

Dear Friends:

“White rage is not about visible violence, but rather it works its way through the courts. The legislatures, and a range of government bureaucracies. It wreaks havoc subtly, almost imperceptibly. ... White rage doesn't have to wear sheets, burn crosses, or take to the streets. Working the halls of power, it can achieve its ends more far effectively, far more destructively. ... The trigger for white rage, inevitably, is Black advancement. It is not the mere presence of Black people that is the problem; rather, it is Blackness with ambition. With drive, with purpose, with aspirations, and with demands for full and equal citizenship. It is Blackness that refuses to accept subjugation, to give up. A formidable array of policy assaults and legal contortions, has consistently punished Black resilience, Black resolve.”

From “White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide”, by Carol Anderson, Ph.D. (p. 3)

Unfortunately, BIFOC—defined as BIPOC who Attend Quaker Meetings for Worship and/or serve on Quaker committees--have been subjected to this type of quiet racism, for centuries, ever since the earliest days of Friends in the Americas, right up to the present day. There is no doubt that subtle, and not-so-subtle racism, has been a part of SAYMA since its beginning and it is abundantly clear that it is operating now.

We see white domination/racism enacted through SAYMA's business processes, both formal and informal, overtly and covertly. We have witnessed the spiritual gifts of BIFOC being maligned and suppressed, and our continuing revelations (Spirit-led initiatives) being effectively undermined through various unFriendly means.

Since the formation stages of the SAYMA Uplifting Racial Justice (URJ) committee, some BIFOC have been viciously attacked, with almost total impunity. Every idea or initiative SAYMA-URJ has brought forward has been met with resistance. BIFOC who have been doing exactly what they are called to do regarding Quaker racism, have been called liars, con artists, bullies, and abusers, basically over **differences of opinion**—as to what racism is, how it operates among Friends and strategies to dismantle it--which is to say, no good reason, whatsoever. In addition, SAYMA BIFOC have consistently been pitted against one another over issues of race, specifically to discourage us from connecting with one another in fellowship, finding unity, and acting in unified spirit-led purpose, as Friends of color. And, to this day, not one single white Friend who has engaged in, or enabled such absolutely racist activities, has been held accountable for the hams they have caused BIFOC. Meanwhile, Friends of color who've been targeted by Quaker racists, have yet to receive anything resembling restorative justice. In fact, there are SAYMA Friends, in positions of responsibility now, who think SAYMA-URJ is responsible for the reluctance of SAYMA BIPOC to participate in SAYMA activities, and question whether we are even owed an apology.

All this, from a Yearly Meeting that has proclaimed it is committed to becoming an anti-racist multicultural faith community that welcomes diverse peoples of color and families.

But, how is that ever going to happen, IF no white Friend is ever accountable for the racist harm they cause? How will this methodology help you meet your diversity goals, IF you are not willing to act in a fair and equitable manner, with regard to BIFOC?

Fundamentally, anti-racist praxis involves empowering BIPOC, respecting our unique interpretation of Quaker Testimonies, values, faith, and practice, based on our lived experience as Friends of color, while holding white people accountable for their racist behaviors. Yet instead, in order to be considered worthy to white Quakers, BIPOC are held up to colonizing Eurocentric racially biased preconditions, social norms, and protocols. You expect us to make you feel “safe”, while you threaten us with your paternalism, your white sense of superiority, and your cultural addiction to exploitation, control, and domination, of BIPOC. This approach will certainly not help you meet your diversity goals, because you simply cannot establish Friendships or build relationships of trust with people you do not treat with respect.

In fact, the Society of Friends has been a white supremacist organization from its inception. Quaker history bears this out. Historically, Friends have seen non-white people as not fully human and eligible for exploitation and oppression. And, it is abundantly clear that some Friends are still struggling with these ideas. Current patterns of racist Quaker behavior across the world, show us that many white Friends have not changed.

We know that white people have been socialized to believe your predatory Eurocentric ways are superior for the last 530 years. You’ve been taught that you are better, and more deserving of “the pursuit of happiness” than the Natives whose land your ancestors stole or the Black people your ancestors enslaved, and the BIPOC that you say you want to be your Friends. You still treat the BIPOC who dare to approach you as equals or do not share your inflated opinion of yourselves with suspicion. All BIPOC know this from experience. Yet here you are, still trying to deny that you have a problem, that your racism is THE problem, NOT our behavior and not our spirit-led anti-racist activism.

Even though Friends claim they want multicultural “diversity” and “inclusion”, you are exceptionally reluctant to accommodate cultural difference, or culturally different understandings and expressions of Quaker faith, worship, and practice. SAYMA Friends of color have witnessed this for many years. We have borne the brunt of white rage lashing out against us, and the few white Friends who are brave enough to support our efforts toward racial justice among Friends.

According to the SAYMA Friends of color we spoke with, this pattern of systemic white supremacist behaviors shows up in SAYMA in the following ways:

1. Controlling the narratives, processes, and resources are the primary ways white supremacy is maintained. WS is also maintained by well-meaning folks who enable unjust laws rules, policies, social practices, and conventions to continue without question.

2. Racist/Quakers are responsible for creating conflict and division between Friends of color, by pitting FOC against one another, playing “divide and rule”, in order to serve their racist agenda, and to derail URJ’s efforts to build a harmonious spiritual community with SAYMA FOC. (Note: Quakers have not treated LGBTQ, Quaker women’s, children’s or environmental justice groups the same way they have treated Friends of color.)

SAYMA FOC already told you what they want/need to feel welcome among Friends. URJ’s vision and Mission were approved, by SAYMA FOC before they were approved by the body in 2017, yet SAYMA has yet to support URJ’s work, financially or spiritually. EVERYTHING URJ has tried to do in fulfillment of its vision, mission, and goals has been undermined by racist actors in positions of responsibility, and so far no one has admitted responsibility, apologized, or been held accountable.

Vision: SAYMA-URJ envisions a Yearly Meeting community where every Friend of color feels welcome. We see a SAYMA community where the divine Light within every Friend of color is affirmed, their unique history, spiritual journey and lived Truth is honored, where our messages and concerns are heard and respected with due consideration. We see a SAYMA community where Friends of color are empowered to build close spiritual Friendships, appreciation, love and support for the weighty responsibilities we carry as people of color, embodying Quaker Testimonies. Within and outside of the Religious Society of Friends.

Mission: To help SAYMA become a welcoming place for Friends of color. The committee will do this by providing safe space for Friends of color to bring issues and concerns regarding racism within their Monthly Meetings and SAYMA, to find support and advocacy. The committee will also work to raise awareness about White Supremacy aka racism within SAYMA, by compiling and disseminating educational resources.

Recommendations or demands?

“If you are neutral in a situation of injustice, you have sided with the oppressor.”
--Desmond Tutu

1. No Quaker individual, committee or Meeting can be neutral in the face of racial injustice and expect to be anti-racist. Therefore, White Friends must practice noticing patterns of racist behavior within Quaker meetings and speak out against the racism they see, within and beyond the Quaker context.
2. As the victims of racism among Friends, we have a human right to “name names” and “point fingers” at those individual Friends, communities,

organizations or committees who are sustaining white supremacy/racism, thereby causing harm to FOC. What would be the worst outcome if white people felt and faced their fear and shame when they are called on their racism?

3. Controlling finance/resources is one of the primary ways white supremacy is maintained. Therefore, Finance Committee's business should be open and transparent; no longer confidential. Any Friend should be welcome to attend Finance Committee meetings.
4. All efforts possible, should be made to help SAYMA Friends understand how internalized oppression: both "internalized superiority" and "internalized inferiority", impacts SAYMA's progress toward becoming an anti-racist faith community. This is not about how much SAYMA pays for anti-racism work, but about how white people change their relationship to racist ideology and white power.
5. White Quakers must accept responsibility/accountability for racist Quakers, your racist/colonizing presence and legacy. Clerks are present to keep Quaker order, not to allow racist attacks against FOC or take sides in disagreements between BIPOC. In fact, Quaker clerks/committees perpetuate racism whenever they permit racism, by inaction.
6. FOC expect a cessation of mean-spirited racist attacks against FOC— especially attacks against FOC engaged in anti-racist analysis and organizing work among Friends. This behavior is usually in defense of fragile white feelings, and it must be stopped. Any Friend who feels they are being abused by the Truth is no Friend.
7. SAYMA Friends must accept the reality that racist Quakers are responsible for instigating conflict and division between FOC, by pitting FOC against one another, playing "divide and rule", in order to derail our efforts to build spiritual community with one another and find unity. This covert organizing can be stopped by exposing the individual Friends engaged in it and encouraging FOC to resolve whatever artificially contrived conflicts we may have.
8. White Friends must respect BIPOC's diverse cultural frameworks and modes of expression, and our various on-going legacies of resistance to oppression, forms of anti-racist organizing, and activism.
9. Since white people's feelings are far down the list of important elements in anti-racism work, how white people feel about being called on their racism should not be a central element to the work.