearly Meeting for approval along with previously distributed background information. Polly described the process by which FORJ had come to support the Minute and described some of what is meant by a cultural audit, including that often organizations need to hire a consultant in order to begin the process. Friends then read the Minute and settled into worship.

Friends then discussed their thoughts on the Minute and FORJ's queries. A Friend discussed her experience at Friends General Conference and her request that we respond in a vigorous and total way to this request. She acknowledged the length of time that it takes to come to one's own realization of this topic. Another Friend spoke about his long history of racial justice work along with his discomfort with some of the language of the Minute and also the process by which it was developed. He remarked that the language of "white supremacy" is a good thing to "sit with" but not a good thing to "start with." A Friend described her own recent experience in which she demonstrated her own "white supremacy" and how the subsequent conversation had been powerful for her. A Friend questioned the use of the phrase "white supremacy" and suggested that she did not think it accurately fit the individuals present at FMC. A Friend commented that while the Minute might not be perfect, the intention and spirit was central and an important action for the Society of Friends to carry forward. It was also remarked upon that while this Minute was hard it was also an opportunity for opening. A Friend acknowledged the difference between "disparate treatment" and "disparate impact" and that this conversation will raise individuals' awareness. It was acknowledged that this might not be the best way of doing things but this is a way of doing it.

The Clerk acknowledged that there is not yet unity to approve the Minute and asked whether we are willing to minute our encouragement to FGC as they consider commencing a cultural audit.

Friends approved our encouragement to FGC for a cultural audit and the clerk encouraged FORJ to think about what the next steps might be at FMC.

Cannon Valley Friends Meeting

August 14th, 2016: CVFM supports that FGC undergo an institutional audit to identify and eradicate any policies, structures or culture that inhibit full participation of People of Color and other marginalized groups."

Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting

October 9, 2016: Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting minutes its support for Friends General Conference undertaking a multicultural institutional audit to assess its culture, process and practices, and the structures which create barriers to full participation by Friends of Color.

We support an institutional audit of FGC because without assessing our systems we will not achieve the real change required to right historic wrongs. Though necessary, it is not sufficient to address problems as they arise. An audit will be a proactive effort to address systemic concerns.

We believe the audit will provide a way to understand FGC's culture, practices and policies and how these affect everyone the organization deals with. We feel that as a meeting we will benefit as well from FGC's efforts, as the audit and the sharing of its findings will lift up practices which occur in Quaker organizations and which may occur in our monthly meeting as well.

We affirm the step which FGC has taken of enlarging and changing the composition of the Gathering site-selection committee and including four Friends of Color. We support as well the step of re-examining FGC Gathering site-selection with consideration of racial concerns as a factor. For example, if FGC could select an historic black college or university as the Gathering site, Quakers could learn a great deal.

If FGC does engage in a multicultural institutional audit, CPMM is prepared to provide additional financial support for this effort.

Chena Ridge Friends Meeting

October 2nd, 2016: CRF support FGC examining the expressed concern of institutional racism within the organization, its programs and practices, through a self-audit. We encourage the designation of funds toward this effort and are willing to add our financial support.

The CRF FY 2017 budget doubled the FY2016 financial donation to FGC.

Fort Wayne Friends Meeting

September 11, 2016: Believing the Spirit shows no partiality, racism has led to discrimination, oppression, injustice, and violence. Fort Wayne Friends Meeting commits ourselves to be doers of the Word (James 1:22) by pursuing racial justice and reconciliation. Supporting an institutional audit of our denominational body, Friends General Conference, to identify and provide recommendations to correct any structural racism and/or implicit bias within the organization we feel is one step in that direction.

Fox Valley Friends Meeting

September 11, 2016: Fox Valley Friends Monthly Meeting supports a request forwarded to us by a representative of Friends of FGC/Spiritual and Institutional Accountability Working Group for an exploration of the decision-making mechanisms and practices of Friends General Conference to provide recommendations for the establishment of administrative practices that will help identify and address any implicit racial bias that may be present within the organization.

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting

2016 Annual Sessions: Lake Erie Yearly Meeting supports the request by Friends of FGC/Spiritual and Institutional Accountability Working Group for an institutional audit of Friends General Conference to identify and provide recommendations to correct any structural racism and/or implicit bias within the organization.” LEYM committed \$1,400 to FGC for an Institutional Assessment.

Mountain View Friends Meeting

August 14, 2016: In a demonstrative show of support, Mountain View Friends Meeting stands fully behind Friend Regina Renee Ward and endorses the petition of Friends of Color: “*We unite with Friends of Color in their call for a majority representation on FGC's Annual Gathering site selection committee as an immediate first step. We call on FGC to undergo an institutional audit. Our aim is not just to add People of Color to decision making structures but to understand and change the structure so that they better serve People of Color, which in truth serves all of us.*” Our concern extends beyond the issues within our beloved FGC community and reaches out in compassionate support of all people of color worldwide, to all victims of violent policing, and in remorse for all the blindness inherent in our culture of white supremacy. Recognizing that Mountain View Friends Meeting reflects the same attitudes and cultures found in FGC, we commit to beginning a process of self-examination for ourselves and our Meeting so that we can make changes to begin to act to dismantle this systemic wrong.

New England Yearly Meeting

2016 Annual Sessions: Our hearts were touched when we heard the pain and honesty in the reports of the experiences of People of Color and other attenders at FGC Gathering. We felt the spirit move us to affirmation and action.

We are complicit in white supremacy. We at New England Yearly Meeting have been “colonized” by our white supremacist culture and fall short of our full potential as a gathered body of Quaker Meetings because of this colonization.

We commit to engaging in interrupting white supremacy in ourselves:

- within individuals
- interpersonally
- in our meetings
- and at all system levels of NEYM

To start this, we ask Permanent Board to explore an external cultural competency audit of New England Yearly Meeting.

We support Friends General Conference, an organization of which we are a part, in its efforts to interrupt white supremacy in its organization.

We commit to support fundraising by the New England Yearly Meeting FGC committee to raise \$4,000 from our membership and our monthly meetings by the end of 2016. These funds will be available to FGC towards the cost of an external cultural competency audit if FGC decides to

have one conducted. If more than \$4,000 is raised, we direct the Permanent Board of NEYM to find use for the additional funds to support the work of interrupting white supremacy.

(Read more about NEYM's laboring with the words "supremacy" and "colonized" here <https://neym.org/minutes/year/2016-sessions minute 2016-64>)

Northern Yearly Meeting

October 15, 2016: We are witnessing a time of deep pain in the body of Friends and we wish to speak to this brokenness with clarity, honesty and love. We acknowledge the lived experience of this pain and harm as expressed by Friends of Color in our midst.

We, the Friends of Northern Yearly Meeting, have come to understand that many do not experience our Quaker institutions and Friends General Conference and its Gathering as a truly welcoming, loving, and safe community. We grieve the many ways in which this has closed all of us off the rich tapestry of human diversity and mutuality that is the gift of the Spirit among us.

We believe that many Friends have earnestly labored to hear and be moved by the Spirit on this issue. Friends have a long history of asking queries, of shining a fierce light, in search of truth and right action. It is this process of individual and corporate self-examination that has, at times, led Friends to the forefront of the struggle for justice.

It is in this spirit of honest, humble, and bold self-examination that we call on FGC to undertake a race equity institutional audit with the assistance of outside professionals. We hope that this audit will help us all to recognize the unintended consequences of our attitudes and practices, and to close the gap between our intentions and our impact.

What we hope to achieve through this work is nothing less than the co-creation of the beloved community to which we believe we are called. We believe this audit will help make visible the obstacles that our current structures and practices place in the way of full and safe participation of Friends of Color. Further we believe that Friends are called to change those structures and practices to be those that create and support a dynamic, transformative, beloved community. We anticipate that the assessment and recommendations can and will be used to enliven Yearly and Monthly Meetings as well.

This audit, and implementation of its recommendations, will require financial resources. We believe that FGC needs to redirect existing resources and obtain additional support for the work. We commit to making a meaningful financial contribution specifically for this work when FGC commits to undertake the audit.

We, as members of FGC, hold all of us in the light as we undertake this urgent work on behalf of, and in the name of, all of us.

Oberlin Monthly Meeting

September 20, 2016: Oberlin Friends Meeting, Oberlin, Ohio supports the recommendations of Friends of FGC/Spiritual and Institutional Accountability Working Group for an institutional audit of Friends General Conference to identify and provide recommendations to correct any structural racism and/or implicit bias within the organization. Furthermore, OFM supports this

year's member assessment by Lake Erie Yearly Meeting (LEYM) which will include a donation to be held in escrow by FGC which will help cover the cost of an institutional audit and the assessment for LEYM members. Furthermore, Oberlin Friends Meeting will continue to actively reflect on our own strengths and limitations in terms of internalized bias, institutional racism, and inclusion of Friends of Color in our Meeting and community.