

Executive Summary of
Institutional Assessment
on Systemic Racism
within Friends General Conference
as Reported October 2018

*"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies,
but the silence of our friends."*

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Overview and Project Aim

The Institutional Assessment is a direct response to the events at the 2016 Gathering that encapsulates the long history of lived experience of Friends of Color of systemic racism among Friends. A similar assessment focused on Indigenous Peoples, classism, ageism, and disability is encouraged in the future. We hope the results of this assessment may inform FGC's inclusion of Friends from all communities.

Process and Planning Stage

In 2016 the entire nation was confronted with media stories of unarmed people of color being killed by the police, with numerous accounts of racial intimidation and violence ever present in our daily lives. This was the environment in which the 2016 Gathering met in St. Joseph Minnesota. There, Friends of Color had multiple experiences and related stories of racism at the College of Saint Benedict and in the surrounding St. Joseph community. This includes the dismissal of the seriousness of the stories by some Friends of European descent of the demonstrated racism. A small group of Friends were moved to petition FGC staff and Central Committee representatives to address the systemic racism within our organization.

More than 358 Friends signed the petition during and after the Gathering. Yearly Meetings raised the issue of racism within our communities. In October 2016, Central Committee, after discernment, approved a minute that directed development staff to raise money to support the Institutional Assessment on Racism. If the money raised was sufficient, said the body, a consulting firm would be hired to train and guide a group of Friends through the assessment. A total of \$63,455 was raised within six months and we were ready to move forward by 2017 Gathering. Friends donated generously and donations for the assessment came in from sixty-two individuals, twenty-one Monthly Meetings, four Yearly Meetings and one foundation.

As the Development Staff sought funding for this enterprise, the Committee on Nurturing Ministries recruited four volunteers to serve on the Institutional Assessment Working Group (IAWG) whose charge was to review the research done on potential consultants, select a consulting group to work with us, manage the logistics of the assessment including communicating its progress and identify a small team to collect data and write the report. The four volunteers, Sharon Lane-Getaz, Justin Connor (co-clerks) Carolyn Lejuste, and Marvin Barnes were joined by Vanessa Julye, the staff person assigned to the assessment, Frank Barch, FGC Presiding Clerk and Barry Crossno, FGC General Secretary served ex-officio.

The Diversity Committee prepared a request for proposals that went out to consulting firms. Once the funds were obtained, FGC contracted with Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training. See the Crossroads web site at: <http://crossroadsantiracism.org>

Crossroads teaches their clients participatory research where the subjects of the research learn and implement research methods, analyze the findings and write the report. Thus, the people studied engage with the materials, do the work and own the results. This approach is used in Popular Education and grows out of the work of Paulo Freire and others working in liberation theology movements in Central and South America.

Once a contract was signed with Crossroads, the IAWG began to identify Friends willing to serve on the Task Force. A team of twelve people was created, with half being Friends of Color and half being Friends of European descent. The four volunteers serving on the IAWG and Vanessa Julye as FGC Staff for the Institutional Assessment all joined the Task Force. Four Adult Young Friends were intentionally recruited to be part of the twelve Task Force members.

During the third weekend of November 17th - 19th, 2017, forty-three representatives of FGC, identified by the IAWG as primary stakeholders in the organization convened at Stony Point Retreat Center in Stony Point, NY to attend an intensive Crossroads anti-racism training. The intent of inviting these specific representatives was to create a shared understanding of *systemic racism* among the volunteer leadership and staff of FGC. Representatives included all staff, committee clerks, some yearly meeting representatives and the members of the Institutional Assessment Task Force. The training was the result of six months of spirit-led work by the Institutional Assessment Working Group (see Appendix A of the full report).

At the 2017 Gathering at Niagara University (Niagara Falls, NY), Marvin Barnes and Carolyn Lejuste offered a series of presentations that projected a timeline for the Institutional Assessment. In 2018, a decision was made to extend the opportunity for Friends to complete the survey offered by the Task Force. The extension impacted the data analysis and report writing to the extent that the report was finalized just before this Central Committee Meeting.

Initial Discernment Stage and Data Gathering

Racial equality within the Religious Society of Friends and specifically Friends General Conference has been one of struggle and confusion with occasional bright spots. Friends have striven to address the issues of racism in our secular communities in both Canada and the United States. These struggles have had a basis in the values that Friends have historically held. On occasion, Friends have codified these values into statements to guide additional work in the area of racial equality.

Following the conclusion of the two-and-a-half-day workshop, the twelve-member Institutional Assessment Task Force remained to learn from Crossroads how we would collect and analyze information regarding systemic racism within FGC. In order to effectively undertake its work, the Task Force formed three subgroups to gather assessment data:

- **The Continuum team** reviewed Crossroads' six-stage continuum (listed in Continuum section of the full Task Force report p. 27). This team proposed over thirty statements based on this continuum to the survey team.
- **The Power Analysis team** examined FGC documents using a "matrix of domination" filter. To what degree does our Quaker culture uphold white supremacy and marginalize subcultures. "How might Quaker practice, programs, etc. benefit white society and oppress People of Color?"
- **The Survey team** developed and executed an online survey with input from initial focus groups and the other two teams. They used themes arising from the survey to create a facilitation handout that was used for focus groups during FGC Gathering and at several Yearly Meetings.

Design

The continuum group guided the development of questions that map back to key indicators of anti-racist transformation. The survey included 15 demographic questions, one open-ended question and 59 main questions which have been clustered around 10 themes: Monthly Meeting Engagement, Yearly or Monthly Meeting Engagement, Welcoming, Governing Structure, Participatory Decision-Making, Finance and Budget Equity, Racism and White Privilege, Racial Tension and Conflict Resolution, Dominant Worldview, and Overcoming Cultural Exclusivity. By asking multiple related questions

the reliability of our results is improved (internal consistency of the survey was measured at 95%). To complement the findings of the focus groups and survey, historical FGC data was uplifted and reviewed for indications of past problems and efforts in dealing with systematic racism within the organization. From this effort, the Task Force determined that the best way to report on systemic racism within FGC was to present a portion of the history of FGC through the stories of Friends and the data in parallel.

Evolution of Data Gathering

The data collection proceeded along parallel paths that converged during the report writing process. One stream of evidence was from 1,168 responses and open-ended statements collected from the survey conducted by the Institutional Assessment on Systemic Racism Task Force. Another source of evidence was from the discussions held during the 17 Focus Groups held at summer sessions of Yearly Meetings and at the Gathering. The third stream of evidence stemmed from the personal stories, testimonies and history of tension between FGC and People of Color that remained unresolved over many decades.

Summary of Findings

While analyzing the survey data, focus group transcripts and the experiences of Friends of Color in FGC, we found that while FGC seeks to welcome People of Color to the Religious Society of Friends, the depth of tension and experience of racism faced by Friends of Color has never been fully heard nor understood by white/European-American Friends. Conflict avoidance has ruled the day. Whistle blowers have often been deemed troublemakers and have been sidelined or simply have chosen to leave our blessed community with no resolution to the conflicts that have arisen.

When surveyed Friends describe themselves as non-racists and even as anti-racists. White/European-American Friends will say that “we don’t see a problem”. Our Monthly and Yearly Meetings have written minutes, epistles, and public statements regarding racism, white supremacy, and related topics in the world at large. We offer workshops on racism and white supremacy. However, white/European-American Friends often fail to see or credit the overwhelming evidence that Friends of Color have not felt at peace at our Gatherings or that the words and actions of white/European-American Friends continue to perpetrate violence against Friends of Color.

Survey respondents report that many Quaker traditions reflect and/or are rooted solely within white/European-American culture. Our board and staff are primarily accountable to people of European descent. Our meeting walls do not reflect a diverse, blessed community. Our nominating process tends to reinforce the status quo. The projects and services to which we commit our funds do not typically address racism. In light of what we in fact do, how can we, in all truth, name ourselves as anti-racists? What evidence is there for making this aspiration our lived reality?

What is the status quo? In their survey responses, many Friends reported that they perceive FGC's governing structure as non-egalitarian, non-transparent, and hierarchical. Friends on Central Committee admit there are only a few people who know how to get things done. Decisions within FGC are most often made by Friends of European descent. Our decision-making process tends toward secrecy rather than transparency. These traits describe a club-like institution that is passive about its role in anti-racist work.

It's time for real change. It's time to look into the mirror and see ourselves clearly. We must act now. It's time we truly transform ourselves, to model what it means to work toward an anti-racist society by transforming what FGC does, how we do it and who is included in the process. The Spirit is calling Friends to do this work. Will we answer this time? Are you with us on this journey?

Recommendations:

Our recommendations are arranged in three sections: Two minutes that were presented for Central Committee's approval at its October 2018 meeting; requests regarding the organizational structure for Friends engaged in that discernment; advice for the proposed Anti-racist Transformation Implementation Group describing ways forward to becoming an anti-racist organization.

I. Central Committee Minutes

A. Minute 1 – as approved on October 28, 2018

Central Committee resolves that in all FGC decision-making processes during FY 2019, each body shall answer the following query with respect to each decision, "How does this decision support FGC in its goal to transform into an actively anti-racist faith community?"

B. Minute 2 – as approved on October 28, 2018

Central Committee approves the establishment of a group to implement the work of the Institutional Assessment on Systemic Racism within Friends General Conference. Its charge shall be to guide the transformation of Friends General Conference into an anti-racist organization.

Consistent with the decision of Central Committee in 2017 to prioritize the work of anti-racism, FGC commits to work to eliminate white supremacy within the Religious Society of Friends and model anti-racism, as we support the work of the implementation group.

Central Committee authorizes the Institutional Assessment Working Group (IAWG) to serve as a naming committee to bring forward the names of eight Friends to serve on this implementation group. The names for the implementation group shall be brought forward for approval to Executive Committee at its winter 2019 meeting. The individuals to be recommended shall constitute at least 50 percent Friends of Color and consideration shall be given to include Young Adult Friends and broad geographic representation.

The implementation Group will use the information and recommendations from the Institutional Assessment on Systemic Racism within Friends General Conference 2018 report to begin their work and its work shall not be limited to the scope of the report and its recommendations. The implementation group shall be accountable to Central Committee and will report its progress to each Executive Committee Meeting and annually to Central Committee. Central Committee authorizes the IAWG to propose an appropriate budget to support the work of the implementation group and authorizes the Executive Committee to approve that budget at its winter 2019 meeting.

II. Organizational Structure

The following recommendations address questions relating to Organizational Structure and shall therefore be forwarded to FGC Central Committee and Executive Committee for their further consideration.

1. Change the governance of FGC to be more multi-racial and multi-cultural, inclusive, nonhierarchical, egalitarian, efficient, anti-racist and possibly smaller.
 - a. Assure the efforts of other working groups whose charge is to consider changes in FGC organizational structure and culture includes the goal of becoming an anti-racist organization.
 - b. Develop a structure that allows us to more fully receive the spiritual gifts of Friends of Color and Young Adult Friends in all of FGC functions.

- c. Create a functioning and standardized communication mechanism with YM and co-opted representatives to Central Committee.
 - d. Develop a comprehensive communication strategy specifically for further inclusion of Friends of Color and Adult Young Friends including with regard to the use of technology.
 - e. Make the governing body more racially, culturally and age diverse, and consider making it smaller.
 - f. Improved orientation for those serving on the governing body.
 - i. Use the Diversity Committee's resources to assure understanding of systemic racism and structural racism within the organization.
 - ii. Provide training to all (old and new) Central Committee members in the body's decision-making processes and provide the query in Minute 1 (above) in advance of all meetings.
 - iii. Know and use the gifts of new volunteers fully and immediately.
 - iv. Have a trained buddy for new volunteers
 - 1. Develop guidelines for the buddies
 - 2. Consider pairing new volunteers of color with either other Friends of Color or Friends of European descent who have participated in anti-racist training.
 - g. Develop and maintain a nominating data base that includes Friends of Color which is available to nominating committee as committee membership changes
 - i. Ask Monthly Meetings and Yearly Meetings to collect and provide to FGC demographics of their Monthly Meetings that include age and race.
 - h. Provide opportunities and resources for Friends of Color who live in the West to fully participate in FGC governance by holding meetings in a variety of geographical locations across North America.
 - i. Develop and implement a racial harassment policy and complaint procedure for staff and volunteers.
2. Consistent with the review of priorities at the 2017 Central Committee Meeting and the sense that the FGC Ministry on Racism Program is one of its highest priorities, FGC shall increase its support of FGC's Ministry on Racism program by:
- a. Making the coordinator a full-time position; and
 - b. Moving back to the original name of Committee for Ministry on Racism (CMR) from the current Transforming.
 - c. Re-instating the requirement that the Committee for Ministry on Racism is comprised at a minimum by 50% People of Color; and
 - d. Increasing the capacity and financial resources of Ministry on Racism Program to provide anti-racism learning opportunities for Yearly

Meetings and Monthly Meetings (similar to the Traveling Ministries program)

3. The role of FGC's Diversity Committee will be to:
 - a. Continue to assure every staff meeting includes time for increase awareness of racism.
 - b. Ensure that new employees' orientation includes individual and systemic racial awareness
 - c. Support Gathering Planning Committee orientation regarding racism. Reinforce FGC commitment to lifting voices of People of Color in Gathering Evening Programming by inviting speakers who represent a diverse mix of race, gender, age, etc.
 - d. Develop and deliver annual racism and racial justice awareness programming for yearly Central Committee meetings.
4. FGC shall conduct a detailed review of its policy & procedures with a view to considering the intentional and unintended consequences and the impact on the participation of Friends of Color.

III. Implementation Group

The following Recommendations shall be forwarded to the newly established Anti-Racism Transformation Implementation Group for its consideration and for it to bring appropriate recommendations for action before Central Committee, Executive Committee and/or other appropriate FGC bodies:

- I. Seek Friends of Color to serve in positions (volunteer and staff) of leadership
 - a. Identify and engage Friends of Color in Monthly Meetings to consider FGC service.
 - b. Specifically ask Yearly Meetings to nominate Friends of Color to Central Committee.
 - c. Provide enough resources to assist Friends of Color to serve FGC
 - d. Make every effort to bring in new Friends of Color rather than further burdening the few Friends of Color currently serving in leadership capacities with FGC.
- II. Develop a means to examine and change Quaker traditions, language and process developed by European ancestors to be inclusive of other cultures.
- III. Have Development Staff seek funding to implement the recommendations including but not limited to:
 - a. Create an endowment to offer funds for People of Color and other underrepresented communities to support volunteers' travel to committee meetings and hospitality (paid accommodations) beyond local Friends.

- b. Increase the Bayard Rustin Fund so it can continue to provide travel support for Friends of Color to participate in FGC sponsored events including the ability to supplement registration fees for FGC sponsored events.
- c. Commit to solving the barriers People of Color face that preclude them from fully functioning as a volunteer for Central Committee and other FGC activities.

Statement made at Central Committee by the Task Force

Central Committee is the governing body of FGC whose membership is comprised of more than 120 Friends from Yearly and Monthly Meetings that span the United States and Canada. At the Central Committee meeting of October 24-28, 2018, the Institutional Assessment Task Force (IATF) brought forward its work, including a minute, an executive summary, and the full report.

At Central Committee, the IATF brought forward the following minute for discernment:

IA Task Force Minute

Central Committee approves the establishment of a group to implement the work of the Institutional Assessment on Systemic Racism within Friends General Conference. Its charge shall be to guide the transformation of Friends General Conference into an anti-racist organization.

Consistent with the decision of Central Committee in 2017 to prioritize the work of anti-racism, FGC commits to model and work to eliminate white supremacy within the Religious Society of Friends, and to support the work of this implementation group.

Central Committee authorizes the Institutional Assessment Working Group (IAWG) to serve as a naming committee to bring forward the names of eight Friends to serve on this implementation group. The names for the implementation group shall be brought forward for approval to Executive Committee at its winter 2019 meeting. The individuals to be recommended shall constitute at least 50 percent Friends of Color and consideration shall be given to include Young Adult Friends and broad geographic representation.

The implementation Group will use the information and recommendations from the Institutional Assessment on Systemic Racism within Friends General Conference 2018 report to begin their work, and its work shall not be limited to the scope of the report and its recommendations. The implementation group shall be accountable to Central Committee and will report its progress to each Executive Committee Meeting and annually to Central Committee. Central Committee authorizes the IAWG to propose an appropriate budget to support the work of the implementation group, and authorizes the Executive Committee to approve that budget at its winter 2019 meeting.

Upon hearing the minute, the Central Committee body offered a series of changes. Eventually the Clerk, in an attempt to find unity, asked members of the Task Force to gather, re-write the minute, and bring it back to the body. The Task Force members present returned and gathered at the front of the room and one of its co-clerks read out the following statement.

Statement of the IA Task Force

Friends, we heard that you're concerned about the process, about accountability, about how we're reporting, and about our grammatical error. Also, there was some confusion about whether we need a budget now or the budget should be approved after we know what the full scope is. Further, some of you voiced concerns about whether the implementation group is going to be accountable to Central Committee (with reporting to Executive Committee in between) and what is it that Central Committee is giving authority to the body to do. We feel, that if you carefully read the minute, that we've answered these questions within the minute.

With respect to accountability, we feel that the minute is clear that the implementation group is accountable to Central Committee which shall approve its recommendations.

With respect to reporting, we feel that it is clear that this body will regularly and consistently report to Executive Committee and Central Committee.

With respect to the budget, we trust that it is clear that the IAWG will do the initial budget for this year only and for 2020 onward, the implementation group will present its own budget for approval.

With respect to authority, we feel that it is clear what specific limited authority has been delegated by Central Committee in the minute.

With respect to our vision for change within the Religious Society of Friends, we note that we are all a part of the Religious Society of Friends, and when we move outside FGC circles we share what we learn here.

We carefully thought about each word in the minute, and so our considered decision is that the only change we propose to the minute is to correct the grammatical error with respect to the placement of white supremacy.

And now we wish to bring forward a new minute for approval, before we return to our revision to the previous minute.

New Proposed Central Committee Minute

Central Committee resolves that in all FGC decision-making processes beginning now with the FY 19 budget, each body shall answer the following query with respect to each decision, “How does this decision support FGC in its goal to transform into an actively anti-racist faith community?”

And we have made one change to the following sentence in our previous minute, to read as follows:

Consistent with the decision of Central Committee in 2017 to prioritize the work of anti-racism, FGC commits to work to eliminate white supremacy within the Religious Society of Friends and model anti-racism, as we support the work of the implementation group.

Both minutes were approved and the Task Force had one more thing to say.

Our Lesson in White Supremacy Showing Up at Central Committee

The IATF shared a story at Central Committee from Jessica Vazquez Torres, an anti-racism trainer, who led the anti-racism workshop at Central Committee. Jessica said a white Friend noted to her at the close of our last session,

“So, did you see that just happen? That is us – that is our Quaker white supremacy in action in our process. We tell you to bring us a big, beautiful expansive dream, and then through our process we will whittle it down for you and put it into a box.”

The IATF then shared with the body,

“We are reflecting to the body what we just experienced. We brought you an expansive dream, and then you seek to control it, you seek to police it, and you say that you have no trust of the group appointed to do this work, and you are coming from a scarcity, either/or mindset.”

Once the IATF held up a mirror to Central Committee, the micromanaging fell away and Friends’ hearts were broken open, recognizing that indeed many of the concerns raised by the body had been addressed, all along, by the original minute.

Central Committee found unity and FGC has now affirmed its commitment to becoming an anti-racist organization through the processes and actions described in the minute and the summary report. This will be a multi-year process to uproot from within ourselves the on-going reality of white supremacy that spiritually harms us all.

While it is true that the body reached strong unity, it is also important to stress that the discernment at Central Committee was challenging for many Friends. This underscores the ways that even when we are largely united in moving forward, systemic racism inserts itself in a myriad of dispiriting ways.

As individuals, as an institution and as a religious body, we have much work to do and we are committed to doing it. Let us all, as Friends, be united in doing the hard work necessary to make manifest the Kingdom of God on earth. Let the Divine search us, to hold up the mirror, so that we, individually and as a body, might see Truth.

Today many persons are attracted to the Religious Society of Friends because of its testimony against discrimination of all sorts, and are puzzled and upset to learn that the record is stained. Why bring that up? Is a common response. “That was in the past.” But we live today with echoes of that past. In Philadelphia, and doubtless elsewhere as well, memories of past acts of discrimination linger among the black middle class, generation after generation, and deter present day trust.

Even more important, the lessons of the past can help us ask ourselves, “of what unconscious acts of discrimination are we guilty today? Do we expect, as our religious ancestors expected, that blacks joining our meetings abandon their cultural conditioning and accept without question the cultural conditioning of the dominant, white membership? Do we react negatively when Friends of African- American descent choose to meet separately to share common experiences? Are we willing to see

our Quaker ways, if not our Quaker faith, become modified as they evolve? Are those ancestors we are always evoking, who consigned blacks to the back bench worth emulating today?

From: Sarah Douglass and Racial Prejudice within the Society of Friends
A Pendle Hill lecture given by Margaret Hope Bacon

Respectfully Submitted by the Institutional Assessment Task Force

Task Force Members

- Marvin Barnes (Lake Erie Yearly Meeting)
- Justin Connor (Baltimore Yearly Meeting)
- Janice Domanik (Illinois Yearly Meeting)
- Michael Doo (Baltimore Yearly Meeting)
- Vanessa Julye (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting)
- Sharon Lane-Getaz (Northern Yearly Meeting)
- Carolyn Lejuste (Lake Erie Yearly Meeting)
- Katrina McQuail (Canadian Yearly Meeting)
- Elanna Reber (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting)
- Marijke van Roojen (Northern Yearly Meeting)
- Dwight Wilson (Lake Erie Yearly Meeting)
- Keira Wilson (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting)

The Institutional Assessment Task Force welcomes your thoughts, feedback, contributions and/or response to this report. Please reach out via e-mail to share your light with us at: institutionalassessment@fgcquaker.org