



# SPARK

New York Yearly Meeting

*The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)*

Volume 50, Number 4

15 Rutherford Place, New York, NY 10003

September 2020

## Black Lives Matter: In Memory of George Floyd

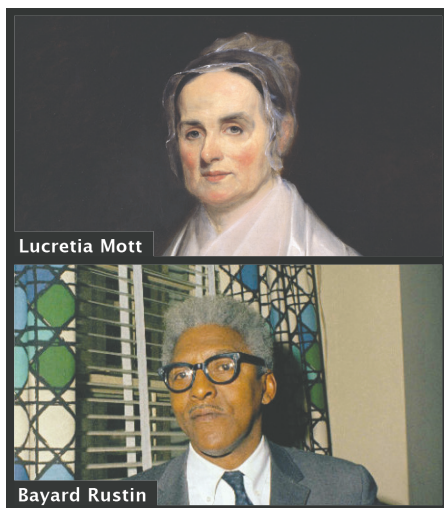
Nadine Hoover  
Buffalo Meeting

Black lives matter. On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a black man, did not just die; he was killed in Minnesota by Derek Chauvin, one of four white police officers present. Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey denounced the officers, "Being black in America should not be a death sentence... I believe what I saw and what I saw is wrong on every level." Only after public outcry was Chauvin arrested and charged with 3rd degree murder and manslaughter.

We abide by laws, but in the words of Justice Marvic Leonen, "A lawful grant of power to a person doesn't guarantee that it is always wisely used. At times, what is called legal may not be just. Our collective duty is to make sure the legal will also be just." A free, just society relies on citizens to protest injustice, to assert that brutality and disrespect of life is wrong and must stop. Societies that cannot hear such critique or silence such voices are corrupt.

**As a Quaker, I see every person as a child of God and oppose any form of prejudice or violence. Black men, women, and children should feel loved and respected, not afraid to walk the streets or go about their daily business.**

Gandhi explained, "Non-cooperation and civil disobedience become a sacred duty when the state has



become lawless or corrupt. And a citizen who barter with such a state shares in its corruption and lawlessness." Black men, women, and children lose their lives to prejudice and injustice; this must stop.

To abolish prejudice, we must abolish privilege. Prejudice and privilege are two sides of the same cycle of oppression. Privilege is structural or legal restriction of advantage to some people at the exclusion of others and permission to use advantage with impunity. Privilege is not a pleasure, blessing, or honor; it is unnecessary, unfair power used with impunity that causes harm, and is immoral.

Development takes time, so some people gain advantage over others. A just society nurtures everyone's development, while holding the advantaged accountable. Abolishing privilege does not negate development, it ensures equity in developing knowledge, skills, health, relationships, talents, and so forth.

The time has come to separate business and state. This may seem as impossible as separation of church and state felt in their time. Governance should attend to the public good, not to accumulating wealth

*continued on page 6*

## Notes from NYYM's 325th Annual Gathering

New York Yearly Meeting met online for the first time this summer after 324 consecutive years of meeting in person. Below are reports from some of the interest groups held during these virtual Summer Sessions.

### Moving with Spirit

Jane Alexandre  
Tom Goodridge  
Morningside Meeting

About 2 years ago, we began a conversation about movement, worship and spirit. We are restless movers, both: Jane Alexandre is a dance artist/scholar whose current practice and concerns center around community, obligation and belonging. Tom Goodridge attempts to worship through Spirit-led movement.

We began this experiment in movement at Morningside Monthly Meeting with a 30-minute session before meeting for worship, held in the meeting room. It was not the first time some Morningsiders had experimented with Spirit-led movement; perhaps ten years ago a group of up to five Friends practiced moving in the spirit, seeking to center and prepare for worship.

As we renewed our experiment in movement, we wondered whether our movement was preparation for worship, or was it worship?

We sought guidance in NYYM's *Faith and Practice*, 2015:

**"...In Silence:**

*continued on page 4*

### Right Sharing of World Resources

Mary Eagleson  
Scarsdale Meeting

Two aspects of Right Sharing of World Resources (RSWR) are the "why" and the "how." The "why" is expressed in the organization's mission statement: "God calls us to the right sharing of world resources, from the burdens of materialism and poverty into the abundance of God's love to work for equity through partnerships with our sisters and brothers throughout the world." The emphasis is on "God calls."

We who live in North America are the beneficiaries of an extremely lopsided world economic system

*continued on page 4*

**Racial Justice**  
pages 6-7

**Reports from Summer Sessions**  
pages 4-5

**Fall Sessions Nov. 6-8** page 8

## Notices

### New Members

**Jorie Bateman-Coe** —  
Fifteenth Street  
**Matthew Bell** — Fifteenth  
Street  
**Steve Greechie** — Fifteenth  
Street  
**Mary Grimes** — Fifteenth  
Street  
**Carmen Hendershott** —  
Fifteenth Street  
**Sander Hicks** — Fifteenth  
Street  
**Janice Hinson** — Buffalo  
**Claire Litherland** — Fifteenth  
Street  
**John Thomas** — Fifteenth  
Street  
**Eli Kjellberg Zerof** —  
Fifteenth Street

### Births

**Nathan Wu-Hansen**, born  
to Ian Hansen, member of  
Fifteenth Street, and Tammy  
Wu, on November 18, 2019.

### Marriages

**Claire Litherland**, member of  
Fifteenth Street, and David  
Lewis, on October 5, 2019.

### Deaths

**Jean Benninghof**, member of  
Westbury, on May 28, 2020.  
**Julia Damkoehler**, member of  
Albany, on March 23, 2020.  
**Gordon Clark**, member of  
Shrewsbury, on June 23, 2020.  
**Catherine Feucht**, member of  
Purchase, on June 18, 2020.

## NEWS

### Announcing the Closure of Blossom Garden Friends School

After 44 years of operation, Blossom Garden Friends School, in Collins, NY, closed as of Aug. 31, 2020, due to difficulties inflicted by the COVID-19 epidemic. The school will become Blossom Garden Friends Peace and Education Center. It will be for educational, spiritual, artistic, and creative expression and growth. Contact Janice Ninan at [bgfs@roadrunner.com](mailto:bgfs@roadrunner.com)

### Sojourn at Powell House this Fall

The larger building at the Powell House retreat center, Pitt Hall, is now available to be rented, including the use of its kitchen and

## Around Our Yearly Meeting

common spaces as well as specific bedrooms and bathrooms for your group. For details visit [www.powellhouse.org/sojourn-at-poho](http://www.powellhouse.org/sojourn-at-poho) or call 518-794-8811.

### Arrange an Earthcare Workshop for your meeting

Quaker Earthcare Witness is offering virtual workshops for your meeting on a wide range of earthcare-related topics. See available topics at [www.quakerearthcare.org/article/quaker-earthcare-witness-presents-virtual-workshops-your-community](http://www.quakerearthcare.org/article/quaker-earthcare-witness-presents-virtual-workshops-your-community) and contact [hayley@quakerearthcare.org](mailto:hayley@quakerearthcare.org) to set one up.

## ONLINE EVENTS

### NYYM Fall Sessions

Fall Sessions is November 6-8, 2020, online via Zoom. See page 8 for more.

### NYYM Budget Saturday

Budget Saturday is October 10 from 9 am to 12 pm. The meeting is an opportunity for the NYYM community to provide discernment on the 2021 and 2022 operating budgets. Email [office@nyym.org](mailto:office@nyym.org) for more.

### Upcoming webinars from the Center for the Study of White American Culture

Visit [www.euroamerican.org/](http://www.euroamerican.org/) for details. The Black Concerns Committee offers some scholarship aid for NYYM members and attenders. Apply to Robin Alpern at [robin.alpern@gmail.com](mailto:robin.alpern@gmail.com).

### What White People Can Do About Racism, Part 1 — October 1, 8, & 15

A live, 3-part, interactive online workshop that looks at how white people can work for racial justice **Raising Anti-Racist White Children** — November 4, 11, & 18  
An online, live, 3-part interactive workshop for parents and educators offering information and guidance on how to prepare white children to live in our increasingly multiracial society.

### World Quaker Day is October 4, 2020

The theme of this year's Quaker Day is "What Does it Mean to be a Quaker today? Living a Faithful Life in a Changing World." Friends World Committee on Consultation (FWCC) is encouraging online worship on Quaker Day along with the opportunity to invite another worship group to join with yours. More information, including

resources that can be used, shared, and discussed, are at [www.worldquakerday.org](http://www.worldquakerday.org)

### Events for Young Adults

The Interim Young Adult Field Secretary, Marissa Badgley, continues to organize a schedule of virtual get-togethers, workshops, and worship designed for young adults (ages 18-35-ish) but open to all. Visit [bit.ly/NYYM-yafca11](http://bit.ly/NYYM-yafca11) for all upcoming events and opportunities!

### Powell House has gone virtual!

Powell House, the retreat and conference center for NYYM, offers **virtual workshops**, using the Zoom conferencing technology, on a donate-as-led basis. Go to [poho.org](http://poho.org) to see the



full list of upcoming events at Powell House; new events are being scheduled all the time. Some upcoming events include: Poho Book Club Reads *An American Marriage*, October 24  
Poho Book Club Reads *Hamilton*, December 5

### Powell House Youth Program is Holding Online Conferences

[www.powellhouse.org/youth-program](http://www.powellhouse.org/youth-program)

Upcoming virtual youth weekends:

**Lunar Laughter**, for grades 6-8, Oct. 9-11

**Monster Mashquerade**, for grades 3-5, Oct. 30-Nov. 1

**Surviving and Thriving**, for grades 11-12 and young adults, Nov. 20-22

## ONLINE WORSHIP

Many of the local (monthly) meetings in the New York Yearly Meeting area are holding online meetings for worship every week. Visit [nyym.org/online-worship-opportunities](http://nyym.org/online-worship-opportunities) for the full list.

### Powell House Online Worship Saturdays at 6:00 p.m.

Powell House, the conference and retreat center for New York Yearly Meeting, holds a meeting for worship via Zoom every Saturday at 6:00 p.m. Contact Regina at [regina@powellhouse.org](mailto:regina@powellhouse.org) for information on how to join.

### Friends General Conference (FGC) Online Worship

FGC offers general worship on Saturdays at 9 p.m.; for People of Color, worship on Wednesdays at 1 and 8 p.m. and worship sharing

on Tuesdays at 5 p.m.; and a weekly Meeting for Worship for Friends of European Descent Confronting Racism and White Supremacy on Fridays at 12 noon. Find all details and links at [www.fgcquaker.org/resources/online-worship-opportunities](http://www.fgcquaker.org/resources/online-worship-opportunities)

### Pendle Hill Worship in the Barn

Members of the Pendle Hill community gather in the Barn for worship every day from 8:30 a.m. to 9:10 a.m. Connection information is at [pendlehill.org/explore/worship/join-us-online-for-worship-in-the-barn/](http://pendlehill.org/explore/worship/join-us-online-for-worship-in-the-barn/)

### FWWC's Worldwide Worship List

Friends World Committee of Consultation (FWCC) has compiled a list of meetings holding worship online around the world, here: [fwcc.world/kinds-of-friends/online-worship](http://fwcc.world/kinds-of-friends/online-worship)

## OPPORTUNITIES

### Quaker Job Openings

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting maintains a webpage with job openings in their yearly meeting and other Quaker organizations. Visit [www.pym.org/employment/](http://www.pym.org/employment/) For jobs with American Friends Service Committee (across the US), visit [www.afsc.org/job-center](http://www.afsc.org/job-center)

SPARK (ISSN 00240591)

New York Yearly Meeting News  
Published five times a year:  
January, March, May, September, and  
November by

New York Yearly Meeting  
Religious Society of Friends  
15 Rutherford Place  
New York, NY 10003  
212-673-5750  
[office@nyym.org](mailto:office@nyym.org)  
[www.nyym.org](http://www.nyym.org)

Editor: Sarah Way  
[communications@nyym.org](mailto:communications@nyym.org)  
Editorial Board:

NYYM Communications Committee

*Spark* deadlines are the first week of the month preceding the publication month. Permission is granted to reprint any article, provided *Spark* is acknowledged as the source.

Periodicals Postage Paid  
at New York, New York

Postmaster: Send address changes to:

**SPARK**  
15 Rutherford Place  
New York, NY 10003

NYYM Staff

Marissa Badgley: [yafs@nyym.org](mailto:yafs@nyym.org)  
Chad Gilmartin: [web@nyym.org](mailto:web@nyym.org)  
Steve Mohlke: [gensec@nyym.org](mailto:gensec@nyym.org)  
Walter Naegle: [walter@nyym.org](mailto:walter@nyym.org)  
Helen Garay Toppins:  
[office@nyym.org](mailto:office@nyym.org)  
Sarah Way:  
[communications@nyym.org](mailto:communications@nyym.org)

## Letter from Chappaqua Meeting

I'd like to let you know what's going on at a Chappaqua Monthly Meeting at the moment.

In mid-June one of our young people asked permission from Business Meeting to hang a Black Lives Matter banner he was designing at the meeting. He hung the banner next to our sign on Rt. 120, aka Quaker Road, one of the main routes into Chappaqua. (See photo to the right.)

About two weeks later a vandal covered the work 'Black' over with white paint. The young artist repainted his banner. A few days later the banner was defaced with black spray paint. The young man immediately repainted a second time. In both incidents, there was a lot of community support and sympathy for the vandalism of an important message. Our meeting wrote a letter to the local paper, The Examiner News, in support of Black Lives Matter. (To read, visit [www.theexaminernews.com](http://www.theexaminernews.com) and search for "Friends Meeting.")

Shortly after Tropical Storm Isaias, in the early hours of Aug. 6, someone brought some sort of accelerant and burnt the entire banner down, leaving a singed tree and a bare spot on the earth below. The banner was up again on the same tree the next morning.

As a response, in cooperation with others in the community and in consultation with the meeting, our young artist and his parents have started a Go Fund Me fundraiser to cover the cost of creating more banners to hang around the community and for scholarships to the Children's Aid Society's Wagon Road Camp on the grounds of the Chappaqua Mountain Institute, founded by Purchase Quarter. This campaign has raised over \$6,000 from 91 people so far and spread similar banners far and wide.

The community has supported us not just with this fundraiser, but with calls, social media messages and even rallies, which has been much more than we ever expected and very gratifying to see on such an important issue of racial justice.

We'll keep you posted as this develops,

Avis Sri-Jayantha



The Black Lives Matter banner in place in front of Chappaqua Monthly Meeting

## Making Room for African Refugees in the USA One Meeting's Story

Sue Tannenhill  
Buffalo Meeting

They came as refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in August of 2010. Quaker Pastor, Ndanga Ramazani, his wife, and 7 children arrived in Buffalo, NY, under the auspices of Catholic Charities. Eventually they found our Buffalo monthly meeting and we welcomed them with open arms. They were Evangelical Friends. We are an unprogrammed meeting. That never mattered.

Now, a church has grown up around Pastor Ndanga, and that church is applying to our regional meeting for status as a monthly meeting. How did this all happen? It was built on good will, much help from the meeting, the region and the YM, and a grant.

Our meeting offered financial assistance, tutoring support, accompaniment to teacher parent conferences and medical appointments and more. Ndanga attended a college. Within a few years, he had his bachelor's degree in social work and his two older girls were also attending college. The family became citizens and bought a home.

Farmington Scipio region also embraced them and helped pay off the \$12,000 bill from Catholic Charities for their airfare to the USA from Africa. In addition, NYYM, through the Barrington Dunbar fund consistently supported scholarships for one of the children to attend a private Jesuit High School

Buffalo is home to many DRC refugees and a group of them approached Ndanga, saying, "We want to worship as we did in the DRC. Please be our pastor." We found space for them where we rent space. We approved them

as a preparative meeting, and Friends, including our General Secretary, attended the services that were in Swahili. Though we didn't understand the language, the sense of praise and worship was evident. Their worship was joyous — singing, dancing, testimonies, preaching the word of God. The church, named Christ is the Answer International Fellowship, grew, and before the pandemic 50-80 people attended each Sunday afternoon. Ndanga, his wife, and several of the children continued to worship with us as well as with their own church later in the day.

Then the group who had approached Ndanga initially came to him saying, "We want to be part of the Quakers." Most refugees were not yet fluent in English. It felt important to our meeting that this congregation understand our branch of Quakerism.

Buffalo Meeting sent Ndanga and his daughter Regine to a workshop on clerking with Arthur Larrabee and Steve Mohlke in January of 2020.

In addition we received a grant from the Thomas H. and Mary Shoemaker Fund that provided a professional translation from English to Swahili of NYYM *Faith and Practice* as well as the printing of 350 copies. In July 2020, these copies were distributed. The Church has committed to having monthly sessions learning about "Imani Na Matendo"— Faith and Practice.

Christ is the Answer International Fellowship has written a letter to the region requesting monthly meeting status. This August, Buffalo Monthly Meeting will consider a letter supporting their request to become a monthly meeting. (Editor's Note: Since the writing of this article, Farmington Scipio Region has approved this request, and Christ is the Answer is now a monthly meeting.)

At a time when divisiveness is rampant, it feels good to welcome a faith community that shares our heritage, but practices it in a different way. According to Scripture, there is clearly room for us all as we find in the Psalms both forms of worship:

"Be Still and Know that I am God (Ps. 46:10)," and

"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all ye lands (Ps. 100:1)."

We rejoice that we have been able to nurture this meeting

and welcome so many recent immigrants to the wider body of Friends.



### Editor's Note

Welcome to *Spark*, the printed newsletter for New York Yearly Meeting-area Quakers. Do you receive the weekly update with news and events for NYYM that I email every Friday? It's full of up-to-date announcements, links to online events, job and grant opportunities, etc. Email [walter@nyym.org](mailto:walter@nyym.org) to join the email list.

The next issue of *Spark* is scheduled for November, and the submissions deadline is **October 15**. Please consider writing an article or submitting images for *Spark*.

### Upcoming *Spark* themes:

**November: Open.** There are many urgent issues happening right now. Some meetings have started to hold hybrid in-person-and-online worship, and others are considering it. Sharing information about that experience would be helpful to many. Friends may wish to write about the struggle for racial justice and against police brutality, interpersonal or community tensions related to the election, climate change-related fires happening on the west coast, or the effects of extended COVID-related social distancing.

Please write as you feel led. Email article and photo submissions to [communications@nyym.org](mailto:communications@nyym.org). Please limit yourself to 400-600 words.

Also, send your meeting's news to [communications@nyym.org](mailto:communications@nyym.org) to be shared in the next weekly email update and, if received far enough in advance, in the next issue of *Spark*.

You can keep in touch with NYYM on social media! The more Likes and Replies our posts receive, the more our audience will grow.

### Facebook:

NewYorkYearlyMeeting

### Twitter:

NYYMtweets

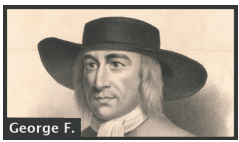
### Instagram:

newyorkyearlymeeting

Stay safe and hang in there.

—Sarah Way, NYYM

Communications Director



# NYYM's First Virtual Sessions

## Moving with Spirit

Jane Alexandre  
Tom Goodridge

*continued from page 1*

“We value our times of waiting silently in holy expectancy. Many of us have quiet periods alone regularly; we share quiet before or after meals or with others in our meetings; silence is the context of our worship. Silence is also the context in which we come to inward reliance upon God. It brings us to our true commitment, our concerns, and our leadings...”

“Our prayer is communion with God. We may express it in expectant longing for wisdom and help, or in praise, confession, petition, intercession, thanks, relief, awe, or grief... We lay before God not only our personal needs but the needs of others as well...In bringing our concerns before God we must be ready to accept God’s guidance.

### “Quaker Community and Fellowship:

Our worship together gives us an opportunity to commune with God and one another.

### “Queries:

1. Are meetings for worship... held in expectant waiting for divine guidance?”

Thus, our initial invitation to Morningside Meeting was as follows: “Friends’ worship has been characterized as a listening for the promptings of the still, small voice. Quaker practice seeks to attend to this quiet call, which seems to emerge from the interior of a gathered body of expectantly waiting Friends. Typically, Friends have together waited on Spirit in a seated position. Might there be other ways to wait expectantly?”

In some of our experiences with movement we have felt the promptings of Spirit. We have begun our sessions warming up to selected music. Sometimes Jane has offered us words, phrases, or emotions that we attempt to embody or which we allow to move us. Our movement experiments include both individual and collective movement.

Our experience of these past two years seems to be that we come

together out of various urgings: of the spirit, of the body, of the community. Together we seek action, calm, release, intellectual exploration, and immersion in embodiment and music. Our practice has not been to process our experiments with words: only to move as worship, or as preparation for worship, or as something else, concluding in a silent gathered circle.

The Morningside movement group has continued to meet virtually since May, exploring together with the benefit of our shared experiences over the past couple of years. At our virtual NYYM Gathering we held a Meeting for Movement Interest Group that highlighted the distances, the remoteness, the challenges, the loss—yes, all of that—with which we struggle during the pandemic. At the same time, we presented the possibilities, the comfort, and hope that we seek by moving, together, with the spirit. 

## Right Sharing of World Resources

Mary Eagleson  
Scarsdale Meeting

*continued from page 1*


which gives us about 25% of the world’s economic resources for about 4% of its population. Even though wealth within the United States is also distributed very unequally, all of us benefit from the wealth available for public works such as hospitals and highways, as well as to us as individuals.

Friends have been uneasy with this situation for years. We recognize the injustice of the system, and we also realize that we are entangled in our personal lives with burdens imposed by the consumerist economy in which we live. Like addicts, we understand that the “rat race” is harmful to us, yet few of us are able to free ourselves from its constraints. Many of us are not even aware that we are harmed by

our addiction to “things” and status. This unease, this dis-ease, is part of the “why” of RSWR’s work.

RSWR offers us the chance to look at the system from the other side of the economic divide. We see how, by working in partnership with people in poor countries, mainly women, we can begin to redress some of the wrongs imposed by economic exploitation of natural resources and cheap labor in India and Africa. This brings us to the “how,” at least in the sense of how RSWR seeks to empower women in poor countries. Given start-up funds for small businesses, they are able to feed themselves and their children, send their children to school, and, eventually, put non-leaky roofs over their heads.

By working with other women in self-help groups, women discover their power to act as independent agents in strongly patriarchal cultures. RSWR makes grants to self-help groups, who then use the money to set up revolving loan funds for their members. The women borrow money to capitalize their small businesses and repay the loans to their group’s own revolving funds. In the process, they are motivated to learn essential business skills, such as reading, writing, arithmetic, and simple accounting. Because the money belongs to the group, husbands cannot easily appropriate it. Many men oppose the groups at first, though once they see the value of a second source of income in the family, most come around to supporting their wives’ activities.

What do we donors gain, in addition to the satisfaction of helping people? For one thing, we help mitigate climate change. Project Drawdown has estimated that the two most effective mitigation strategies are empowering women and educating girls. RSWR empowers women, who then educate their daughters. Another, perhaps more important reward comes from the exercise of examining our own lives to see where we have surplus income that might best be used to make our human world more sustainable. In that way, we begin to experience our own power and to free ourselves from the “rat race.” 



Graphic for *Quakers: the Quiet Revolutionaries*, quakersthefilm.com

## Quakers: The Quiet Revolutionaries

Elaine Learnard  
Conscience Bay Meeting

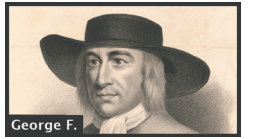
For an Interest Group at Summer Sessions, we joined filmmakers Janet Gardner and Dick Nurse by Zoom to hear about the making of the documentary *Quakers: The Quiet Revolutionaries*. Our conversation was facilitated by Karen Tibbals of Rahway and Plainfield Meeting, who holds an MA in Quaker Studies from Earlham College. Janet and Dick are members of Princeton Meeting of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

Janet told the story of how she first thought of making this film. She had joined some Philadelphia Quakers making a pilgrimage to sites of Quaker history near Lancaster Prison in England. Janet was learning much about Quakerism’s beginnings, the early persecution and suffering of Friends, and Fox’s vision of a great people gathered. On a gray and misty day, she struggled to make the difficult trek up Pendle Hill in the fog. As she reached the top to sit and look out over the scene of Fox’s vision, the clouds parted and the sun came out, and she wondered, “Is this a leading?” As we see in the resulting film, it was indeed a leading and one to which Janet, later joined by Dick, was steadfast in following through.

The film is organized by topic, not as a chronological history. Janet and Dick did not think of themselves as experts at the beginning of the project, so they sought out and met with individual Quaker scholars and activists. From each person they learned of another, with their list of contacts and historical information growing as they worked. They were learning how to explain the “history and mystery” of Quakerism, as Dick puts it; the facts and then the corrections of the many popular misconceptions



Elizabeth Fry



about Quakers, including that we do not even exist anymore!

They had challenges in filming. Filming a meeting in progress? Not necessarily welcome. Filming actors in reenacted scenes? Not necessarily easy, on a limited budget in a different country. Filming at historic sites? Not necessarily available as needed.

They had to develop funding for the film, beginning with a Kickstarter fund and donations from individuals, ultimately getting support from several Quaker foundations. Additionally, Janet received a Guggenheim Fellowship while they were working on the film, which helped them move work along.

Karen enjoyed seeing the film and told the filmmakers that she found it accurate and balanced, not painting an unblemished picture of all that Quakerism has been in the world but telling the truths.

Yes, early Quakers were active abolitionists, but nonetheless most



did not welcome people of color into full participation in meetings. Karen asked why some things were left out, such as Elizabeth Fry's prison work. The answer was that they could not fit everything of importance into an 80-minute film. Important stuff got "left on the cutting-room floor," at least figuratively. Karen did note that though the film talks about the testimonies that we describe today as the SPICES, which is important information for folks who do not know about Quakerism, the Quakers in earlier centuries would not have used a set formulation and would have talked about testimonies more broadly.

Janet and Dick are eager to promote *Quakers: The Quiet Revolutionaries* to educate more people about Quakerism. The website for the film is [www.quakersthefilm.com](http://www.quakersthefilm.com). A DVD of the full film, the version we showed for Summer Sessions, will be available for purchase. The website for Janet's company ([www.gardnerdocgroup.com](http://www.gardnerdocgroup.com)) also has information about her many documentaries on diverse topics.

## Climate Justice Working Group

Margaret McCasland  
Easton Meeting

This summer, the Climate Justice Working Group (CJWG) was able to drop the "ad hoc" from their name when they were approved as a working group under the care of the Witness Coordinating Committee, with the following mission: The Climate Justice Working Group encourages and supports direct action to reduce global warming and other harmful human effects on the environment and to restore Earth's ecosystems for the good of all life. By providing resources that will be informative, interactive, action-oriented, and rooted in Quaker witness and testimonies, we hope to inspire action both within and outside the New York Yearly Meeting community.

During Summer Sessions, we got to celebrate Friends Fiduciary Corporation's decision to fully divest from fossil fuels, which our working group and our yearly meeting had been discussing with them for over a year, both formally and informally (See minute 2020-07-16 from July 21, [nny.org/content/minutes-summer-sessions-2020](http://nny.org/content/minutes-summer-sessions-2020).)

The CJWG offered three interest groups which reflect the range of our work: Peter Close coordinated a group on "Green Investing in a Friendly World," where we learned about a range of options for institutions and individuals to make investments which are both ecological and ethical. Diane Keefe coordinated presentations by people active in public policy to promote "Clean Energy" in CT, NJ, and NY. Margaret McCasland coordinated a workshop on using the new form, "Sharing Climate Solutions around NYYM." Any Climate Justice or Earthcare projects you are working on can be reported via the link on the CJWG page: [nny.org/committee/climate-justice-working-group](http://nny.org/committee/climate-justice-working-group).

Work in all three areas (green investing, ecological energy policy, and sharing climate solutions) is continuing. We are also considering ways to focus more explicitly on climate justice issues. Everyone is welcome to join us.

## Myths of Gender

Cai Quirk  
Ithaca Meeting

Imagine a circle, and around that circle are the main colors of the rainbow. Like a rainbow, the colors do not have stark beginnings and endings, but blend into one another, the red slowly shifting to orange, orange to yellow, and so on until violet turns back to red. At the edges of this circle of colors, they are vibrant and bright, and towards the middle they blend together to get gray. Pink and blue are just two colors in this wide array, and male and female are just two genders in a wide range of possibilities. Perhaps I am a light green color, a gender the English language doesn't have words for. I've met people on a wide spectrum of this rainbow.

Even within the colors we might call 'pink' or 'blue,' there are so many variations, just as there are many ways to express one's gender even within the identities of 'female' and 'male.' If we tried to describe the whole world in terms of pink and blue, or nature's more common green and blue, we wouldn't be able to describe the beauty of cardinals, tulips, and autumn leaves. We also lose the beautiful diversity of humanity when we try to force it into two distinct boxes, yet modern culture has conditioned us, to varying degrees, to believe that this binary exists.

In the Summer Sessions interest group "Myths of Gender," we looked at many cultures around the world who have accepted and often celebrated genders beyond male and female. We used the color wheel metaphor to visualize this wide range of possibilities and understand that this set of two limited genders is a myth. It is a myth that many believe in, work hard to stay within the boundaries of, and which has very real effects on how some people are held in hierarchy over others, but a myth nonetheless. Together we heard folkloric myths as well, stories that uplift non-binary identities in cultures around the world, and new ones I wrote to accompany images in my photo series and upcoming book, *Transcendence*. When we can not only know that a binary is a much limited version of what is

truly around us, but imagine other possibilities of how a world might look, we can begin to imagine how disrupting the gender binary doesn't just free those who transcend the binary, but liberates everyone from a mould of expectations based on their appearance at birth.

This is about far more than what pronouns or bathrooms to use, but about truly seeing and honoring that of the divine in each person. 325 years ago when the New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends formed, we continued the statement, considered bold at the time, that men and women are created equal, and we lived it to varying extents within our Quaker circles. Today many Quaker groups have stated that all are equal, that there is 'that of God in everyone,' that we should treat each other as we want to be treated. The problem is that treating everyone the same doesn't respect and honor the beautiful diversity of gifts and talents that is the divine manifesting differently in each person.

We as Friends encourage each person to find their own path with the divine, but are not quite as good at supporting and nurturing the gifts that arise from that seeking. In many of the communities around the world that have gender diversity, such an identity is often inherently seen as connected to spiritual roles such as healer, mediator, shaman, and ceremony leader, and those with such qualities are supported in their growth into these gifts. While these roles do not manifest in the same ways in Quaker spaces, when we are reluctant to see and nurture the spiritual gifts in each other (we are often much better at seeing the tangible ones like treasurer and organizer), we miss opportunities of growth and depth in our beloved community.

Quaker practice has more potential roles than many churches do, such as inviting people to elder for meetings and including healing centers in some of our spaces, but there is room to grow, room to imagine what we could be if we were able to see and honor and support not only the full rainbow wheel of genders, but how all our nuanced intersections of experience and identity and gifts weave together to create a tapestry of our beloved community.

# The Movement for Racial Justice



A mural and memorial in Minneapolis, Minnesota, honoring George Floyd and other Black victims of police violence. Photo by Munshots/Unsplash/Creative Commons

## Apology to Afro-Descendants

*The request for this apology was made by a Quaker of African descent around 2002. After many years of seasoning and discernment it was approved by the entire yearly meeting at Fall Sessions, 2013.*

We the New York Yearly Meeting (NYYM) of the Religious Society of Friends apologize to Afro-Descendants\* everywhere 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 Friends participated in or benefited from slavery. This included trafficking of 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 and their descendants in bondage up until 1777, when Friends were directed by the Yearly Meeting to manumit the people they held in slavery.

We abhor the decades of terror and legalized racial segregation that followed the abolition of slavery declared in the 13th amendment, which was ratified in 1865. The amendment reads: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." This exception gave rise to a justice system that disproportionately targeted and

incarcerated Afro-Descendants, a practice which continues today.

We acknowledge in sorrow that those of us who enjoy a high standard of living today are still benefiting from the unpaid and underpaid labor of enslaved peoples and their descendants. We deeply regret that even after emancipation, despite the Quaker testimony of equality, Friends schools denied admission to Afro-Descendants and many Friends meetings enforced segregated seating. We regret the effects that those policies had and continue to have on all of us.

Over the centuries, some individual Quakers and Quaker groups have joined efforts to end slavery and eradicate racism and have supported African Americans in their struggle for civil and human rights. We honor the work of these Quakers and are moved to follow their example. Thus we re-commit ourselves to the testimony of equality as regards Afro-Descendants. This work will include challenging existing racist assumptions, and educating ourselves about the direct relationships between the past enslavement of Afro-Descendants and current conditions in the United States.

We recognize that this apology is a step towards healing and trust, and 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.

*\* 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.*



## Black Lives Matter: In Memory of George Floyd

Nadine Hoover  
Buffalo Meeting

*continued from page 1*

and protecting it with impunity.

Good intentions are important, but not enough. Besides friendship, charity, and celebration of Juneteenth commemorating the end of slavery, our government must change. Institutions of education, healthcare, food supply, housing, and law must work for equitable outcomes for everyone and restore the natural world.

Faith is a belief so strong it orders our actions. Voices covered by the few who control media often

**That which unites is trustworthy; that which divides is not.**

express faith in military and financial might over the power of love, conscience, and integrity. We must each turn off corporate media, find our faith, and raise our voices for the power of love, conscience, mercy, and justice.

**We must demilitarize civil society; appreciate direct service providers and not call them "frontline" workers; stop clothing police with heavy paramilitary gear while doctors in our hospitals wear garbage bags as protective gear.**

State-sanctioned violence has no place in a peaceful, just society. Hold public officials accountable for acts of violence and standards of integrity. When law itself is corrupt or used as a weapon, then law enforcement is corrupt. When we use police to protect privilege, we set up a prejudiced society.

To achieve justice, the very fabric of society must change. Rid the legal system of falsehoods. Legalizing falsehoods corrupts society and subverts integrity. Corporations are not "persons" and do not deserve

the rights of persons. Corporate charters are not "contracts," they are powers granted and supervised by the legislature on behalf of the people. In the United States, courts settle contractual disputes; government cannot intervene in contracts. To consider charters contracts removes accountability, legislative and judicial, and fuels privilege and its abuse.


By law, corporations are mercenary; they must put short-term financial gain above any other consideration. Corporations subvert institutions of education, healthcare, food supply, housing, and law for wealth accumulation, and no longer represent us.

**Human beings are each different, yet we are united in our humanity. Grounded in our humanity, we welcome diversity with appreciation and curiosity. Genuine differences do not divide, they teach and enliven. Brainwashing and propaganda divide, polarize, and form sides of "us" and "them" engineered to exploit and manipulate. That which unites is trustworthy; that which divides is not.**

The challenges to a peaceful, just society are deeply rooted in our faith and social structures. Historic changes will disrupt our own lives, not just change others. Acknowledge the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade as a crime against humanity and address the repercussions, do not walk out of official meetings when the topic arises. Shift from extraction to replacement pricing and hold producers accountable for restoration. Remove funds from corporate banking to invest in local credit unions and enterprises. Terminate corporate charters as a failed public experiment. Develop local citizen associations to secure basic needs and citizen contracts to hold larger producers accountable in court, similar to the Creative Commons licenses.

We will not make peace with each other, until we make peace with the earth. Oppression will not end until we oppose public-sanctioned violence and exploitation. We must each find practical ways to end prejudice and privilege in our hearts, aspirations, daily lives, and occupations. At the same time, we must listen to the oppressed and marginalized with respect and take

# The Movement for Racial Justice

their perspectives into account. They often see how the system operates in ways that privilege obscures. Only together will we discover how to end public-sanctioned violence and exploitation that gives rise to oppression. Then we can divest from war, violence, and brutality and invest in peace, nonviolence, and justice. 

## Double Double Toil And Trouble

Michael Rhynes

Attica Worship Group

*Content warning from the author: There's a couple of strong words here that may be offensive. But they are not as offensive as an African American being killed on TV for the whole world to see.*

The silence between the veil of darkness and dawn is meditative and horrendous. The beast within the darkness never slumbers, it never snores. In its domesticated state it hums with technological might. Though it appears to be in a Morpheus-like state, it is ever vigilant. It prowls through veins and arteries, sniffing each cell, looking for dreamers. While its white blood cells, wearing blue arm bands, patrol the corridors of its lair. Making sure the red blooded human virus, prisoners, are contained.

As the twilight of democracy wanes, it finds a prisoner sitting squarely in the belly of the beast, in a bastardized position of "The Thinking Man." With his head drooping downward towards apathy, one fist isn't enough, so he places both fists on his weary temples. He's not Atlas, but he will not shrug his moral obligation to witness.

For what seems like four score and seven years ago, he's been quarantined. In the belly that became his castle by gubernatorial fiat. He's become a contemporary version of Hamlet's father, who's only allowed to communicate via machines. In fact he's the ghost in the machine, who flickers in and out at inappropriate times like "Breaking News."

As he sits in his bubble, he sees trouble as white blood cells march on the double. While protesters chant not rant, "GIVE US BREATH

OR GIVE US DEATH!"

There's been a breach, the belly rumbles, the military fumbles. The beat uses its art by releasing a poisonous fart. The people screech as they retreat down the street. Not to be beat, they tweet; their retort, is not to abort. Let's get the rascal who hides in the White Castle.

The Bread and Circuses were gone until Bubba gave his rebel yell, grabbing that ole flag by the tail. A sport that sprang from crime, right on time, banning that traitorous rage.

The people protest there's something rotten in Minneapolis, so George Floyd won't be forgotten. The three witches of power plan to quiet the land by tightening the leash on the police. Trump, McConnell, and Nancy, bend over their legislative pots concocting a plot to swat the cop. Knowing full well they've been part of the pollution, now they're being forced to be part of the solution.

*In the beast's lair the three witches prepare. Round about the cauldron go.*

*In the poisoned entails throw.*

*Black Lives Matter, to make the brew fatter.*

*Double, double, toil and trouble.*

*In the cauldron boil and bake.*

*Tongue of Floyd.*

*Vagina of Taylor.*

*Penis of Aubury.*

*Nuts of Brooks.*


*Buttocks of Grey.*

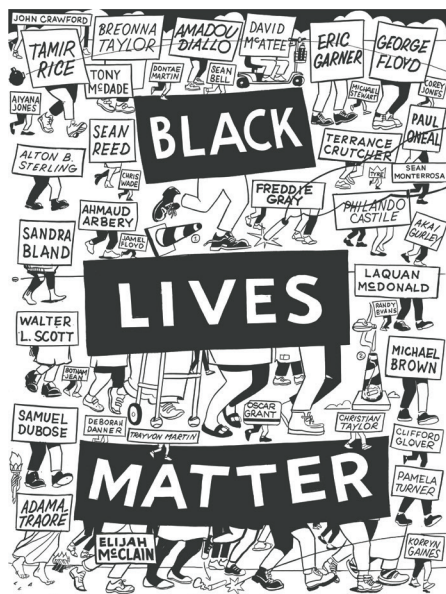
*A pinch of Travon's skin.*

*With a touch of McClain's foreskin, just to blend.*

*Cool it with a baboon's blood.*

*The charm is firm and good.*

*No national police reform for the 'hood.* 



Poster available for free at [tinyurl.com/ybqvtoqn](http://tinyurl.com/ybqvtoqn)

## Love One Another So We Can Talk To Each Other

Karen Tibbals

Rahway Plainfield Meeting

Our country is divided. Even Quakers are divided. We have a hard time agreeing on anything. I am reminded of an FGC plenary speech on that theme years ago by then Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong. In the question and answer period afterwards, people kept describing examples that were more and more difficult. His answer was the same, love them anyway. The fact that he kept getting the same question, over and over again, illustrates how difficult it is.

Is there a way to love people who are difficult?

I think there is. For me, the key is a deep understanding of people's values and how it informs their stance on issues. That helps me to separate the people from their values and from the things they say. Then, I can love the person.

But more than that, it helps me learn how to talk to people I disagree with in a way they can hear. When we talk from our own beliefs, then we often express ourselves in a way that is perceived by others as aggressive or condescending. I call that preaching.

I like to use an Aesop fable to describe what happens when we preach.

One day the sun and the wind got into an argument about which was more powerful. They agreed to settle the argument by recognizing that the more powerful would be the one who made the traveler take off his cloak. The wind went first, sending a strong gust. That made the traveler hold onto his cloak tighter, wrapping it around himself and holding close. Then it was the sun's turn. The sun shone brightly, warming up the traveler, until the traveler lay down to bask in the sun, taking off his cloak.

Preaching is like what happens when the wind blows strongly. The listener holds onto their beliefs even more tightly.

Academic research shows that the effect of extreme actions by demonstrators on people who disagree is exactly the opposite of

# ANTI RACIST




Graphic by Torta Gialla/tortagiialla.com

what the demonstrators want. The watchers tend to strengthen their own belief system. As Abigail Van Buren has said: "People who fight with fire, usually end up with ashes."

Let me emphasize this point: The very action that the demonstrators thought was so powerful has exactly the opposite effect than they want. The activists may be proud of themselves for being so formidable and forceful, and believe what they are doing is working, but they don't realize that what they are doing is actually counterproductive. Plus, the other side already knows basically what you think.

On the other hand, persuasion is what happens when the sun comes out. When we listen to someone who "gets us," who seems to come from our perspective, we relax. We listen differently. That person becomes part of our tribe. And if that person makes a surprising comment that fits with our belief system, we agree. That's what happens when the sun comes out.

That's what I think will help us love one another and talk to one another productively. Learning how to take into account the other's perspective so you can love one another. Learning how to take into account their values so you can talk to them in a respectful, productive, persuasive way. It isn't easy to do, but the attempt is worth it.

Karen Tibbals is co-clerk of Rahway Plainfield Monthly Meeting in NJ. This article was adapted from her forthcoming book, *Persuade, Don't Preach: Restoring Civility across the Political Divide* (available when the pandemic allows). 

## Virtual Fall Sessions 2020

Friday, November 6, 2020, 7:00 p.m. –  
Sunday, November 8, 2020, 4:30 p.m.

Dear Friends,

Our first virtual Summer Sessions were successful and constructive. Perhaps more importantly, they set a great basis for planning ever-more accessible meetings as NYYM moves into a future of work and worship done through a blend of virtual and in-person meetings. Though we long to see one another and to shake hands again, until it is safe to do so, we will continue to meet online. Dedicated Friends are busy planning our online Fall Sessions as scheduled, November 6-8, 2020.

The planning team is keenly aware that our Fall Sessions will happen immediately after a harsh political season and an election that may not yet be decided. We plan to minimize time spent on business and make Fall Sessions a time to gather as Friends in the Light, to share as we are led, to experience a blessed community together.

Fall Sessions will continue to be Pay as Led, with no fee to participate, but with registration required so that you can receive secure links. Please watch for more details about the agenda and plan to be with us if you are able!

—Elaine Learnard, NYYM Clerk

### Sessions and Committee Meetings

Given the ongoing concerns of holding large in-person gatherings in the Time of COVID-19, NYYM's Fall Sessions will be held virtually on the weekend of Friday-Sunday, November 6-8, 2020. We will have time for worship, discernment, business, and social gathering. Because of the nature of Zoom meetings, we will not however provide time for committees to meet, opting instead to have breathing space between worship and business over the course of Fall Sessions. We encourage all committees to host their own committee meetings via Zoom well before Fall Sessions, so that any business they approve to be brought before the yearly meeting can be brought first to the appropriate coordinating committee for seasoning and approval, also before Fall Sessions. **To request use of a Zoom account for your NYYM committee, please email your request to communications@nyym.org. Include the meeting title, date, starting time, and duration of the meeting.**

We need as many Friends as possible to participate and help the yearly meeting discern its way forward. Registration will be available beginning Friday, September 25, at:

[nyym.org/session/fall-sessions-2020](https://nyym.org/session/fall-sessions-2020)

You must register in order to receive the Zoom links for the meetings. There's no fee to participate. So, please, plan on joining your NYYM friends online!

Visit the Fall Sessions webpage for the latest news and a link to registration:

[nyym.org/session/fall-sessions-2020](https://nyym.org/session/fall-sessions-2020)

## TENTATIVE Fall Sessions Schedule November 6-8, 2020

### Friday, November 6

7:00-9:00 p.m. Meeting for Worship and Sharing

### Saturday, November 7

8:30-9:30 a.m. Meeting for Worship

9:45-11:45 a.m. Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

12:00-1:00 p.m. Social Meal

1:30-2:30 p.m. Meeting for Worship

2:30-4:30 p.m. Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

5:00-6:30 p.m. Social Meal

### Sunday, November 8

(Morning off so that folks can join their own Meetings)

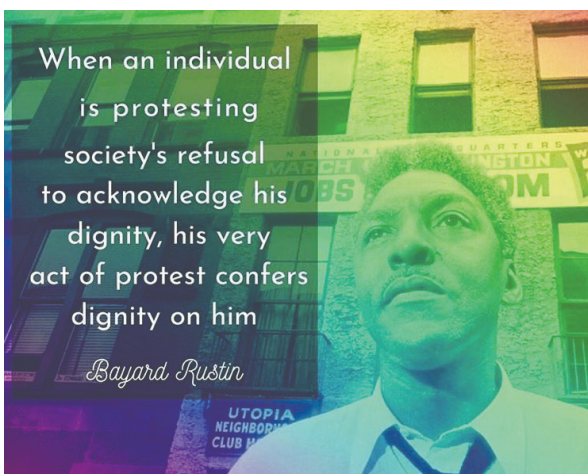
12:00-1:00 p.m. Social Meal

1:30-2:30 p.m. Meeting for Worship

2:30-4:30 p.m. Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

## Donate to NYYM

Won't you support NYYM? Visit [nyym.org/donate](https://nyym.org/donate) or mail a check to the yearly meeting office. Thank you!



## Friends Committee on National Legislation: "Love Thy Congress"

Riley Robinson

FCNL Major Gifts Officer

Congress is the one branch of the federal government that you can talk with through lobbying. FCNL lobbies congress effectively in a wide range of issues. At FCNL's "Love Thy Congress" interest group at NYYM's Summer Sessions, lobbying experience varied between group attenders. Friends had experience with FCNL Advocacy Teams, writing emails from home, making phone calls, office visits (including with actual members of congress), even a shuttle ride beneath the D.C. Capitol building

Attenders learned lessons from their lobbying experiences that match what FCNL has learned: Build relationships. Never assume that someone often differing with you shares none of your concerns. Listen, learn, and persist! Assume that the congressperson who agrees with you needs your support — especially if they take a risk. Making personal contacts gets results. Quaker lobbyists do hold congressional members and staffers in the Light. You CAN try this at home!

FCNL's lobbying is guided by you. This spring more than 200 meetings and churches sent input for FCNL's legislative priorities for the coming congress. Participants in the NYYM interest group expressed concerns including partisan acrimony, impeachment frustration, legislative paralysis, needed criminal justice reform, and support for fair voting.

FCNL has a team of experienced lobbyists, but volunteers are crucial. You can join an Advocacy Team (the NYYM area has nine) that takes on one issue per year. Young adults can participate in one of four programs: Spring Lobby Weekend in March, Summer Interns, Young Fellows, and Advocacy Corps. (Three young adults from the NYYM area are in FCNL programs now.) In DC, the Quaker Welcome Center fosters bipartisan dialogue, and new programs are being planned for William Penn House.

### Right now, FCNL is working on:

- **Prisons** – COVID
- **Police** – Set national use of force standards, stop the flow of military equipment, promote transparency and accountability
- **Voting** – Registration, candidate questions, funding secure elections
- **COVID crisis** – Funds for people in need, like the SNAP nutrition program
- **Militarization** – Defund nuclear programs, prevent genocide and atrocities, support multiparty diplomacy
- **Climate change work** – Support bipartisan climate caucuses and carbon user fees
- **Native Americans** – Native women's health and safety, tribal justice, COVID
- **Gun Safety** – Ghost guns

Visit FCNL.org for links to videos, email newsletters, online events, and information on attending the upcoming annual meeting in November.