

## 2010 Annual Report for the Working Group on Racism of Baltimore Yearly Meeting

The BYM Working Group on Racism (WGR) has continued to meet regularly except in July. Our meetings include meaningful sharing around our personal experiences with race and racism, and also sharing of resources including books, movies, websites, events and organizations doing related work. We find this sharing very supportive as we, individually and collectively, seek to “deepen our understanding and appreciation of the ways in which Friends meetings are both enriched and challenged by diversity” (from the WGR Mission Statement).

We have continued to be proactive in trying to bring resources to BYM via both the Annual Session and monthly meetings. We hosted authors Vanessa Julye and Donna McDaniel for four presentations/discussions on their new book, *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship* (published by FGC in January 2009), hosted by monthly meetings in Baltimore and Washington in May 2009, and they returned in October for two presentations at Stony Run Friends Meeting.

In March 2010, the WGR hosted a walking tour of Walter Pierce Park in Washington DC led by Friends Meeting of Washington attendee, historian Mary Belcher. A Quaker cemetery was established there in 1807 under the care of Indian Springs Meeting, which later became Sandy Spring Friends Meeting. A much larger African American cemetery, which embraces the Quaker one, was created in 1870 by the Colored Union Benevolent Association, an ecumenical organization of local African American churches and a Masonic lodge. The cemeteries were closed in 1890. The one-time burial site was turned into a park in the 1980s. Quakers are collaborating with local historians, sociologists, researchers, and government agencies to learn more about who is buried there and their history and to assure that the land is managed in a way that honors the dead.

Two members of the WGR have traveled to Africa for Quaker and other peace-related work: Jane Meleney Coe has made two trips to Burundi and Maryhelen (Mel) Snyder has been to Kenya. Mel is returning to Kenya, along with eight other BYM women, at the end of June 2010 for the United Society of Friends Women International Triennial.

Annual Sessions, 2009 and 2010: In Frostburg in 2009, WGR members engaged all those who entered the dining hall with a quiz drawn from the facts in *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship*. With no scoring or “grades,” all could enjoy the challenge to their historical knowledge, and many who had not yet read the book became more eager to do so. The WGR also led two workshops. Pat Schenck led “Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible,” a repeat of that well-attended workshop in 2008, and David Etheridge led a “listening” workshop on BYM history around enslavement and race relations. He gleaned ideas as well as helpers in his goal of creating a BYM history on this topic, which is the basis for his 2010 workshop. The detailed timeline of this history is on the BYM website. WGR members will sponsor two additional workshops in 2010 (“Winds of Change” with Patricia Wild and “Children Can Discriminate” with Elizabeth DuVerlie and Gail Thomas) and will also provide another energizing dining hall experience plus an anticipated film viewing and discussion session with Young Friends.

The WGR is pleased that the overall theme of the 2010 Annual Session, “Leadings for Today, Lessons from History,” comes out of the combined efforts of the BYM Program Committee and the Working Group on Racism, spurred by the publication by FGC of *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship*. We had articulated as a goal, the following: “To encourage an open inquiry into issues of race as it affects our lives—our spiritual lives, our daily lives, and the lives of our Meeting community. To

discover how race plays a role in the spiritual life of BYM.” The theme for 2010 is a reflection of that goal and, we anticipate, a mechanism to help meet it.

Elizabeth DuVerlie, Clerk, Working Group on Racism

Active members: Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch, Jane Meleney Coe, Elizabeth DuVerlie, Paul Didisheim, David Etheridge, Brian Gamble, Carol Phelps, Pat Schenck, Maryhelen Snyder, Gail Thomas, Roger Wolcott

Corresponding members: Jeanne Houghton, Janet Phoenix, Elizabeth Smith, Sharon Smith