



BROOKLYN MEETING NEWS

A publication of the Brooklyn Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

brooklynmeeting.org

January 2015

December Meeting for Business Welcomes Three New Members, Issues Invitation, Approves Budget

New Members Welcomed

Lakisha Grant and her son, Jaden Allen, were received into membership after a second reading of her letter. Lakisha is a graduate of Westtown Friends School and has been serving on the Childcare Committee here in Brooklyn Meeting. Alcimus Cargill, III is familiar to Friends, as he has attended Meeting regularly for quite some time. He mentioned how much he misses Pauli Adams, who passed away this past January. These new members were welcomed by the clerks, and welcoming dinners are scheduled for them.

Brooklyn Meeting to Host Nuclear Bomb Survivors

Tom Rothschild requested that a public presentation by the Hibakusha take place at Brooklyn Meeting. The Hibakusha are survivors of the U.S. nuclear bomb attacks on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II. This request is approved and the clerk will extend the invitation, which will take place in May.

Finance and Collections Committee Reports a Probable Deficit in 2014; 2015 Budget Approved

Paul Flint of the Finance and Collections Committee presented the

final 2014 financial report and suggested that a deficit may have to be carried over into 2015. The Meeting discussed this situation. The proposed 2015 budget was reviewed and approved.

The Nominating Committee Reports on a Challenging Year

The Nominating Committee reminded Friends that in Brooklyn Meeting we have twenty committees, six individual

still needing to be done. They expressed a special concern for the First Day School Committee which is vital not only for the present but also for the future health of our Meeting.

History Committee Continues to Add to Our Knowledge of the Past

The History Committee meets every fifth First Day. The committee laid down its research on the history of the Friends Cemetery, in favor of the



positions and a number of committees in New York Yearly Meeting and New York Quarterly Meeting. All told there are 168 positions which need to be filled by our Nominating Committee. The committee reported good success as regards this task, with some work

Quarterly Meeting Cemetery Project. The committee also reviewed the Meeting Archives on the Third Floor and completed its second volume of interviews with older Friends. This collection of interviews is for sale at

our Book Table; the first volume has sold a number of copies.

Naceo Giles and Molly Rusnak will clerk the committee for the coming year. They are planning for an educational event sometime in 2015.

-- Molly Rusnak

New York Yearly Meeting Statement on Recent Grand Jury Decisions

NYYM has drafted the following statement of conscience in regard to recent events in Ferguson, Missouri as well as here in New York City. Elsewhere in this issue, contributors to the Newsletter offer their own thoughts on this issue.

We write on behalf of New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) to declare our grave religious and ethical concerns regarding the recent decisions by grand juries in Ferguson, Missouri, and New York City not to bring criminal charges against the police officers involved in the violent deaths of unarmed African American men in those cities.

The grand jury system was originally intended to protect individuals from zealous prosecution by the state by insuring that the evidence was sufficient for a trial. In these two cities, the system has been turned on its head: the state is protecting its own in the face of evidence ample enough to at least justify a trial.

These failures to indict have led to a groundswell of protests across the country. We stand in unity with those who refuse to be silent and accept the status quo, who through non-violent protest attempt to speak out against injustice and to bring change to a broken system.

God leads us to believe that violence will never take us to a path of justice and healing. Furthermore, we believe that those who do violence to others also do violence to themselves. We decry both the state-sponsored violence of excessive use of lethal force by police and the individual acts of destruction during civil unrest. But we

understand righteous anger and the need to challenge injustice, and we recognize that civil authority does not always align with how God would have us live in this world. In the face of this misalignment, we choose to work for a civil society that affirms the presence of God within each and all of us without exception.

Black lives matter. We know this truth through the practice of our faith, in which we experience the spark of the Divine present in each of us. We know all persons to be equally worthy of love, respect, and justice. Tragically, fifty years after they were spoken, the words of famed civil rights organizer Ella Baker still apply: "Until the killing of black men, black mothers' sons, becomes as important to the rest of the country as the killing of a white mother's sons, we who believe in freedom cannot rest until this happens." When we do not live out this truth, all of us are harmed, all of us are damaged.

All lives matter. But our civil society is constructed in a way that black and brown lives matter less than white lives. This condition extends beyond the matters of policing into education, the media, the system of mass incarceration, housing patterns, employment, and virtually every aspect of life in the United States, including its faith communities.

Therefore, we call for both recognition and remedy of this condition. We call upon civil authorities to take leadership in bringing about this recognition and remedy. We call upon all people of faith, ourselves included, to understand how we may be complicit in a system that extends privileges to people racialized as white while denying the same to those racialized as people of color.

It is clearly in the interest of our shared humanity and our common spiritual condition to change these circumstances. It is in our material, economic, and social interests to do so as well. This is not easy work. But we pray the burden of this work may be easier to bear than the moral burden of settling back, once the furor subsides,

into complacent acceptance of a system and a society that fail to affirm our most fundamental relationship to God and to one another.

-- Jeffrey L. Hitchcock, clerk, New York Yearly Meeting

-- Christopher Sammond, general secretary, New York Yearly Meeting

A Quaker Mother's Remembrances of the NYPD

My two sons were raised in Brooklyn Meeting. One of them is white and one is African-American. During their teenage years I was a single mother bringing them up more or less alone, and during this time they each had a separate encounter with the New York Police Department. As far as I could tell from their accounts, they were treated approximately the same way. My white son was stopped in the street and searched (because of his long hair, he thought). When the officer found that he had no marijuana in his pockets, he was sent on his way.

My African-American son was picked up on the subway. He did have marijuana on him; quite a lot of it, in fact. He said that some boys in his school had sent him to another part of Brooklyn to bring it to them. The police took him back to school and the school then called me and dealt with him and the other boys involved.

I hadn't thought about these incidents in a long time, but the present highly-charged situation in this country and city brought them back into my mind. It made me realize that I felt and still feel grateful to these two officers who looked out for my sons and provided the oversight that I wasn't always able to provide.

-- Molly Rusnak

Thoughts from a Town Hall Event featuring Families Who've Lost Loved Ones to the NYPD

I was going to write a report on the Millions March, which took place on December 13th and included tens of

thousands of people of all races, ages and backgrounds. However, I feel myself led to share another experience that did not garner the same numbers but was just as incredible and inspiring. On Saturday, December 20th, I attended a town hall event that took place in the basement of Riverside Church. The town hall was organized by The Justice Committee and featured testimonies from the mothers and sisters of six unarmed black and brown men who were killed by the NYPD. The victims were Anthony Baez (killed in 1994), Jayson Tirado (2008), Sean Bell (2006), Noel Polanco (2012), Ramarley Graham (2012) and Eric Garner (2014).

Each of the women shared their story. Some of the details were painful to sit through. For example, in 2008 Jayson Tirado was killed on the Grand Central Parkway by an officer who claims he thought Tirado had a gun (there was no gun ever found). Tirado was then left on the side of the road. *Nineteen hours later* the officer, Sean Sawyer, turned himself in. Garner's relatives recounted that, after a police officer put him in a chokehold, he said "I can't breathe" *eleven times*. It was heartbreaking to hear these strong women struggle through these stories, stories that have been told over and over and which always end with the sad statement that the officer either was never indicted by a grand jury or had the indictment thrown out by a judge. Several of these officers are still employed by the NYPD.

At the same time, it was incredibly powerful to hear these women speak out and discuss with the town hall participants what they needed from us, as supporters. They spoke out against violence, encouraging protesters to keep showing up, but to avoid arrest. Many of them expressed gratitude that so many young people were involved in the protests. An aunt of one of the victims compared this struggle to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, which she had been a part of. Her message was that it was now the

younger generation's turn to take up the fight.

The town hall concluded after The Peace Poets led everyone in the room in the protest song, "I Can't Breathe." Each time the words were sung they were a little louder, and a little more unifying. I was personally moved to commit myself to the movement until these families find justice.

"I can hear my brother crying, I can't breathe. Now I'm in this struggle and I can't leave. Calling out the violence of the racist police. We ain't gonna stop till people are free. We ain't gonna stop till people are free."

— *Anna White*

come to the Meeting House on Thursday, January 15, from 5:00 to 7:30 p.m. There will be a Meeting for Worship, a short video of Mary Haviland and Mary McDowell from *A Play in the Cemetery* and a delicious dinner. Everyone from Brooklyn Meeting is welcome. Tom Buckley from BFS is providing wonderful meats, roasted vegetables and salads; the people of this Meeting are being asked to provide desserts. Please plan to come for worship and the meal, and please bring a pie, cookies or fruit. The faculty and staff of these Brooklyn Quaker Schools are special people who not only impart knowledge and support student growth, but also incorporate the values of our Quaker testimonies into the daily life of their school communities. We are grateful for all that they do, and we wish to celebrate



Appreciation Dinner for Quaker Schools Scheduled for January 15, 2015

Brooklyn Meeting has invited the faculty and staff from Brooklyn Friends School (BFS) and Mary McDowell Friends School (MMFS) to

their dedication and their gifts. Please come to enjoy worship and good food with them. It is a great opportunity for the people of this Meeting to learn more about these schools.

-- *Mary Doty, Brooklyn Meeting MMFS Care Committee*

Healing Racism in the Present Time Period

On January 18, at 1:00 p.m., our Adult Education Committee's Quaker Studies series will meet with a concern for discernment around racial healing within the Brooklyn Monthly Meeting community.

In 2002, a Quaker of African descent asked New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM) to apologize for its involvement in the historic enslavement of African-Americans and the aftereffects of slavery. Some years later, following a workshop led by Friends of color, the group European-American Quakers Working to End Racism drafted the "Apology to Afro Descendants." The Apology was then printed in the January, 2008 issue of *Spark*. Since that time, the Apology has been heard and seasoned at various meetings throughout NYYM, and, ultimately, approved in its present form at the 2013 Fall Sessions by the Ministry Coordinating Committee. The document (included at the conclusion of this article) is controversial. Upon reading the Apology and its background statement, it becomes clear that its purpose is to help us examine both our past and our present as it relates to racism. It brings forth issues that are highly charged in society at large as well as within our Quaker community. For some, this document may seem difficult, as it encourages us to look at events and situations in our past that we may be reluctant to face. To others, it represents an opportunity to bring long-needed tenderness to the task of racial healing in our own time (for both ourselves and our descendants). Many of us feel that the time has come to at least examine this offering of NYYM, which carries the potential to guide us as we grow. One of the most salient (of many salient) statements in this pithy document reads as follows:

We recognize that this apology is a step toward healing and trust that more openings will follow as we strive, with Divine assistance to discern what we as Quakers are called to do to bring about justice and reconciliation in our beloved community.

Join us at Brooklyn Meeting on January 18, when we will seek in the spirit of this quote to consider and understand the Apology and its application to racial healing in our present time and place.

-- Linda Clarke

Apology to Afro-Descendants

We, the New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, apologize to Afro-Descendants* for Quaker participation in the terrible acts of enslaving your ancestors and for the destructive effects that those acts have had on succeeding generations.

Slavery is an abomination. We regret that any Friends participated in or benefited from Slavery. This included trafficking in human beings from Africa, capitalizing on the products of their labor and suffering, and being enriched by an economy based on chattel slavery. We apologize that NYYM allowed its members to hold Africans in bondage up until 1777 when Friends were directed by the Yearly Meeting to "manumit their slaves."

In addition we abhor the decades of terror and legalized racial segregation that followed. We acknowledge that, despite our Testimony of Equality, Friends practiced segregation in our schools and enforced segregated seating areas in many of our meetings. We regret the effects that those policies had, and continue to have on all of us. We recognize that this apology is a step toward healing and trust that more openings will follow as we strive, with Divine assistance, to discern what we as Quakers are called to do bring about justice and reconciliation in our beloved community.

**Afro-Descendants is a term now officially in use by the United Nations to identify the more than 250 million descendants of enslaved Africans dwelling in North America, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Slavery Diaspora.*

Want to Know About Quakers and Slavery?

There is increased interest, among Friends and throughout the nation, about the place of African-Americans in our society and history. Present day Quakers should know that we have a rich source of information about the Quaker contribution to African-American freedom. Titled "The Quaker Slavery Project," it can be found at Friends Historical Libraries at Swarthmore, Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges. The complete collection is available online, with pictures of original documents and artifacts as well as historical commentary. All told, "The Quaker Slavery Project" documents the glorious history of a small religious group, emerging from its own persecution and leading the way toward the success of the Underground Railroad, the abolishment of slavery and the founding of the first schools for African-American children.

-- Molly Rusnak

Two Books that Enlarge our View of Race in the Meeting

I have just read two books that seem relevant to the concern of racial healing in our meeting and our ongoing discussion regarding New York Yearly Meeting's "Apology to Afro-Descendants."

The Warmth of Other Suns, by Isabel Wilkerson, is a historical novel that follows, in great detail, the lives of three black families who came north during the Great Migration of the early 20th century. A fictionalized history, it follows these families in their escape from the South to the cities of Chicago, New York and Los Angeles. We learn just how dreadful the Jim Crow rules were, and how their lives were full of threat and oppression.

We then find that the North, while free of overt discriminatory laws, was, in its own subtle way, just as restricted. Schools were not segregated, but black families were kept out of most neighborhoods by "redlining," a practice in which banks literally drew

red lines around many inner city neighborhoods and refused to give mortgages there.

What is impressive about this book is that it is thoroughly researched (the sources are given in the notes in the back). Wilkerson conducted years of interviews, with more than a thousand individuals, and painstakingly researched official records and newly available data.

The other one book I would like to discuss is *Americanah*, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. It tells of an African woman who comes to America and stays for 15 years, earning a degree from Harvard and becoming an assistant teacher there. What I found most interesting were her occasional

blog posts, which give her view of the culture of racism here in America. Growing up in Africa, she had found no racism. She sees the systemic racism in America from the eyes of an outsider.

Both books illuminate issues that I had been completely oblivious to. Until reading them, I felt that I had nothing to apologize for.

– *Lucy Sikes*

A Final Thought

Years ago, I asked the only black Friend I knew at that time in the meeting, “What could we do to attract people of color?” He replied, “You can’t. They will come when their path leads them to us.” Gradually, it seems, a few are arriving and we rejoice. But it will be a long time until the diversity within the meeting reflects that which can be found outside of its walls.

-- *Lucy Sikes*

Submission Guidelines

The Communications Committee welcomes Brooklyn Meeting News contributions from all Meeting members and attenders. Our newsletter includes a variety of content which may be of interest to our community, including but not limited to:

- Recaps of recent Meeting events
- Previews of upcoming events
- Issues pertaining to our Quaker faith and history

The newsletter is published on the first Sunday of each month, and we request that submissions for the next issue be submitted by **January 19th**.

General Guidelines:

- Please send an email to newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org so that we may briefly discuss your contribution, as regards its timeliness, appropriateness, and length.
- Contributions should

- generally be brief, between 150-450 words in length.
- Please send your newsletter submission as an attached Word document.
- Keep in mind that contributions will be copy edited, and may not appear in the newsletter in exactly the same form as how they were submitted.

Thank you for your interest - we look forward to your input!

Regularly Scheduled Activities

Meetings for Worship

9:00–9:50 AM and
11:00 AM–NOON on Sundays,
in the meeting room
6:30 PM Tuesdays,
in the meeting room

Childcare

Sundays during 11:00 AM worship, for
children of 3 months to 3 years, in the care
of an early childhood teacher and dedicated
volunteers

First Day School

10:45 AM – 11:45 AM, Sundays, September to
June. Three classes, roughly related to age:
Bodies (4-6), Minds (7-9) and Spirits (10-12).

Social Hour

12:00 PM Sundays,
Ground-level dining room

Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business

1:00 PM, first Sundays, in the meeting
room

Hymn Singing around the Piano

10:00 AM, first Sundays, in the meeting
room

Readings of Spiritual Texts

10:00 AM, second Sundays, in the meeting
room

Worship Sharing

10:00 AM, third Sundays, on the third
floor

Community Dinner

1:00 PM-3:00 PM SET-UP
3:00 PM-4:00 PM MEAL/SERVING
4:00 PM- 5:00 PM CLEAN-UP, COME FOR
SOME OR ALL!
Last Sunday of every month, ground-level
dining room; volunteers appreciated for
this monthly dinner for anyone who wishes
a free hot meal. Children encouraged to
volunteer.
Contact: Andres Colapinto,
acolabus@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

Ongoing additions to upcoming Meeting events are regularly added to the Meeting website at <http://www.brooklynmeeting.org/calendar>.

To submit an event, email calendar@brooklynmeeting.org.

Member Kate Rapoport also maintains an

email event announcement list; send a request to brooklyn.kittens@gmail.com to join.

January 2015

Thursday, January 1, 2pm:

Elijah Gwynn and Emily Walsh are pleased
to invite all members and attenders to their
wedding. There will be a brief reception
downstairs with wedding cake and other
refreshments.
Brooklyn Meeting House.

February 2015

Friday, February 13, 6pm- Sunday,

February 15, 2pm:

Clerking: Serving the Community with Joy
& Confidence
Powell House Conference center

Send additions to Regularly Scheduled Activities or Upcoming Events to calendar@brooklynmeeting.org.

Send inquiries or suggestions about the newsletter to newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org.

The Monthly Meeting Newsletter is published by the Communications Committee of Brooklyn Monthly Meeting.

Current members: Eli Gwynn (clerk), Ben Hill, Molly Rusnak, Lucy Sikes, and Anna White.

Drawings by Lucy Sikes
