

## Report to Permanent Board From the *Ad-hoc* Workgroup on Challenging White Supremacy

November 16, 2019 Permanent Board Meeting, Worcester, MA

### Purpose, Background and Policy:

The Permanent Board *ad-hoc* workgroup on Challenging White Supremacy (CWS) was convened in 2017 with the charge of responding to the query from the Clerk of New England Yearly Meeting with regard to the 2016 NEYM Minute on White Supremacy: *“How will this faithful engagement with the work of interrupting white supremacy among the people called Quakers in NE continue?”* (Fritz Weiss, NEYM Clerk).

Review of workgroup activities: The workgroup has hosted or participated in gatherings of NEYM committees involved in racial justice <sup>1</sup> (with particular attention to Racial Social and Economic Justice (RSEJ), CWS, and Noticing Patterns wg) with the aim to foster greater collaboration, cross-referencing, and support of one another’s missions. The workgroup activities focused through 2017-2018 on offering facilitated conversations on race, racism, and racial identity to monthly, quarterly and yearly meeting gatherings. In most cases CWS members have actively solicited invitations from monthly meetings, rather than receiving a flurry of requests directly from monthly meetings.

At Sessions in 2017 and 2018 CWS offered business meeting presentations and workshops, for example, providing tools and talking points to encourage and promote exploration of race and racism at the monthly meeting level. For 2019, due to the momentum of the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness workgroup, and the yearly meeting-wide focus on the Virtual Plenary material prepared by Lisa Graustein, CWS decided that our most constructive contribution to Sessions 2019 was to participate in, and support that work. In 2019 CWS, in collaboration with RSEJ, also facilitated daily lunchtime “Conversations on Race” tables offering prepared topics, tools, and queries. These lunchtime conversations were very well attended.

Throughout 2019 the clerk of RSEJ and the co-clerk of CWS held regular one-on-one conference calls to apprise each other of the work and goals of our respective committees. We have agreed to continue this practice with the new, incoming clerk of RSEJ. As of Sessions 2019, RSEJ and CWS clerks had agreed to the importance and benefits of annual gatherings of the several committees and workgroups carrying out the work of racial justice in NEYM (*see footnote, “Multi-Committee Racial Justice mtgs”*). Thus far these “all-hands” meetings have been arranged in a very *ad hoc* way, with different individuals and groups taking the lead to initiate and plan the events. The RSEJ clerk has indicated RSEJ’s interest in taking the lead on coordinating planning for such a gathering going forward.

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<sup>1</sup> **Oct 14, 2017-** Convened #1 *Multi-Committee Racial Justice mtg*; **Jan 2018-** CWS workgroup retreat at Woolman Hill; **April 2018-** Offered racial identity and dialogue ws at Living Faith Gathering; **June 9, 2018-** CWS-sponsored a “Dialogue Capacity-Building ws” to support/assist racial dialogue leaders; **January 2019-** CWS participated in #2 *Multi-Committee Racial Justice mtg*; **Spring 2019-** several CWS members participated in Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness workshop.

### **Going Forward:**

CWS recognizes RSEJ's role as a standing committee of NEYM, dedicated over many years to promoting racial justice. CWS also recognizes the Yearly Meeting response to the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness work in 2019, offering the incipient possibility for cultural transformation within NEYM. The Yearly Meeting seems to be at a moment of great possibility, but also potential vulnerability, as we seek a faithful and unified way to carry this work forward with a shared vision about where we are Called. CWS is presently unclear about the work Permanent Board envisions for us, as an ad hoc work group.

### **Action:**

- **CWS requests that Permanent Board take up the following requests at a subsequent meeting if time does not allow for a response at this meeting.**
  - **CWS requests that Permanent Board provide us, as an *ad hoc* workgroup under your oversight, with guidance about your vision for the work of CWS, (with particular reference to coordinating the missions of RSEJ, and Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness, bearing in mind the work of the several additional NEYM groups that fall under the umbrella of justice and respect for all life (*Reparations wg, Israel-Palestine wg, Immigration Justice wg, Earthcare Ministries...*))**
  - **CWS requests that PB affirm (or decline) its support for convening another multiple-committee gathering of NEYM racial justice groups this year, with the goal of optimizing coordination of racial justice work within the yearly meeting; if PB endorses such a gathering, does PB wish to offer guidance about how these groups should coordinate planning for such a meeting?**

Submitted by Susan Davies,

co-clerk of ad hoc Challenging White Supremacy workgroup