

**Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Asheville Friends Meeting**

Draft

Fourth Month 8, 2018

Present: Nick Mimken; Adrienne Weir; Margaret Normile; Steve Livingston; Pat Johnson; Kitti Reynolds; NancyLynn Sharpless; Pat Campbell; Sarah Jane Thomas; Mike Eddy; Katherine Kowal; Edie Patrick; Beth Eddy; Rusty Maynard; Robin Wells; Gita Larsen; Patti Hughes, clerk; Barbara Esther, recording clerk.

Meeting began with a period of silent worship from which clerk, Patti Hughes, read the following article:

The Whitewashing — and Resurrection — of Dr. King’s Legacy

By **EDDIE S. GLAUDE, JR.** March 29, 2018

Glaude is the chair of the Department of African American Studies at Princeton University and the author of [Democracy in Black](#).

On Sept. 20, 1966, in the small town of Grenada, Miss., Martin Luther King Jr. would not get out of bed. Andrew Young, his closest adviser, tried everything. He used all the techniques they had learned over the course of the movement when any one of them faced debilitating exhaustion. Nothing worked. This was not exhaustion. King had fallen into a deep depression, and he would not budge.

King’s bout hit in the midst of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s efforts to desegregate schools in Grenada County. He had witnessed, once again, the human capacity for evil. As 150 black students entered John Rundle High School and Lizzie Horn Elementary School, an angry mob gathered outside. White students were dismissed at midday. Half an hour later, black students emerged. The mob attacked the children. Grown men descended upon 12-year-old Richard Sigh and broke his leg with lead pipes. Others laughed as they pummeled a girl in pigtails. No wonder King went to bed.

Near the end of his life, King confronted the uncertainty of his moral vision. He had underestimated how deeply the belief that white people matter more than others—what I call the value gap—was ingrained in the habits of American life. He saw that white resentment involved more than fatigue with mass demonstrations and demands for racial equality—and was not simply a sin of the South. It was embedded in the very psyche of white America.

In King's final book, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*, drafted in early 1967, he argued in part that white supremacy stood in the way of America's democracy, that it was an ever-present force in frustrating the dreams of the nation's darker-skinned citizens. At the heart of it was a distorted understanding of the meaning of racial justice. He wrote:

Negroes have proceeded from a premise that equality means what it says, and they have taken white Americans at their word when they talked of it as an objective. But most whites in America ... proceed from a premise that equality is a loose expression for improvement. White America is not even psychologically organized to close the gap—essentially it seeks only to make it less painful and less obvious but in most respects to retain it.

This is a devastating judgment about our so-called national commitment to progress. It reduces racial justice to a charitable enterprise by which white people “do good” for black people. This, in turn, provides white Americans with a necessary illusion that preserves the idea of innocence and insulates their conscience or, perhaps, their soul from guilt and blame.

King did not craft this conclusion from thin air. This was a lesson learned from experience. The brutality of the South and the hypocrisy of the country led him to conclude that the view of racial equality as a charitable enterprise distorted the principles of democracy itself and disfigured the moral character of those who believed the lie.

Nearly a year after his refusal to leave his bed, in August 1967, King stated plainly “that the vast majority of white Americans are racists, either consciously or unconsciously.” Eight months later, he would lie dead on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel.

Martin Luther King Jr. has been dead for 50 years now, and over this half-century his bones have been picked clean. Conservatives invoke his name in defense of their vision of a color-blind society. Liberals use him to authenticate their own politics. Black politicians yoke his legacy to their own ambitions.

In so many ways, King's life has been reduced to the lead character in a fable the nation tells itself about “the movement,” which begins with *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 and culminates with the 1963 March on Washington or in Selma in 1965. It is a neat tale with Southern villains, heightened drama, tragic deaths and heroic triumph. It does not mention King's depression. It does not reckon with what he told the Rev. D.E. King, that his work “has been in vain ... The whole thing will have to be done away.” Instead, it enlists King in fortifying the illusion of this nation's inherent goodness. It coddles the country from a damning reality.

A genuine reckoning with the murdered preacher reveals a different story. In 1967 at Stanford University, as he toured the nation trying to rally support for what would become his Poor People's Campaign, King offered this assessment of the movement and the challenges ahead:

[W]e must see that the struggle today is much more difficult. It's more difficult today because we are struggling now for genuine equality ... [N]egroes generally live in worse slums today than 20 or 25 years ago. In the North, schools are more segregated today than they were in 1954 ... [T]he unemployment rate among whites at one time was about the same as the unemployment rate among Negroes. But today the unemployment rate among Negroes is twice that of whites. And the average income of the Negro is today 50% less than whites.

His description reads like an account of today: Homeownership among African Americans is just over 40%, 30 points behind the rate for whites. Public schools are as racially segregated as they were in the '60s, and black kids are three times as likely to be poor as white kids. The nonpartisan Economic Policy Institute reports that black unemployment remains roughly twice that of white unemployment. The wealth gap between black and white Americans has tripled over the last half-century.

Fifty years after King's assassination, with so much unchanged, Donald Trump has ripped off the scab of the nation's racial politics, emboldening a kind of overt racism that many convinced themselves had been banished. Hate crimes are rising. Supporters of white supremacists have found jobs in the highest levels of government. Even among some stalwart Democrats we hear demands that more attention should be given to blue collar, white workers and to those economically left behind in rural America or the Rust Belt. This dovetails with the conservative view of the "forgotten" American, who always happens to be white.

All the while, another black family has to bury their loved one killed at the hands of the police. This week, the name resonating is Stephon Clark; next week, it could be someone else. A tragic irony lives on: black death is commonplace, easily understood and yet swept out of sight. It could not be otherwise. For white America to confront the reality of what is happening in the shadows and segregated spaces of this country requires a kind of maturity and honesty that would shatter our national myth that equality has been a shared goal.

It can happen. We're seeing seismic shifts. Black Lives Matter, #MeToo and March for Our Lives are reconfiguring cultural norms and may signal a realignment of our politics. Jaclyn Corin, a white survivor of the Parkland, Fla., shooting, spoke at the march in Washington, where hundreds of thousands of people had gathered. "We openly recognize that we are privileged individuals and would not have received as much attention if it weren't for the affluence of our

city. Because of that, however, we share this stage today and forever with those who have always stared down the barrel of a gun.” That isn’t “a loose expression for improvement.”

We have a chance, once again, to make real the promises of our democracy. It will require us to honestly confront who we are. No myths. No fables. Evil sent King to his bed, but he got up and kept fighting. We must do the same.

Friends accepted the agenda as prepared.

Minute 1: Friends approved the Third Month Minutes as posted.

SAYMA Representative Meeting Report - Steve Livingston

Since I had just had eight teeth extracted the day before the meeting, my darling wife Lynnora Bierce was not so sure I should go to the Rep Meeting on 3/17, but at the very least offered to be the designated driver since I was still heavily sedated so soon after such a major dental procedure. I consented enthusiastically. Not only for the safety, and for the company, but also because the primary reason for my being there was to advocate for the proposal of the SAYMA Uplifting Racial Justice Committee that would be presented. Lynnora is a member of the Meeting, and a member of the AFM Racial Justice Committee. I knew she would have something of value to contribute to the discussion.

But there were other matters on the agenda to be addressed first, beginning with the impending change in our Yearly Meeting's Administrative Assistant. We have begun saying our farewells to Liz Dykes, our AA for the past decade, who has performed the duties of the office with great skill, creativity, and humor. Hers will be hard shoes to fill. She entertained gathered Friends with a limp and a quack, to demonstrate her status as “lame duck”, and we heard a report from our own Barbara Esther, clerk of the YM Personnel Committee and currently assistant clerk of the YM on their search for a suitable replacement. Susan Phelan of Huntsville Area Meeting has been selected from among several highly qualified candidates for the position.

Liz described the disparity between the number of Friends reported for the purpose of assessment and the number reported for the census, a lead-in to the report from the ad hoc Assessments Committee later in the morning. She also informed us that registrations for the Summer Gathering would soon be available, and this year for the first time online registrants will be able to pay via PayPal.

Treasurer Roger Wise of Charleston WV Meeting gave the Treasurer's report, and clerk of Finance Committee Charles Schade also of Charleston Meeting reported for the Finance Committee. Both of these documents can be found on the SAYMA website. The Finance Committee met with representatives of the SAYMA URJ Committee to work out a plan to

implement the URJ Committee's proposed funding. URJ will have a regular line-item budget to cover ordinary committee expenses, and they will have a set-aside fund for large-scale expenses that are specific to their work, such as pre-gathering retreats, professional facilitators for anti-racism training, and so forth. SAYMA agreed to set aside \$16,000 of its reserves for the fund and Charles encouraged Friends to make donations earmarked for the URJ Committee Fund as led. Over \$4000 has already been contributed to this fund, of which about \$700 has been spent.

We heard from Carol Lamm of Berea Meeting for the ad hoc Assessments Committee on the difficulty of formulating a policy for assessments that would be acceptable practice throughout the YM, as there is a great deal of variation from one Meeting to another in counting up who is to be assessed. A number of recommendations are being considered, including assessing a percentage of each Meeting's received contributions.

Bob Welsh of Swannanoa Valley Meeting reported for the YM's Peace and Social Concerns Committee on its proposed Minute of Concern regarding the investment practices of Friends Fiduciary Corporation. Remarkably, as a result of an outpouring of concerns from several other Meetings, the Corporation has modified its screening process to further eliminate any investments that contribute to, or are associated with, the apartheid regime in the Occupied Territories of Palestine. Their actions rendered the proposed Minute moot, and instead the Rep Meeting united in a Minute of Appreciation for the FFC's action. Bob credited Ann Arbor Monthly Meeting for organizing and encouraging Friends far and wide to join in the expressions of concern that led to that action.

Friends discussed raising up a Site Selection Committee to explore the possibility of finding a Historically Black College/University to host the Summer Gathering in a future year. Not that we are dissatisfied with Warren Wilson at all, but there is a growing recognition that being present in this way would be of benefit to all: to White Friends, to Friends of Color, and to the college. Fisk University was suggested as a prospective locale.

Aaron Ruschetta of Atlanta Meeting reported for the SAYF Steering Committee of the ongoing need for adults to be present for our youth at their semimonthly retreats and at the Summer Gathering. It is a significant commitment, but Aaron assured us that the rewards outweigh the investment.

Wood Bouldin of Greenbriar Preparative Meeting (WV) reported for the Outreach Committee. They meet every other Wednesday evening via video chat, and are looking for a Friend from each Monthly Meeting to join with them as they consider ways to inform our wider communities about Quakerism and encourage our friends and neighbors to come and see if Friends Meeting is a good fit for them.

YM Clerk Jon Saderhom read the report of the Faith and Practice Revision Committee, and Friends reflected on the difficult task of revising our Queries. The Committee has done a great deal of work in transforming the Queries from a yes-or-no quiz to more food for thought and

spiritual nourishment, but feedback from Monthly Meetings indicates that there is a long road ahead. Additional Queries for youth have been submitted by SAYFers, and Queries for Earthcare by SAYMA's Earthcare Action Network.

Rep Meeting then undertook the one remaining recommendation of the SAYMA URJ Committee that we had not yet been able to come to unity on: that the committee be comprised entirely of Friends of Color. Lisa Bennett of Memphis Meeting, who is standing in as clerk of the committee, attempted to explain, once again, why Friends of Color needed this requisite in order for the committee to function as it is intended, but several Friends present were oblivious to, or resistant to, the well-documented and experiential truths that she was sharing. The recommendation did not move forward until one white Friend, a long-time member of the YM Ministry and Nurture Committee, encroached upon Lisa's personal space and in smiling, condescending tones explained in great detail, with anecdotal examples, that while other white people might be racist, she was not, and thus the committee was wrong to make this particular recommendation.

This behavior is a classic form of racism denial that Robin DiAngelo, author of “What Does It Mean To Be White” calls “white individualism”. Once it was called out to Friends present, along with how hurtful it can be to Friends of Color to engage in this behavior, a Light came over the gathering, as other Friends joined in testifying from their own experience to the need to yield to the wisdom, training, and experience of the Friends of Color. Those who had argued from a position of ignorance and false authority were silenced, and Friends approved this, final, recommendation for the formation of the SAYMA URJ Committee. Nominating Committee can now move forward with its task of identifying the mandated number of Friends to serve on the committee, so they can proceed with their work as described in their mission and goals.

Lastly, the Yearly Meeting Planning Committee reminded Friends that early registration eases the burden of making last-minute arrangements and spreads the workload on the volunteer registration staff. Your Rep will let you know as soon as registration forms are posted.

Committee Reports:

Racial Justice Committee - Adrienne Weir

AFM.RJC--State of Racial Justice in the Meeting Report 2017

“The Mission of Asheville Friends’ Racial Justice Committee, is to address white supremacy, aka racism, among Friends (within Asheville Friends Meeting, SAYMA, and the City of Asheville).

This Mission was properly seasoned and approved by the RJC three years ago yet Asheville Friends were still unwilling to unite with it, as of December 2017. The Meeting has been unable to unite with the RJC’s Mission, due to a small group of white Friends who are uneasy with the term, “white supremacy.” They also dispute

the definition of the word, “racism.” These few white Friends have stated that they are offended by the implication that Asheville Friends may be white supremacists, or racists. They have said they want the RJC to use “different language” to talk about racism, language which does not make them feel accused, threatened, guilty or angry. They want racial healing and forgiveness, without having to sit with the impact of their racial oppression, aka structural white supremacy, on their victims. They want to “just move on” without remorse or repentance. In addition, the RJC has witnessed the Meeting’s processes being used to cause harm (aka process violence) to people of color among us, in order to maintain white denial and comfort.

Faced with high levels of racial illiteracy in the Meeting, the RJC responded by offering a wide variety of educational resources: reading lists, discussion groups, workshops on systemic racism, films, visiting speakers and workshop presenters and visitations with struggling Meeting members. Racial Justice Committee members are also committed to doing our own internal anti-racism work and participate in other Asheville community anti-racism efforts. We strive to always examine and learn from our experience, and support one another through inevitable challenging moments. We continue to grow in our understanding of how the culture of white supremacy and institutional racism work. We have observed that it operates in a number of predictable ways. For example, racism among Friends tends to be more about racism-denial and passive-aggression, in practice.

In 2017 the RJC established an Outreach Fund to support people of color led racial justice initiatives. We supported our clerk, a Friend of color, whose ministry is about challenging Friends on their racism. Our clerk attended two Philadelphia Yearly Meeting called sessions on racism, to support Avis Wanda McClinton, a Friend of color experiencing institutional racism there. The RJC initiated the formation of SAYMA-URJ and convened the first meeting of a white Friends support group for SAYMA-URJ. How successful the RJC’s yearly meeting initiatives will be is unknowable at this time, due to the same predictable patterns of systemic racial politics within SAYMA.

That Asheville Friends Meeting has not been able to unite with the Racial Justice Committee’s mission and ministry in three years, speaks volumes. When members of the RJC did our assessment of the Meeting, we were in unity with the view that, Asheville Friends Meeting is STUCK in level 3, as described in the book, **“Becoming An Anti-Racist Church: Journeying Toward Wholeness” by Joseph Barndt.***

Level three is characterized by: Friends not being able see ourselves as racists. We think we are open and accepting of “diverse” others BUT... not those who make waves, and certainly not those who do not conform to our white colonial settler assumptions about appropriate social norms, beliefs, expectations and behaviors. We are still relatively unaware of our continuing patterns of colonial white privilege, paternalism, exploitation and control over people of color--especially if they ask us for help. Research indicates, it is quite common for people of color who do not neatly fit our white settler colonial expectations, to be viewed with suspicion and as potential

threats. We have seen for ourselves that Asheville Friends are no exception. And, the pathological depths of our denial, could be a chapter unto itself.

Indeed, Asheville Friends have chosen not to acknowledge or take responsibility for their perpetuation of institutionalized racism. The Meeting has allowed racially motivated attacks against Friends of color and visitors, to go on without eldering or intervention. On several occasions the Meeting engaged in blaming the victim(s) and failed to hold white Quakers to the same standards of behavior as Friends of color.

As a direct result of our “process failure” or lack of action regarding incidents of racism in the Meeting, people of color, some of them young people, have been alienated and stopped attending Meeting activities and/or participating in SAYF and SAYMA. Furthermore, Asheville Friends do not mourn their loss the way Meeting has mourned the loss of certain white Friends who instigated racial tension in the Meeting and then created an, “independent worship group,” because they refuse to face their own racism.

Therefore, the Racial Justice Committee strongly recommends that every Friend involved in the life of Asheville Friends Meeting, and SAYMA read the book, **“Becoming an Anti-Racist Church: Journeying Toward Wholeness” by Joseph Barndt**. We believe reading and discussing this book, could lay the foundation for a common understanding of what racism is, its purposes, how it operates, and offer practical ideas to help our Quaker faith community move forward. We urge you to read the book for yourself, for your Meeting, for the future of Quakerism, and do your own assessment.

In the Light of Racial Justice,

Asheville Friends Meeting Racial Justice Committee

A Friend shared a story of some decades ago when she bought a house with her partner in a neighborhood which was, as a product of white supremacy, rife with prejudice. As gay women, they had to consider what the repercussions of living in that community would be. Individual efforts to grow are her goal. The clerk pointed out there is a difference between individual prejudice and racism, racism being power plus race. Another Friend spoke of her understanding that our definition is narrowed down to racism and white supremacy in Quakerism and our local communities. A Friend spoke of missing people on both sides of the divide in our meeting. To describe those who do not worship with us anymore as white supremacists, using “attack” within the report gets in the way of its accuracy. One Friend spoke of her appreciation for the concerns held by some members of our community. However, we accept that there is a history spanning hundreds of years of whites asserting that they are superior to other races, holding power over people of color, with resultant institutions and systemic racism in our society today. The power of being white is daunting. Standardizing acceptable behavior such as use of standardized English was cited as another manifestation of racism. A committee member stated that the RJC has put in many hours of research into the term white supremacy and that the mission statement

is what the committee is about doing. While many changes are noted amongst Friends in the last few years, we have a lot more to learn. A quote from Isaac Pennington which was part of a recent Memphis Friends Meeting newsletter said that none of us is perfect, we all have work to do and that our charge is to help one another out of love, to be a help to each other in the journey. A concern was raised regarding making assumptions about the reasons some Friends no longer worship with us on Sunday mornings.

House and Grounds Committee - NancyLynn Sharpless

We were asked to consider and discuss one item today: the care of our library and the health of those who breath the air in the house. The traffic patterns through the present library and nursery are one problem. The continued care of the library after treating the books with sunlight and non-toxic chemicals is another concern. One Friend said that she has allergies to mold, but does not have a reaction to the air quality in the meetinghouse. Another Friend suggested that the library be considered to have several collections, such as new books, storing books that are older and not always used, possibly needing mold removal treatment, in a separate area. Exposure of the infants and toddlers to mold in the present library was also a concern, since the space doubles as the nursery for children under 2 1/2 years of age. Books which aren't handled can collect more mold. Air that smells of mold does not necessarily mean that the air is mold-laden, but that the air has not moved. The committee has gathered some scientific advice about how to proceed and will bring a proposal next month, with a budget for our review as to the cost of each phase or item.

Nominating Committee - Mike Eddy

The Nominating Committee is proposing to formalize terms for committee memberships. The suggested length of a term is three (3) years. If approved, terms will begin in the seventh (7th) month of 2018. In the mean time, Nominating Committee will work with each committee to define how much of a term each existing committee member has served and work out the rotations. A goal would be to overlap terms within committees to bridge experience among members.

Nominations brought forward to this Meeting for Business are:

Hospitality: Jen Seifert, Michael Peacock, Annika Peacock

Care and Nurture: Jim Cavener, Sarah Jane Thomas

Clerk of Meeting: Robin Wells

Minute 2: Friends approved initiating a commitment to a term of three years service on committees of the meeting, with an option to serve additional terms. This gives us a rotation of workers and continuity as Friends rotate off committees on a staggered basis. We can be flexible when a Friend can only commit to service for a shorter period of time. Additionally, this will provide the structure for the Nominating Committee to work on staffing during a certain time of year.

Minute 3: Friends approved the following Friends' service: on the Hospitality Committee Jen Seifert, Michael Peacock and Annika Peacock, for three year terms

beginning in July 2018-2020; on the Care and Nurture Committee Jim Cavener and Sarah Jane Thomas, for three year terms beginning in July 2018-2020; and Robin Wells as Clerk for a two year term from October 2018-2020.

The newly approved committee members are already active on their respective committees and are prepared to work with the committee from the present and through the three year term. An adjustment to beginning terms in July of each year will be made this year.

Peace and Earth Committee - Pat Johnson

BDS Minute

As a member of Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association, Asheville Friends Meeting requests that Friends Fiduciary Corporation expand its Quaker Values Screening Criteria to exclude **ALL** companies that provide products or services that are complicit with Israel's occupation, military control and economic exploitation of Palestinians. Let us be clear that we categorically reject & condemn all forms of racism & bigotry including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia and we make this request only in order to hold companies and institutions accountable for their violations of human rights and/or international law.

In accordance with our closely held testimonies of equality and integrity, we will more carefully examine our personal purchasing and investment decisions as well and to the greatest extent possible apply the same screening criteria requested of the Friends Fiduciary Corporation to our personal financial instruments.

As a result of the adjustments that Friends Fiduciary Corporation has made, we no longer need to send a minute asking for the expansion of screening criteria. However, we can thank the FFC for its action and response to Friends' requests. A rephrased version will come to our May meeting for business.

Announcements:

The ad hoc Retreat Committee met to look at venue for a residential retreat in early November. The next meeting is to be held on April 22, Sandwich Sunday. All interested Friends are invited to join the committee.

We closed with a moment of silence to meet again as way opens on Fifth Month 13, 2018.