

Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Report for the Years 2020-2021

It has been a year of challenges, isolation, and grief for many. Still, we go on and are heartened as the pandemic has started to release its grip on our country. We also remain aware that we are in a privileged position in the wider world and with privilege comes responsibility. The effects of the coronavirus on Black and Brown people, the poor, and the working class- along with continuing violence against Black people by police- makes clear that work towards equity and justice remains to be done.

We found joy in the collaboration with Earthcare Ministry as together we put out a Call to Action. We hope that others can also share the joy we felt in this collaboration. In working together we can accomplish more than we can in isolation. This year, the Freedmen's Fund provided scholarships to two Southern African-American students pursuing degrees in Education at \$2,000 each. Additionally, the Prejudice and Poverty Fund supported the work of Dr. Hal Weaver as he creates "Black Quaker Lives Matter! Quakers of Color International Archive". Additionally we supported the work of the Friends Ugandan Safe Transport Fund through emails and letter writing. We helped raise funds that cumulatively allowed over 80 LGBT people to escape from Uganda. We also helped support the work of Bulungi Tree Shade Meeting in Uganda. The Bulungi Shade Tree Meeting is an open and inclusive Meeting. It has grown from a dozen members to an average of 125-135 people on Sunday. Donations from individuals and a New England Meeting helped to purchase a tent for the Meeting that provided shelter during the monsoon months.

The Racial, Social, and Economic Committee has found itself in a challenging and frustrating position this year. We have been seriously limited by a lack of membership. It has been many years since the nominating committee has brought forward a member. In the past, we have recruited members on our own but we are finding it increasingly difficult to carry on the work of the committee with our depleted ranks while simultaneously looking for others to help carry on this work.

At the same time, there are a number of parallel groups that are also working on racial justice. We respect and admire the knowledge and energy other groups and individuals have brought to this work. We also feel that having several working groups and committees is a division of resources. Over the years, attempts have been made to create bridges between the groups. Some of these have been successful beginnings but ultimately we have not united as a single group. We feel that this system is ineffective.

We do strongly feel that there should be a standing committee to act as a resource for those involved in this work, to act as a voice that speaks truth to power- including the power of Yearly Meeting, and to advise New England Yearly Meeting as it speaks in a collective voice to the world at large. The Racial, Social, and Economic Justice has been a committee of New England Yearly Meeting for decades and has watched as Friends in New England have become more aware of systemic justice and have begun the work towards healing. However, having a long history does not guarantee a permanent place in the Yearly Meeting's structure. We would ask though, that there remains a standing committee for social justice- however it may be composed and under whatever name fits best. If we want to ensure that racial justice remains a standing concern in NEYM, and not a passing interest, we need to formally

carve a place for it. Social justice demands and deserves to have permanent space in our Yearly Meeting structure.

Respectfully,

The Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Committee of New England Yearly Meeting

Beth Morrill, Clerk