



BROOKLYN MEETING NEWS

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

brooklynmeeting.org

NOVEMBER, 2017

150 Years of Light: The Brooklyn Friends School

-- Melissa Cavanaugh

On a fall day in 1867, 17 students entered the Brooklyn Meeting House and launched an educational journey for thousands of students to follow. As Brooklyn Friends School (BFS) celebrates its sesquicentennial, it remains closely connected to Brooklyn Monthly Meeting in its mission and its regular activities.

The BFS October Note to the New York Quarterly Meeting (NYQM) highlights the numerous ways in which the school exemplifies its Quaker values. For example, in February the school co-hosted (with Mary McDowell Friends) the 2017 Quaker Youth Leadership Conference (QYLC), bringing together students from the U.S., the U.K. and Canada to explore the theme, "Bridging Communities." Students were able to connect with each other around social activism while enjoying the city. Brooklyn Monthly Meeting member Marna Herrity – Clerk of the BFS All-School Quaker Life Committee, BFS teacher and point person for the event – noted, "QYLC 2017 renewed my appreciation for Quaker pedagogy and Quakerism as a whole and reminded me why it is so important to make a commitment to better the world, no matter who you are or how small the act you choose to do."

The school is also responsible for other partnerships, such as an ongoing cultural exchange with Kisangura Friends Schools in rural Tanzania and the Bridge Film Festival, which was started by BFS faculty member Andy Cohen nearly 20 years ago to recognize student-made films that show Quaker values in action.

The school also finds simple yet meaningful ways to reinforce its Quaker mission. For instance, by hosting a monthly Meeting for Worship in the school's meetinghouse, allowing parents and caregivers to have time for silent reflection after the morning drop-off.

For all of the ways that BFS has made Quakerism part of its present and future, it has not forgotten its past. The school will mark the 150th anniversary with a number of projects focusing on its history, including a book that will be

published this winter. The BFS note to NYQM indicated several areas for exploration in this work: "[t]he early history of Quakerism at BFS, particularly the role of the Women's Meeting in starting the school, BFS' initial status as the first co-educational elementary school in Brooklyn (public or private), and the dynamic leadership of women principals in the 19th century." It's sure to be a rich exploration of the bond between the school and the Meeting that has endured for one and a half centuries.

Center, the school in 1932 then clockwise, 1939 quiet reading in principal's office, 1880 class, school in 1973, ice skating on the roof 1940, class in 1912



From Attender to Member, a Spiritual Journey

Brooklyn Friends accept into active membership those whose declarations and ways of life manifest such unity with Friends' views and practices that they may be expected to enter fully into religious fellowship with the meeting. Part of the essential genius of the Society is the experience of growth through common worship and the loving acceptance of an individual by the group. It is an open fellowship that recognizes that of God in everyone.

Those inclined to join us are encouraged to attend meetings for worship and for business for a sufficient period of time to become convinced that membership will nourish and enrich their continuing growth in the life of the Spirit. Membership is a commitment to enter wholeheartedly into the spiritual and corporate activities of the Society and to willingly assume responsibility for both service and support as the way opens.

The attender writes a letter to the clerk requesting membership. This is forwarded to the Committee on Ministry and Counsel, which appoints a clearness committee to work with the person and brings the letter to the meeting for business for its first reading. After a second reading of the letter on the following month, we welcome them into the meeting with the traditional hug. And a welcoming gathering is arranged.

We have come to realize that, though daunting, the process of writing the request is a powerful opportunity to examine our spiritual journey.

Here is one of our most recent letters of request for Membership. It is from William Carr:

"My spiritual journey has been a slow process that developed and changed with different stages of my life. I grew up in Raleigh, North Carolina in a family of Southern Baptists. Although I was baptized as a young teenager, largely because that is what one did at that age, I did not appreciate the power of a spiritual life. In college, I discovered many diverse ways in which people celebrated spirituality. However, when I came out as a gay person, I lost my spiritual path, because I knew that the religious tradition I grew up with did not accept my sexuality. My spiritual life went dormant for many years until I finished college and veterinary school and got my first job. My first job was in Hawaii, and after I moved there, my mom told me I could meet guys to date by either taking a course or going to church. So I decided to go to the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) because they welcomed gay people. My mom was right. The first time that I went to MCC I met my current partner, David, who later became my spouse after we got married in 2009. As I got to know David I found out that he converted to being a Quaker from being Episcopalian. I learned a lot of the principles of Quakerism through David. My spiritual life began reawakening after we decided to get married. My life was transformed after marrying David in ways that I still can't find the words to describe. In many ways, it is like going from seeing black and white to seeing a multitude of dazzling colors. The texture of my life gained so much

richness. Now I must say that I cannot imagine not being with him after being with him for almost half of my lifetime.

In 2012, we moved to Brooklyn and I started going to the Brooklyn Friends Meeting. I started to attend regularly and participate in committee meetings. David warned me that committee meetings would be overwhelming, but I feel such joy in my service. Initially, I became involved with the Welcoming Committee, the LGBTQ Concerns Committee and the Pride Parade Organizing Committee. I enjoyed being a part of a community and being able to share my happiness and sorrows. Over time, spirituality has become one of the most important things in my life. In 2015, I took the ARCH training and started volunteering by visiting Boyce Bengé. In this experience, I found that I faced my own mortality, and also found so much beauty in celebrating life, which I could not have ever imagined before. Some days I feel such elation from being a part of something so much greater. I recognize that small things such as being able to swim the butterfly in having a swim lane all to myself brings me much joy for several reasons. It is not often that I am able to get a lane to myself, and I know there were times when I physically could not do the butterfly, which is a very demanding stroke. Each day has become an opportunity to learn how to appreciate my inner Light and the Light of others in new ways."

*Interested in promoting a
Quaker event? Then email
events@brooklynmeeting.org*

October 2017 Meeting for Business: Memberships, Contributions and Schools

-- Molly Rusnak

Father and Daughter Welcomed into Membership

Cassel Kroll and his daughter, Beatrice, were welcomed into membership in Brooklyn Meeting after the second reading of their letter.

A letter requesting membership by William Carr was given its first reading. William has been active in the meeting as an attender. His letter described a rich history of experiences and seeking leading to Quakerism.

Brooklyn Friends School Care Committee Reports

The Care Committee described its activities and participation in the annual dinner for faculty and the visit to meeting for worship of school parents and faculty. New members were added to the committee.

Donations from the Socially Responsible Fund Approved

At the recommendation of the Peace and Social Action Committee, the following donations from the Socially Responsible Fund were approved:

* To the African Education Committee of New York Quarterly Meeting for the Friends School in Tanzania: assistance for female students, dormitories and other supports.

* To the Quaker Activism Group: to join other Quakers on a march across the Brooklyn Bridge on November 4 with light-up signs, which can be used for other demonstrations.

* To the COVE: providing neighborhood arts centers for at-risk teenagers in the Bronx; creating a video about the "Dreamers."

Am I a Racist?

-- Linda Clarke

Am I a racist? I first asked myself this question a few years ago at Silver Bay, after hearing several Friends of European descent call themselves white racists. What a shock that was! And the experience actually catalyzed a new and freer way of being for me.

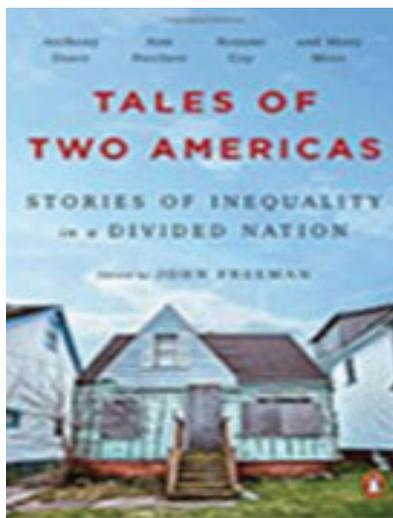
Recently some Friends and Attenders in our Meeting for Worship have voiced the same question. It is a hard question, for many reasons, especially in view of the feelings of

shame which accompany the label. Additionally, the term has become so hard to define and so overused that it is easy to get bogged down or scattered when attempting to explore the idea. After all, we're working with our unconscious selves when we do this - part of what Jung called the "shadow" - and some gentleness with ourselves may be in order. One way to start is to take a test about prejudice or bias online. You can do this at <https://implicit.harvard.edu>, or go to www.projectimplicit.net for more information. Here you will find tests for biases about many stereotypes.

Book Review: Tales of Two Americas: Stories of Inequality in a Divided Nation

-- Iris Lee Stoler

Tales of Two Americas, a 2017 Penguin Books release edited by John Freeman, is one of several



recent books addressing the topic of inequality in our country. What makes this one stand out is that it's a collection of essays, memoirs, poetry and short fiction, authored by some of today's most important writers. They all address the issue in their own powerful way; the

subject, style and impact of each is unique. Some examples:

"Trash Food" by Chris Offutt - a memoir segment on "white trash"

"Soup Kitchen" by Annie Dillard - two paragraphs on doing something worthwhile

"American Arithmetic" by Natalie Diaz - poetry on Native American mortality statistics

"Notes of a Native Daughter" by Sandra Cisneros - essay on growing up in Chicago

"Invisible Wounds" by Jess Ruffson - graphic short story of a disabled veteran

"Looking for a Home" by Karen Russell - memoir on gentrification in Portland, OR

"How" by Roxanne Gay - short fiction about abused women.

Some of the other contributors include Joyce Carol Oates, Edwidge Danticat and Danez Smith.

Because this is a collection, it can be read in any order. These are issues that our community has concerns about and deals with continually. The bonus is that you'll be reading some of the best writing around today by some of our best writers.

Some Thoughts on Clerking Friends Committee

-- Molly Rusnak

Occasionally, through the years, workshops on clerking have been held, but few have specifically focused on committees. It is assumed that Friends learn how to clerk a committee informally, from participating as committee members, from attending Meetings for Business and from trial and error. However, committee clerking has its own challenges which are not always met successfully because there are few clear accepted practices.

For example, how should a committee select a clerk? There is little guidance for this. In practice, one or two committee members will look at some unsuspecting individual and say "You do it." Or a clerk who feels they have served long enough or is moving out of town, asks another Friend to become the next clerk. However there are a number of Friends who have taken a private vow never to Clerk a committee. So this process can take a while, and it can be frustrating. One solution which can work well is to have two clerks or co-clerks. I have found this to be a rewarding experience and less stressful.

What are the responsibilities of a committee clerk? Certainly scheduling, notifying and reminding members of meetings and providing a proposed meeting agenda for the committee to decide on. The clerk can ask someone to take minutes or notes. The clerk usually calls on members who wish to speak, though this is not always necessary. Some committees can participate without much formality. A wise clerk can ask a committee for guidance about organization and conduct of meetings or ask individual members to take certain responsibilities. One Quaker goal is to provide for silence between comments. This is not easy to achieve in small groups, which tend to be informal.

Problems will arise for which there is little or no guidance. For example, what does the clerk do if a member repeatedly fails to attend meetings? If this continues, it means that the committee is one member short and other members may need to do extra work. Is there a tactful way to either encourage better attendance or suggest resignation?

Another occasional problem is when a committee needs to make a decision and one member refuses to agree with the others. "New York Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice"

offers some guidance. It suggests that the clerk ask the objecting Friend if they wish to be recorded as "standing aside." Or the clerk can simply say this. However I have never seen this advice followed in Brooklyn. In my experience what most committees do in this situation is to defer to the objecting Friend or just continue indefinitely without making a decision, thus allowing one individual to decide for the group.

Another puzzling question for committees is whether the decision they are making affects the meeting as a whole and should be taken to meeting for business. A situation like this occurred some time ago the first time I served on the Ministry and Oversight Committee. A member applied to have a same sex marriage under the care of the meeting. Two members of the committee were opposed so the request was denied. The rest of the meeting had no idea this had happened. Several years later, when I was co-clerk of the committee, we brought the question before the whole meeting as a policy issue that concerned the meeting as a whole. After a full and often emotional discussion, it was approved.

Perhaps other Friends will be encouraged to respond to these thoughts and submit their ideas to the newsletter.

Raising Anti-Racist White Children

There is still time to register for the "Raising Anti-Racist White Children" workshop, which will be held at the Brooklyn Meetinghouse on November 18 from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The workshop, sponsored by CSWAC (Center for Study of White American Culture), welcomes all who are interested. This could include parents,

caregivers and teachers of white children as well as persons of color who wish to lend support. Learn about children's grasp of race and racism. Gain information, tools, strategies, language and resources to teach anti-racism to your children or students.

This workshop is sponsored by our First Day School Committee, together with New York Yearly Meeting. BMM Ministry and Counsel

has made scholarships available which pay for more than half of the tuition. Tuition includes lunch, and child care will be provided by NYYM at no cost to participants. To learn more and/or to register for this workshop, visit: <https://www.nycquakers.org/2017/10/12/raising-anti-racist-white-children> Contact Robin Alpern at robin.alpern@gmail.com for additional information regarding scholarships.

How Mohawk Indians Once Lived Near Brooklyn Meetinghouse

- Molly Rusnak

From the 1920s through the 1960s, Kahnawake Mohawks, from a reservation in Quebec, occupied a 10 square block area in what is now Downtown Brooklyn or Boerum Hill. Then, the area was called "Little Caughnawaga." The men were iron-workers, working on tall structures and bridges in New York City. The women created a vibrant neighborhood, including boarding houses along Atlantic Avenue for families who lived here most of the year, a church

and social and charitable activities. The community also kept its connections with the reservation in Quebec with frequent visits. The children were mainly bilingual.

When my family moved to the neighborhood in 1968, we were unaware of those Indians still remaining. However, we were told that the "Wigwam Bar" on Nevins Street (between Atlantic and State Street) was the oldest existing bar in Brooklyn. Unfortunately it was ignored by the Landmarks Commission and has become a beauty parlor today.

I did have the opportunity to become acquainted with a very

elderly lady who lived with her caregiver around the corner from my house on Nevins Street. She had stories to tell, though she suffered from memory loss. Her main interest was in placing a ceremonial circle of stones in the nearby neighborhood community garden. It remained there for some time after her death. I am told that there are still a few remaining members of this tribe living in the neighborhood.

A television program describing this community was produced by PBS and a tape copy of it was distributed by Native American Public Telecommunications, also funded by PBS.

White Privilege: A New Way of Looking at a Very Old Condition

-- Linda Clarke, reprinted from an article in *Spark*

Long ago, racism was the intellectual product of pseudo-science. It later came under study by social sciences and eventually by physical science. Whether you have studied formally or casually, a little or a lot, politically or spiritually, you must have noticed that until recently all of the focus has been on the lives (or natures) of black people. You may also have noticed that remedies have focused on a "charitable" model of assistance, i.e. the privileged class "gives" some benefits, such as government programs designed to help minorities. Tokenism, the practice of letting one or two blacks into a privileged area, also falls into this category.

Recently, a well-seasoned academic paradigm for studying racism has entered into popular culture. Referred to as "white privilege," it focuses on the lives of white people and the functions that racism performs for them.

The basic principle is that whites enjoy advantages that others do not. While the advantages are numerous and varied, much of the focus is on the economic enrichment that comes to whites as a result of racism. (One prominent scholar has characterized white privilege as "unjust enrichment.") This is very evident in the area of family wealth accrual. While the proof that this is the case is abundant and that white privilege is more than a mere idea, remedies are nonexistent. History has shown that charity, government "handouts" and tokenism have failed to produce any substantial or lasting change. Are there other remedies? And why are we so reluctant to talk about reparations?

Perhaps the shortage of remedies and the reluctance to talk about reparations has something to do with concerns about "white fragility." This concept holds that white privilege can be viewed as unstable racial equilibrium and that when this equilibrium is challenged, the resulting social/racial stress can become intolerable and trigger a range of defensive responses. Does white fragility explain the poverty of meaningful

responses to what we well know to be injustice of monstrous proportions? The concept of white fragility raises the issue of whether or not white privilege becomes just another impotent model for the study of racism with no tangible solution.

Maybe the time has come to move beyond analysis and into a deeper human dimension.

If we view racism as a spiritual disease, then it becomes incumbent upon Friends to define a spiritual basis to fund the necessary passion for meaningful social change. Just as Quakers who fought for abolition forged a spiritual and political alliance between the Bible and the Declaration of Independence to create and maintain the necessary moral fortitude to stand up to slavery, we can bring our faith into the modern world. Most, if not all of us, agree that we are one in the light. From this faith we might ask ourselves how our behavior is at odds with the deepest truth of who we are and be guided individually and corporately toward more real and sustainable improvement.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The Communications Committee welcomes Brooklyn Meeting News contributions from all Meeting members and attendees. 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 November 19th, so that we may briefly discuss your contribution, as regards its timeliness, appropriateness, and length.

General Guidelines:

- Please send an email to newsletter@brooklynmeeting.org

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 (age 4-6), Minds (age 7-9) and Spirits (age 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

Outdoor Worship

6:00 PM, every Thursday, weather permitting spring through September, outdoor worship under the Quarterly Meeting's care in Battery Park (Manhattan) at the Labyrinth just north of Castle Clinton

Worship Sharing

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

Prayer Healing Meeting

10:00 AM, fourth Sundays in the meeting room

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 ARE 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

Saturday, November 18

9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Raising Anti-Racist White Children Workshop¹

Tuition includes lunch, Child care will be provided by NYYM at no cost to participants. Scholarships available which pay for more than half of the tuition.

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

To submit an event, email: events@brooklynmeeting.org.

Send additions to Regularly Scheduled Activities or Upcoming Events to events@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: Melissa Cavanaugh, Ben Frisch, Ben Hill, Molly Rusnak and Heather Loza Drawings by Lucy Sikes