

Annual Report October 2021

Diversity Change Group and Threshing Prep

The Diversity Change Group was formed in the Spring of 2019 following a BYM workshop with Dr. Amanda Kemp focusing on difficult conversations about racism. The mission of the Change Group is to assist Spirit in leading us more fully into living our testimonies of equality and community, especially as they relate to racial justice, equity, and inclusion. We seek to explore: "How are we changed – as individuals and a community – by this Leading?" We will summarize our actions to date for both the Change Group and for the Threshing Prep Group. We would like to highlight the upcoming threshing session on October 24th intended to emerge with a sense of the Meeting on key next steps. We hope as many as possible can attend to help us discern the way forward.

The Change Group includes Alex Bell (co-clerk), Gale Thompson (co-clerk), Peirce Hammond, Aura Triana, and Michael Wallace, with Lee Ingram joining recently. We are under the care of Ministry and Worship with Margaret Benefiel and Jackie DeCarlo as our key collaborators who form the core of the Threshing Prep Group along with Gale, briefly Jillaine Smith and Leslie Sussan, and were recently joined by Aura Triana and Michael Wallace.

In 2019, the Change Group led three workshops to increase Friends awareness of racism. The first, "On White Fragility," addressed the discomfort and defensiveness of confronting systemic racism. The second, "Experiences with Racism," allowed Friends to discuss when they confronted or committed acts of racism as well as their reactions and reflections. The third, "Developing Personal Queries About Racism," supported self-awareness of the impact of racism and self-reflection via individualized self-queries. While helpful in raising the awareness of those who participated, they were not intended to result in any specific action or collective activity.

In early 2020, a Call to Action Against Systemic Racism was received from Baltimore Yearly Meeting. Since then, our group has focused on helping the Meeting discern its response. By the end of 2020 and in response to queries sent by the Clerks to all BFM committees, the Meeting had developed a list of thirty-five action ideas to be considered by committees and eighteen to be considered by the Meeting. Committees are pursuing their work and reporting to Business Meeting on their activities. One substantial outcome from the Change Group's encouragement to date is two anti-racism queries proposed by the clerks to be used in decision-making where were approved at Meeting for Business in July.

In early 2021, the Clerks asked the Change Group for guidance on how to address those ideas for action against systemic racism which pertained to the Meeting as a whole. After reviewing the action ideas and deliberating, the Change Group concurred with the suggestions that a threshing approach and external facilitation expertise made sense. The group proposed that an ad hoc committee be formed to explore what other Quaker organizations and experts in Diversity/Equity/Inclusion (DEI) were doing that might inform BFM's approach, identify outside experts who might be suitable to assist BFM, and propose an approach to BFM. Of particular note, the Change Group urged that the approach address BFM's desired identity as well as specific action steps, thereby introducing an important spiritual element to what might otherwise be just action planning. The Clerks launched the Ad-Hoc Threshing Prep group which has been meeting weekly for months, often collaborating with the Change Group.

After conducting its outreach, the Threshing Prep group came to several realizations. An effort to uproot structural racism in ourselves and in the outside world is a journey, not a small set of discrete actions. We sought benchmarks from which to evaluate where BFM might be and encountered, via other Quaker organizations, the Continuum (attached) which we found eye-opening. We concluded that to jump start the journey and lay shared groundwork, there needs

to be some group engagement in concepts of identity, what structural racism consists of, and what roles Quakers and BFM have played in sustaining or dismantling the systems. From there, BFM can collectively move on to address its desired identity on a journey of evolution as well as the concrete actions it is committed to take in dismantling structural racism. This requires willingness to look at our own assumptions, actions, systems, and institutions which may unwittingly reinforce a system of white privilege, if not examined closely and with clear intention. As a result, the group sketched an approach that would include several group steps over a period of 6-9 months on the way to confirming a concrete action plan (attached).

Way forward

The Change Group and Threshing Prep Group believe that Bethesda Friends Meeting can more fully live an identity that supports uprooting racism. Its community involvement has largely centered around charity as the major means of action, and charity may ameliorate the system, but often sustains it rather than changes it. As a predominantly white community, we have inherent biases and blind spots which we will need help in identifying and addressing.

For these reasons, and considering the fact that no member of the Meeting has such expertise, the Ad-Hoc Threshing Prep Group has had many conversations with individuals who do this work. It requires both content expertise but also a delicate blend of probing and support to overcome resistance, potential guilt, or shame, and to emerge with clarity of intention and commitment to action. Securing the kind of expertise that would be most helpful for the process identified above (and in the attachment) will likely require a resource budget of \$15-20K to lay the foundation from which to make clear decisions about the identity we wish to evolve to and the actions we are committed to take from that aspirational place. A portion of this amount has already been pledged by a BFM family willing to match the funds BFM commits, so the total we need to raise or allocate would be roughly \$7-10K. We also believe that a supportive community to learn and evolve BFM may further equip our participants not only to take collective BFM action but to initiate and support action in their own spheres of influence outside of BFM.

We recognize that BFM needs to discern its identity and intentions on several fronts even to pursue the proposed approach, which has already elicited internal dissent. So, we are calling for a Threshing session on October 24 to discern the first level of our identity and intentions:

1. In what way is systemic racism an area of continuing revelation on our testimonies of Equality, Integrity, and Community which calls us to concerted collective effort and action to support uprooting systemic racism and develop the "Beloved Community"?
2. What internal work do we need to undertake in our mindset, behavior, words, processes, and systems to avoid unwittingly perpetuating systemic racism in ourselves as we seek to take collective actions to uproot it in the external world?
3. What is the support and expertise we need to be able to see our biases and address the resistance, pain, fear, anger, hurt, shame, and guilt that might arise, so we can move forward to effective action?
4. What level of time and energy are we willing to commit at both an individual and community level?
5. At what level are we prepared to pay for external expertise and how would we secure funds (budget adjustments and/or special fund-raising)? (Note: there is an offer by a family in the Meeting to make a contribution matching that of the Meeting)

Our two groups look forward to continuing to work with the Meeting on these important questions at the Threshing Session on October 24.

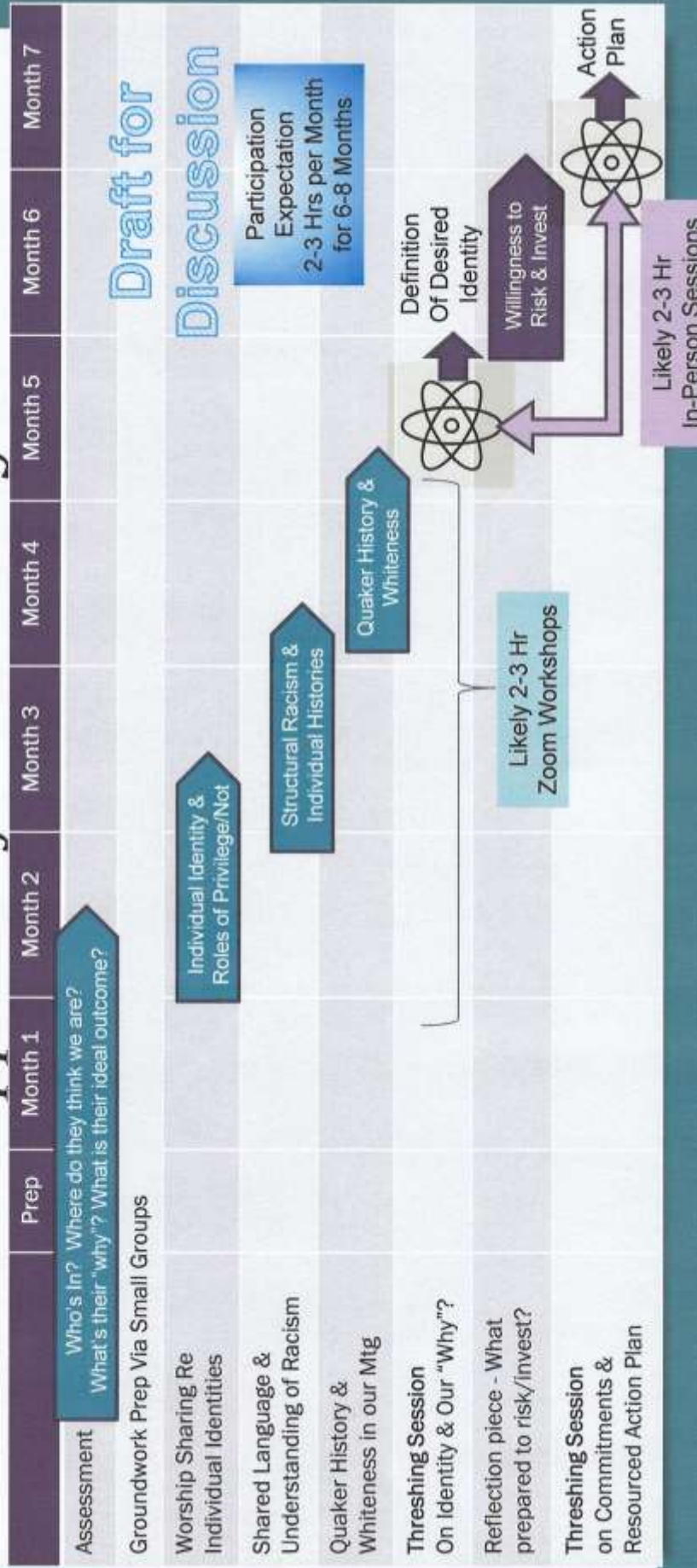
CONTINUUM ON BECOMING ANTIRACIST MULTICULTURAL INSTITUTION

MONOCULTURAL → → → MULTICULTURAL		ANTIRACIST → → →		ANTIRACIST MULTICULTURAL	
Racial & Cultural Differences Seen as Deficits		Tolerant of Racial and Cultural Differences Seen as Assets		Racial and Cultural Differences	
1. EXCLUSIVE A Segregated Institution	2. PASSIVE A 'Club' Institution	3. SYMBOLIC CHANGE A Multicultural Institution	4. IDENTITY CHANGE An Antiracist Institution	5. STRUCTURAL CHANGE A Transforming Institution	6. FULLY INCLUSIVE A Transformed Institution in a Transformed Society
<p>Intentionally and publicly excludes or segregates African Americans, Arab Americans, Native Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans*</p> <p>Intentionally and publicly enforces the racist status quo throughout institution</p> <p>Institutionalization of racism includes formal policies and practices, teachings, and decision making on all levels</p> <p>Usually has similar intentional policies and practices toward other socially oppressed groups such as women, disabled, elderly and children, LGBTQ, citizens of developing nations, etc.</p>	<p>Tolerant of a limited number of People of Color with "proper" perspective and credentials</p> <p>May still secretly limit or exclude People of Color in contradiction to public policies</p> <p>Continues to intentionally maintain white power and privilege through its formal policies and practices, teachings, and decision making on all levels of institutional life</p> <p>Often declares, "We don't have a problem."</p>	<p>Makes official policy pronouncements regarding multicultural diversity</p> <p>Sees itself as "non-racist" institution with open doors to People of Color</p> <p>Carries out intentional inclusiveness efforts, recruiting "someone of color" on committees or office staff</p> <p>Expanding view of diversity includes other socially oppressed groups such as women, disabled, elderly and children, LGBTQ, citizens of developing nations, etc.</p> <p><i>But...</i></p> <p>"Not those who make waves"</p> <p>Little or no contextual change in culture, policies, and decision-making</p> <p>Is still relatively unaware of continuing patterns of privilege, paternalism, and control</p>	<p>Growing understanding of racism as barrier to effective diversity</p> <p>Develops analysis of systemic racism</p> <p>Sponsors programs of antiracism training</p> <p>New consciousness of institutionalized white power and privilege</p> <p>Develops intentional identity as an "antiracist institution"</p> <p>Begins to develop accountability to racially oppressed communities</p> <p>Increasing commitment to dismantle racism and eliminate inherent white advantage</p> <p><i>But...</i></p> <p>Institutional structures and culture that maintain white power and privilege still intact and relatively untouched</p>	<p>Commits to process of intentional institutional restructuring, based upon antiracist analysis and identity</p> <p>Audits and restructures all aspects of institutional life to ensure full participation of People of Color, including their worldview, culture, and lifestyles</p> <p>Implements structures, policies and practices with inclusive decision making and other forms of power sharing on all levels of the institution's life and work</p> <p>Commits to struggle to dismantle racism in the wider community, and builds clear lines of accountability to racially oppressed communities</p> <p>Antiracist multicultural diversity becomes an institutionalized asset</p> <p>Redefines and rebuilds all relationships and activities in society, based on antiracist commitments</p> <p>Allies with others in combating all forms of social oppression."</p>	<p>Future vision of an institution and wider community that has overcome systemic racism</p> <p>Institution's life reflects full participation and shared power with diverse racial, cultural, and economic groups in determining its mission, structure, constituency, policies, and practices</p> <p>Full participation in decisions that shape the institution, and inclusion of diverse cultures, lifestyles, and interests</p> <p>A sense of restored community and mutual caring</p>

Source: Crossroads Antiracism Organizing & Training; used with permission for BFM



Possible Approach for Threshing Process



Draft for Discussion