

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION ON RACISM  
CONSULTATION CALL, NOVEMBER 11, 2018

This was the first of two scheduled Consultation Calls for 2018-19 facilitated by NPYM Ministry and Counsel Committee. The topic was chosen to follow-up on the focus of this summer's Annual Session theme of Racism.

Following opening worship, introductions were made. There were 9 Meetings represented. Elinor Jordan, Ministry and Counsel Committee member, acted as Clerk for this call.

The basis for this discussion was a set of 5 queries which were used to elicit responses from those present:

- How is your Meeting dealing with/responding to/ or discussing this issue (Racism)?
- Do all members and attenders in your Meeting feel welcome in these efforts?
- Have you been delving spiritually into the work we have been doing?
- Has your Meeting been exploring its role in racism?
- What do you need to help your meeting become more fully inclusive and welcoming regardless of color or ethnicity?

During this discussion, it became very clear that Meetings and individuals are approaching this topic in many different ways. Some Meetings are very actively engaged in this work, and are full of energetic action and outreach. Others are finding it harder to accept, discuss, or act, due to a lack of energy or interest. Some seem to be in denial that there is a problem, or feel that they have moved beyond the issue. It is easy to feel intimidated about how much work there is to do around this topic.

One Meeting caller shared a number of actions that Friends there have taken. It was pointed out that this Meeting is probably the largest in NPYM, so may have more resources and energy, and they also have a group of Friends who are very committed to this issue. Some of their actions include:

A four-page list of things the Meeting has done around racism.

Initiating study and discussion groups on "Racial Justice," "White Fragility," "Black Lives Matter," as well as holding a number of training sessions.

Collect and distribute books to children of color.

Sponsored a visit by AS Friend-in-Residence Vanessa Julye. The Meeting had a visual display on racism, which was passed on to the Friends Church in their community.

Realization that Friends of Color have struggled with the concept of darkness vs light and the connotations for those words (darkness=negative; light=positive).

Other callers weighed in about their own Meetings or thoughts.

- One has been working on a revision of the racism minute that was distributed by NPYM. There is a realization that learning about and respecting other cultures is also as important

as addressing racial issues. The group is discussing the idea of reaching out to African/American churches in their area.

- One Meeting is realizing how much work is to be done. They would like to do more, including reaching out to the community.
- One group started to address racism at their summer session. Research was done on the "boarding schools" for Native American youth, and a skit was developed with wide participation. There was a realization that we must take care of the Earth, and get in touch with who we are. There will be ongoing work in this direction.
- Another Meeting called a special meeting to develop a letter about the recent synagog massacre, and in the process, realized how much hatred exists about social concerns. The Meeting is finding it hard to respond to the many requests from NPYM, as they are an older Meeting, with not so much energy. One member had the opportunity to directly ask Friend in Residence Vanessa Julye what is it that we are doing that is so oppressive to people of color? She said there was no real answer that could help understanding.
- One Meeting still has a lot of denial about racism. The Meeting is working on the Minute and considering other actions.

Trying to absorb what so many Meetings are currently doing, we had some realizations that helped with perspective:

- Perhaps people of color would prefer to worship in communities where they may find many other people of color and may not be interested in worshipping in a largely white Quaker space.
- Sometimes it is our use of wording/language that is not inclusive. We may not consider how someone of color understands it. We need to see beyond our wording-"white wording".
- Revisit our NPYM website to see it in a different light. Do we need to make it more inclusive, perhaps using pictures of people of color?
- Native Americans can ally with other groups, be open to listening to others as they work toward a common goal that is doable.
- We realize that we cannot be, or pretend to be, all things to all people.

Responding to Query #5 about support:

- Realize that the concern goes beyond our Yearly Meeting into the wider world. [ A recent Western Friend cover drew comment when it inadvertently continued a stereotype of African people as poor and needy. Some found it offensive, and the editor apologized for the unintended error.] Sometimes these errors are unconscious, but we need to be aware and do something about them when they occur.
- Have Peace and Social Concerns send out to Meetings a list of possible actions we might take. That could include a list of available resources, including books and websites. Need to include both easy and complex.
- Join FGC. Vanessa feels there are lots of resources there that Meetings could use, rather than re-inventing the wheel.

- We who are "white" need to do our own work, and incorporate these ideas into our own daily lives. Be aware of our vocabulary, our use of words, and their connotations
- Don't expect any people of color to "educate" us; that is not their job. We need to do the work ourselves.
- There is an intersection of race, education, culture, etc, we need to be aware of.
- Realization that younger people are already doing a lot of this work.
- This year's AS Friend in Residence, Vanessa Julye, may attend AS again in 2019 to further work that has been started. We need to think about how we will work with that. She may hold an interest group, individual sessions, small group discussions, etc.
- Provide self-identified people of color the opportunity to attend Vanessa's workshop at Ben Lomond next Spring.

Closing thoughts:

This is just a start of this conversation. Share with your Meetings the ideas that have been shared here. There are lots of resources available, from books to videos, to speakers and workshops. Contact Worship and Counsel Committee if you have further thoughts.

It has become clear that Meetings are approaching the topic of "Racism" in different ways, on a continuum of simple to complex, easy to hard. The major 'take-away' is that each one of us needs to do our own work. We should not rely on People of Color to educate us.