

North Pacific Yearly Meeting Annual Session 2018
University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA
Minutes of Record, Third and Fourth Plenary Sessions

July 26, 2018; 6:45 pm – 8:30 pm

Third Plenary Session—NPYM Engagement to Uproot Racism—Presentation of Proposed Minute and Focused Worship Sharing

The following minute was presented by the NPYM *Ad Hoc* Uprooting Racism Committee for seasoning and consideration for Annual Session 2019. Members of the committee present were Steven Aldrich, Jonathan Betz-Zall, Rose Lewis, Bob Morse, and Merlin Rainwater. Additional members of the committee are Dove John, Laurie Childers, Sea Gabriel, and Lew Scholls.

We affirm our commitment as Friends to live our intertwined testimonies of Integrity, Equality, and Community, and we look to restorative justice to guide us in uprooting racism.

We recognize the impact of systemic racism on all people of color from overt discrimination and violence to insidious rules and mores that limit educational opportunities, economic prosperity, shared power, medical treatment, housing security, and human dignity. We acknowledge that Friends have been complicit in perpetuating white supremacy, even in our Meetings.

Under the guidance of Spirit, we are led to explore how the veiled system of white supremacy rewards people racialized as white with unearned advantages in tandem with punishing people of color with pervasive disadvantages. We seek a deepening awareness of how white privilege has manifested in each of our lives. We endeavor to use this awareness to speak out against racial injustice.

We also acknowledge theft of native lands, genocide suffered by Native Americans, cultural annihilation, enslavement of African people by European colonists, the economic benefit derived from all these actions, the racial inequity created, and the egregious lack of reparations and profound intergenerational suffering. We acknowledge the need for institutional and personal apologies as a necessary step to healing. We also acknowledge the necessity for guidance in how to remedy any continued injustices perpetuated by systemic racism, and in the creation of improved alternatives.

Our Quaker values affirm that of God in everyone. Compassion calls us to eradicate white privilege in our individual lives, in our Meetings, and in our greater communities. We commit to taking action that dismantles oppressive societal attitudes and institutions, creates equity, and constructs multiracial movements to solve the pressing problems of our times. We aspire to a beloved community structured by equality of opportunity, respect, and spiritual and economic well-being for all.

The committee members expressed thanks that the structure of this year's annual session has been focused around racism. The minute is a suggestion for action. On www.npym.org, one can also find resource lists and suggestions of activities to use in grappling with this issue.

Worship Sharing

This plenary session was then opened to worship sharing of our responses to the minute and its content.

The following are an approximate record of points people raised as their responses:

Compassion calls us to action, but the following question occurs to this speaker. Are some of the privileges that whites possess such that whites should give them up, or should whites work to make the "privileges: apply to all people?

It is said that [the work of uprooting racism] is to be done by white people, but is there work [contribution?] that also is to be done by non-white people?

The first speaker has spoken this Friend's mind. In addition, dismantling white privilege will be a long and complicated process.

Speaker preferred the wording used by the Philadelphia meeting (not clear if this meant Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting or Philadelphia Yearly Meeting). It was more succinct.

This speaker is approaching the issue with great love. She sees all the right words but does not get a feeling from the minute other than an expression of white guilt. White guilt is experienced by people of European descent. While acknowledging white guilt we should remember that systemic racism also affects people of European descent.

This Friend said that she has been ignoring the issue of racism and white privilege far too long. She sees a need to change our Ministry and Oversight Committee to a Ministry and Counsel Committee.

White privilege is based on how we look and not on how we feel, live our lives, etc. It's what is seen on the outside. This speaker is both Native American and of European descent and has been privileged because she is blond and fair-skinned. She has not asked for the privileges. In addition to acknowledging the costs to people of color, we must recognize that we need each other. We need to work so that everyone (including white women as well as people of color) receives the same deal as white men.

This work will take divine help, transformation that can only come from the Center and Source. We need to trust in this.

The speaker remembers his 30+ years of seeking the best opportunities for his children, who thus have benefitted from white privilege. What changes will uprooting racism require of us who are privileged for all to have equal access to what are currently considered elements of white privilege? What will the impacts be (e. g. education at the best colleges or universities)?

It is difficult for anyone to give up something. The minute should reflect problems that need solving, needs that we have together, and ask for a variety of insights, multiple points of view. She would push for this.

The personal gifts that leaders contributed to the civil rights movement benefitted everyone. This speaker calls for the acknowledgment of the gifts we all bring in a celebratory sense. If all persons' gifts come to the fore, the more diverse world that results would benefit all.

The speaker's friendships with people of color are so important to her—full, enriching, and close. She would like the minute to speak to a positive outcome.

Twice today this speaker has been moved to tears. He was reminded of the words to "We Shall Overcome." During the civil rights movement he was convinced that he'd see lasting change within his lifetime, but this has not happened. The task before us is important, and it requires purification in our hearts as the first step. The hardest work is to reach out to those who we find it difficult to reach out to—those who don't seek racial justice. It requires building bridges over enormous gaps that are already apparent.

This speaker was in a worship with Vanessa Julye last week and learned that we should specify ore clearly who are the subjects of our statements—rather than using we, us, they. She is curious how people of color react to the wording in the minute. She senses that an expectation is that white people will give up white privilege simply out of the goodness of their hearts. She doesn't fully believe that. To what extent would such acts be patronizing and paternalistic? Although we who are privileged do not want to give things up, uprooting racism would benefit us all (for example, universal health care for all regardless of race).

The minute is strongly worded. However, it should include naming of instances when we as Quakers have contributed to the racist structure. We can also emphasize co-creation and evolution in cultural ways to become more inclusive for a future in which individuals tap into multiple cultures.

This speaker hears several voices which sound as if white privilege is structured by tangible opportunities and goods. But, the core of the problem is power, the right to decide, to determine what is good. In the Society of Friends white people have made the important decisions. Abolishing white privilege means surrendering that power.

The final speaker suggested that we ask members of groups of people of color what apologies that want to hear. This will reflect a variety of issues. Quakers were involved in destroying the rights of Native Americans, Asians, Mexicans as well as African Americans. In Africa, when changes were taking place, The people of European descent who were in power did not ask what changes and apologies people of color wanted nor did they pay attention when the changes and apologies were expressed. He hopes for inclusive input.

Fourth Plenary Session—Singing Ourselves to Wholeness

At the close of the worship sharing session, we listened to and participated in a singing session with Anna Fritz. The chosen songs reflected the presentations and sharing we had experienced.