

# Monthly Meeting Actions to Address Racism

This is an ongoing list compiled by the Illinois Yearly Meeting (ILYM) ad hoc Committee on Anti-Racism. Below are reports from individual Monthly Meetings within ILYM. The purpose of this document is to share what Friends have done to address racism and provide concrete action steps on what other monthly meetings could do. This is one step towards addressing racism.

## Bloomington Normal Meeting

### Minute related to anti-racism

Recorded May 31, 2020: Bloomington Normal Friends are holding in the light the families and communities of people of color who apparently have been murdered due to the color of their skin. We dedicate ourselves to taking action and doing better as a society. Four hundred years of racial violence is enough.

### Actions members have been taking:

- At the end of May, many Friends attended an anti-racism rally organized by NAACP and [Not in Our Town](#).
- Individual Friends have been involved with Black Lives Matter, Not in Our Town and Illinois People's Action movements.
- Friends have attended Move-On Anti-Racist workshops.
- Some Friends are members of the NAACP or in the process of joining.
- Members have been contributing to a weekly food drive for immigrants.
- Women's Meeting for Eating participants organized a rally and picketed weekly at the office of Congressman Rodney Davis for several months to protest mistreatment of children in Border Patrol detention centers.
- Members have established a scholarship at Illinois State University for undocumented students.
- Bloomington Normal Friends meeting will be holding an online No Way to Treat a Child workshop facilitated by Steve Tamari. The workshop concerns the human rights of detained Palestinian children. It is connected to a piece of legislation that has been introduced in the US House of Representatives. We are tentatively planning for August 9<sup>th</sup>. Friends are encouraged to invite interested others to join.
- Friends have scheduled a viewing and discussion of the movie 13<sup>th</sup> on Sunday August 23<sup>rd</sup>.

## Burlington Worship Group

This meeting has seven frequent attenders, two of whom are POCs, all over 50 years of age. They don't do minutes for or against things as a general rule ("resolutionism" not being seen as changing much of anything). They are actively inviting US congressional candidates from Iowa to meeting them virtually to discuss matters including matters affecting race. None of the candidates have yet taken them up on their offer.

## Clear Creek Meeting

One member participated in a two-day vigil held virtually by Open Table UCC in Ottawa, IL. The church is hosting three events to raise awareness and stimulate action against racism, a series called "Acknowledge, Amplify, Act."

Women's Meeting for Eating participants organized a rally and picketed weekly at the office of Congressman Rodney Davis for several months to protest mistreatment of children in Border Patrol detention centers.

## Columbia Friends Meeting

Columbia Friends Meeting is holding a monthly, silent, vigil in support of the Blacks Lives Matter movement. We are gathering in front of our property on Rollins Road (the site where we will build a new meetinghouse in the future).

## Downers Grove Friends Meeting

Downers Grove Friends Meeting (DGFM) sent a monetary contribution to Black Lives Matter of Chicago. The DGFM Peace, Environment and Social Concerns committee met yesterday. Our meeting has 3 tentative items in the works, but have not yet finalized them. We are working on a Minute but do not have one yet. We are in the process of finalizing a Meeting for Worship for Societal Healing which would include the concerns for Black Lives and healing from racism, and yet would encompass any other issues brought by attenders to the Meeting. We are considering a study group for our Meeting based on the book by Ibram X. Kendi How to be an Antiracist. One member has told us that there is a companion workbook and also a children's book.

## Duneland Friends Meeting

As of July 23, 2020 there has not been a minute recorded to date on racism. Two of our members participated in the Juneteenth 2020 March in Chesterton, Indiana. We have begun discussions on how our Meeting may begin to take action on the issue of racism. There is a consensus among our members that this is very important. Because of the complexity of the issue we believe education is a starting point.

I have forwarded the Outgoing Epistle of the 2020 Virtual Pre-Gathering of Friends of Color and Their Families to our Clerk who has sent it out to all of our members. We are going to make that the focus of our adult education for the next meetings. We will consider the 6 queries and seek spirits' guidance.

## Elkhart Worship Group

This Worship Group is no longer meeting separately from South Bend for Worship: This meeting has been working with nonviolent communication and Moral Mondays/Poor People's Campaign including in its Indiana manifestation.

## Evanston Friends Meeting

### Statement of Commitment on Anti-Racism Work

Written by: Peace, Justice, Earthcare (PJE) Statement of Commitment on Anti-Racism Work

Evanston Friends Meeting (EFM) condemns the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, and so many others. We are called to take action against racism, both within our own community and outside it. Recommitting ourselves to the work of antiracism roots us in our faith. Guided by the Quaker testimonies of equality, peace, integrity, and community, Evanston Friends Meeting makes the following commitments:

To ensure that our meeting is working toward equality both internally and in the wider community, Evanston Friends Meeting commits to creating a Working Group for Antiracism. The group will consist of at least three members or attenders, well-grounded in the work of antiracism and guided by Quaker testimonies, charged with the following duties:

- To observe within our own Meeting community and suggest opportunities for growth toward an inclusive, antiracist community and to actively welcome a more diverse meeting community where all human beings are seen and valued in their full humanity,
- To identify and present to the Meeting opportunities to support outside movements, organizations, and activities that are involved in antiracist work.

The testimony of peace is intertwined with justice. Evanston Friends Meeting commits to working toward a more equitable system of justice for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). EFM commits to continued and increased support of organizations and movements that promote peace and justice for BIPOC.

The testimony of integrity requires us to examine deep and uncomfortable truths within ourselves. Evanston Friends Meeting recognizes that antiracist work is a process of growth and introspection. EFM has committed financial support to the Chicago Regional Organizing for AntiRacism (CROAR) for the purposes of educating Friends in antiracism. EFM also commits to make available a list of resources to support further growth and education in antiracism. EFM will continue to promote dialogue among members and attenders around these issues.

As Friends, we live by the testimony of community. Evanston Friends Meeting commits to continuing to build collaborative relationships with Black congregations and community organizations, listening to and lifting up Black voices.

Evanston Friends Meeting mourns the loss of Black lives, and we will not be still when our action is required. We commit to growth. We commit to movement. We commit to change.

Other Actions our meeting has taken:

Peace, Justice, Earthcare (PJE) has asked for a working group to work on this. PJE will put a call out to the rest of the EFM community for additional members.

- **Peace, Justice, & Earthcare Peace Award.** In October, 2020 we will present our 2020 Peace Award to Evanston Own It, an organization of faith leaders from 14 African American churches in Evanston. It is an all-volunteer consortium of people from Black churches in Evanston dedicated to anti-violence work and employment for local youth in Evanston. PJE believed that this was a good recipient because the award could help them more than other organizations that we considered, and we will be able to help the African American community at this time. Pastor Cliff Wilson will come and speak to us to receive the award when it is safe to do so.
- Holding a **discussion group** about race for five years. Originally a worship sharing practice of sharing in dialogues, it has evolved into watching films, reading books, and hearing a speaker from an organization creating affordable housing in Evanston. This group is currently on hold due to covid-19.
- Planning a **Chicago Regional Organizing for AntiRacism (CROAR)** training through Crossroads with Northside Friends Meeting.
- After attending a program at the Holocaust Museum, given by the Heartland Alliance, we invited two formerly incarcerated persons to come to our meeting and share their experiences during second hour.
- At our June, 2020 business meeting we formed a committee of 3 to bring suggestions of antiracism activities we could undertake. This group is interested in activities of other meetings.

## 57<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting

57<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting of Friends has **endorsed legislation for the creation of a Civilian Police Accountability Council**, an elected body to which the Chicago Police Department would be accountable. This legislation was developed and is advocated by the Chicago Alliance Against Racism and Political Repression (CAARPR). CAARPR is a Black-led organization that advocates for civil liberties and against white supremacy, the prison-industrial complex, and state violence.

57<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting has started a **weekly discussion group** about racism in the Religious Society of Friends and beyond. The discussion group is currently engaged in reading, discussion, and worship sharing around the book *Fit for Freedom, Not Friendship*.

57<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting has held multiple query sessions to examine whether the Meeting's practices and culture are inclusive and to seek ways to address systemic racism and exclusionary behaviors found in the Meeting.

57<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting has formed an **Anti-Racism Working Group** to develop and implement ideas that have arisen from the query sessions.

## Lake Forest Friends Meeting

### Meeting Minute on Anti-racism

In the wake of the horrific murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, our nation has been left shocked, breathless, and grieving. Added to the anxiety and bereavement occasioned by COVID-19, the frustrations borne for centuries by Black people have spilled into the streets in over 150 of our nation's cities.

Langston Hughes once asked what happens to a dream deferred. Millennials of all races have replied in mostly non-violent street protests despite the risk of death from a pandemic running wild through the country. By organizing demonstrations in such diverse communities as Lake Forest and Chicago, their message is simple: "No more! We will not let this happen again on our watch."

For many of us, it is not safe to be on the street protesting. It is literally a matter of life and death to leave our homes. Silence is not an option at this unique, historical moment, but what to do?

Lake Forest Friends Meeting over the past five years has taken halting but steadily forward-moving steps to make each other aware of how people of color move through and exist in the world. To become aware is to know there is suffering, and to know this, we are called as Quakers to ease that suffering. That knowledge is heavy. Knowing what is the right thing to do can be unclear. It is all too easy to exercise White privilege and do nothing or do something that alleviates white guilt rather than responds to the needs of my Black brothers and sisters. In this moment we as Quakers are called to action. However, the question remains: what kind of action should we take to address racism and white privilege? After prayerful consideration and worship sharing, the Peace and Social Justice Committee assisted by our Clerk have proposed some answers to these questions. They are only the first step. They may make us uncomfortable. The committee hopes that this minute will open the door to further actions and conversations.

Here are six of the suggestions of what we can do:

1. Recognize and support the LFFM's anti-racism work, initiated in our Meeting by the Working Group on the Impact of Systemic Racism on our Spirituality, which is grounded in Spirit and affords us the opportunity to study and grow in understanding of systemic racism.
2. On an individual level, Friends are encouraged to exercise a ministry comprised of many "little things" within and outside the Meeting like establishing relationships with people of color which provide opportunities for deep listening and mutual expressions of compassion - smiling, acknowledging and making eye contact, offering verbal support, and learning ways to be an active bystander and ally.
3. Join an activist organization that is committed to reforming the criminal justice system: e.g., repealing the felony murder laws, eliminating disparate jail sentencing, ending our bail bond system, instituting citizen review boards for police misconduct.
4. Try to empathize with what it must mean when a black person says, "It took a constitutional amendment to make me a full person."

5. Remind ourselves of the radical acts of Jesus and ask ourselves what does this require of us in terms of how we interact with and relate to people of color.
6. Infuse our First Day School with a curriculum that identifies and rejects racism in all of its insidious manifestations. Encourage our middle school, high school and college students to participate in anti-racist initiatives wherever they live or attend school.

NOTE: The above Minute was approved on June 7, 2020 by the Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business of Lake Forest Friends Meeting. This Minute was inspired by the Black Lives Matters Movement. It is not intended in any way to diminish our support for the resolution of issues that impact other people of color including Hispanics, Asians, and Indigenous People.

#### Other actions our meeting is doing:

Some members have worked with the mother and grandmother of Justis Howell who was killed by the Zion Police. They have formed a non profit called FOCUS which supplies gifts for children at Christmas and school uniforms and scholarships for the local community college. The meeting has held several fundraisers for FOCUS .

There were 2 worshipful study groups which read Debbie Irving's book *Waking Up White*. Beginning in August the adult religious education will involve watching Difficult Conversations with a Black Man videos followed by sharing about them.

There is a working group under Ministry and Worship which is designing programs for the meeting.

## Northside Friends Meeting

### Anti-Racism Activities 2019-to date

January 2019: **CROAR** Individual Friends attended training; attendees present our learning(s) to Second Hour program

February 2019: NFM business meeting establishes **Ad Hoc Committee on Racism**

- Committee reports monthly to business meeting
- Business meeting agrees that each month we keep before us Transforming Institutional Values (as an emerging antiracist/anti-oppressive institution) Both/And Thinking (vs Either/Or Thinking); Collaboration & Cooperation (vs Competitive Individualism); Transparent Communication & Decision-Making (vs Secrecy); Abundant Worldview (vs Scarcity Mentality)
- Some NFM Friends continue with monthly CROAR caucus meetings for those who have attended 2 ½ day workshop
- Committee organizes anti-racism activities and programs for NFM, and are compiling an ongoing list of educational resources

Feb-May: NFM participate in **FGC's Welcoming Friends Project**

Provide **Second Hour Programming** on:

- Microaggressions
- The Case for Reparations for Black People in America

- JACL speaker Bill Yoshino, The Redress Campaign and reparations for Japanese Americans
- CRR19 Chicago Race Riot Commemoration Project Presentation

#### **Meeting & Chicago Events encouraged:**

- “Night Coming Tenderly, Black” Dawoud Bey Photography exhibit at Art Institute; (large format black and white landscapes that capture possible sites along the Underground Railroad),
- NFM Movie Night “13th” (Documentary by Ava DuVernay re the intersection of race, justice, and mass incarceration.)
- Gene Siskel Theater showing of “Cooked: Survival by Zip Code”
- JASC (Japanese American Service Committee) Movie Event: Japanese American Immigration, Incarceration, and Resettlement in Chicago
- **Tsuru for Solidarity** Japanese American nonviolent, direct action project of Japanese American social justice advocates working to end detention centers; Tsuru Rising (virtual protest to close the camps June 2020); Tsuru folding (folding cranes representing number of incarcerated immigrants); Tsuru pilgrimage to Washington (now scheduled for June 2021)

**2020 Ad Hoc Ministry on Racism Committee CROAR Workshop for Quakers** project for May 2020 (now postponed) 2 ½ day planned Workshop for Quakers

#### **2020 NFM Online Book group “Fit for Freedom Not for Friendship”**

**2020-07-05 Second Hour Listening Session** responding to the Query: Where are you on your anti-racism journey? 14 Friends participated for 2 ½ hours.

#### **2020 Summer Workshops** Northsiders participate in anti-racism workshops

- FGC Friends of Color Pre-Gathering (1 Friend)
- FGC AFSC led “Decolonizing our Future: A Road to Liberation” (1 Friend)
- AFSC Western Region “Radical Acting in Faith for White People”-(7 Friends)
- Anti-Racism Working Group reading *How to Be An Anti-Racist, (Kendi)*-(1 Friend)

## **Oak Park Friends Meeting**

### Meeting Minute on Black Lives Matter

For over 350 years, Friends have hearkened to the testimony of equality among and respect for all persons as a standard for our behavior towards others. Our heritage includes much good work against slavery, for women’s rights, and for civil rights in general, including equal rights for people of color. Because we live not in an imaginary place but in the real world, our record is not perfect, and we have at times been misled in our efforts and actions. However, we continuously seek discernment and to be led by spirit towards right action, particularly in periods of crisis such as the present moment, when systemic racism, oppression, violence, and the murder of so many for the color of their skin has led to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Thus it is with the Oak Park Friends Meeting. We honor Black lives and by extension the lives of all people of color. We affirm the equality of all people and work to end the scourge of white privilege past and present. Racial, social, economic and environmental justice are inextricably intertwined; all are

aspects of the same brokenness at the core of our society. As products of this society most of us have benefited directly by our racial and economic privilege and we acknowledge the need to help repair that brokenness. Working effectively for restorative justice will require much interior labor and concrete action, both as individuals and as a meeting.

In his last Christmas sermon, Martin Luther King Jr. said, "It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny." This inter-relatedness confers a responsibility to help others, to repair what is broken, and to accept differences so that the dream of equality can emerge into reality and all may thrive. As Friends we affirm that in light of this understanding, we will labor to discern what is required of us and to steadily carry on this work as well as we are able.

## South Bend Friends Meeting

A paying member congregation of Faith in St. Joseph County (part of Faith in Indiana, part of the national Faith in Action), we have members deeply involved in holding the local police department accountable: We got a tougher, more consistent, best-practices level, disciplinary matrix passed. We are working now on a new civilian review board, and we are scrutinizing the Fraternal Order of Police contract to remove ways that police can cover for each other racist and other bad actions. We have attended trainings connected with this group. Clergy of color lead the group.

We have a minute to local synagogues supporting them when there were shootings and other anti-Semitic events going on. We were not able to come to unity about a similar letter for our Muslim mosque.

### Other Actions our members have taken:

Members of our meeting have attended workshops, mostly on-line including:

- With Mai Spann-Wilson, MSW, a Quaker doing a series of four workshops about talking to children about race.
- Virtual Worship for White Friends Confronting Racism (every Friday at noon Eastern time).
- A series for Faith Leaders on dealing with White Supremacy by Faith in Action
- CROAR
- Earth Quaker Action Team
- Faith in Indiana
- Faith in Minnesota
- State on Indiana on Implicit Bias

### Reparations Discussion with South Bend Friends and the South Bend Reparations Team

In June 2020, South Bend Friends approved our Clerk signing onto to the Faith in Action White Faith Leader statement of solidarity with the struggle of our brothers and sisters who are Black, Brown, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native communities. We are not all white, but Quakers have been and are majority-white and we want to move from statements to action together.



Listening to African Americans in our local Reparations Group is a step toward action. As a speaker at the University of Notre Dame Kroc Institute for Peace, Studies Reparations and Reconciliation forum of 2019 said, the first step toward Reconciliation is truth -- listening to hear the harm that has been done and also listening to hear the actions those who have been harmed would like to see our faith group/town/county/state/nation do to repair that harm. We have committed ourselves to action and this is our first step.

## Southern Illinois Monthly Meeting

Everyone works very hard on race matters but does little as a corporate entity. Friends like to support young people. Friends support each other in their individual efforts on race, like the Race Unity Group.

## Springfield Worship Group

We have not been worshipping together since sometime in March.

About 4 years ago three members joined a process called **Constructive Conversations on Race**. This process began with a movie that the Bahai community brought to town. The Springfield members participated in two groups. Each group has 6 white members and 6 black members. They met monthly for four years until recently. Since the pandemic the groups have been meeting weekly by Zoom.

These conversations led eventually to volunteer opportunities. One friend volunteered for AmeriCorps in a middle school, dealing with junior high age children in a school that was mostly black. After a couple of years this friend began volunteering for the Urban League in a variety of ways wherever they were needed, from being their receptionist, to helping in after school programs, to helping with vegetable gardens, military trips to DC, and in a program serving meals.

## St. Louis Friends Meeting

**Ending Racism support group**- November 2016 - September 2019. The process gave time for each person to share what their intentional actions have been over the previous 3 months, how they would like support or to collaborate, and how they would like to see our Meeting stepping up in an institutional way.

**Analyzing Systemic Racism at Crossroads**- 2016-2018. Attended by 5 members. A key theme there was that every institution is reinforcing racism if it is not intentionally, persistently and strategically working to dismantle it.

**White Privilege Conference**- attended in 2017 by 2 members

**Ad hoc working group**- December 2014 - September 2015. The agenda and projects were determined by the interest, initiatives, and energy of those present. We kept reminding each other, as

much as possible, to keep focused on urging systemic change to prevent future tragedies such as Michael Brown's death (e.g., community cash flow, budget priorities, and public policies). Facilitated by Kevin Chestnut. Achievements included:

- The first proposal was to express condolence to the family of Michael Brown. This took the form of a letter from Meeting and it turned out that this was finally sent 12 months after Michael's death.
- We proposed and the Meeting made a contribution to the NAACP for legal fees for Mike Brown's family for a total of \$885.
- "Black Lives Matter" yard signs were distributed at \$4.50 each for working group members to post in front of their homes and to get to their friends. In February we proposed and Meeting agreed to post one in front of the Meetinghouse. This was repeatedly taken, so James secured a permanent one within plexiglass and in cement. When this one, too, had the sign removed, a secure top covering was fashioned and the sign has since then remained intact.
- A study group of the book *Witnessing Whiteness* (by Shelly Tochluk) was organized as part of the YWCA's city-wide program. This involved a series of 10 meetings of 2 hours each, held generally twice a month (March 15 – October 4), and was facilitated by three YWCA volunteers. 28 people signed up to participate, including 4 people from outside of Meeting. Generally half that number attended each session and about one-third by the end. All found this illuminating and challenging.
- Copies of two other books were circulated within Meeting to read -- *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (by Michelle Alexander) and *Waking Up White* (by Debby Irving). 10 people read the first one and 8 borrowed the second.
- Three film viewings and discussions were organized for Meeting, intended as quarterly education: "Black or White" (Feb. 20), "Dear White People" (June), and "Broken On All Sides" (Aug. 30).
- Members kept each other abreast of current, emerging public actions where our Quaker visibility would be supportive and influential. These included activities related to the unfolding Grand Jury deliberations, the Ferguson Commission gathering of public comments, the monthly Anti Racist Collective meetings, initiatives for improved police procedures and training, and urging City establishment of the Civilian Oversight Board for police (which gained City approval 4/20/15).
- Friends led an event *Cranes for Hope & Justice* and raised \$1,000 which was given to a Ferguson youth group along with a mobile sculpture of 1,000 cranes.
- Support was given to the emerging "Friends of North Side/ South Side Metro Group" campaign to advance public rail transit between the north and south ends of the metropolitan region.

Workshop on Racism led by Sue Cataldi in 2018. Used ideas from *Fit for Freedom, not for Friendship* and a chart from Crossroads to assess how the meeting was doing on an anti-racism scale. Talked about various ways anti-racism could be connected to Quaker testimonies.

**AFSC's Freedom Schools-** several youth from the meeting have attended

**Undoing Racism workshop-** with support from AFSC and several other organizations. Workshop was hosted twice and now has resulted in an ongoing meeting to build community and study issues

Donated to support the DeVille Neighborhood and to support the concerts that Sweet T was doing to cross the Delmar Divide at Union.

Peace and Justice Concerns Committee supported the work of Metropolitan Congregations United on limiting use of suspension which has usually been used against children of color.