

Report to Meeting for Worship on the Occasion of Business, 5/14/23
Power, Privilege, and Race Subcommittee of Worship and Ministry Committee

The purposes of Power, Privilege and Race Subcommittee are outlined in the job description:

- To open eyes and hearts to issues of power, privilege (including white privilege), and race, which are complex, entrenched, part of the “air we breathe” in U.S. society.
- To examine the ways in which Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting (SCMM) may not be welcoming to all and to open ourselves to change.
- To recognize and acknowledge structural racism and the ways it diminishes [everyone’s] lives, interferes with our relationships, and encumbers [everyone’s] spirits.
- To encourage Spirit-led internal transformation.
- To embrace the need to address systemic/institutional racism both within our community and the wider community and to take action on this concern.

The job description states also that Power, Privilege, and Race Subcommittee will bring a report to Meeting for Worship on the Occasion of Business at least annually. This report covers the subcommittee’s work during the twelve months since our last periodic report presented on May 15, 2022.

This has been a year of multiple “series”!

Meeting-wide evaluation of our “Accountability Prompt and Query” regarding anti-racism initially approved on a trial basis on August 15, 2021. Process undertaken from May – November 2022.

Starting in May of 2022, we began a meeting-wide discernment regarding our practice of using a prompt and query for accountability to our “Minute on Engagement to Uproot and Dismantle Racism in Strawberry Creek Meeting”. At the request of Meeting Clerk, some committees provided written descriptions of their experience using the prompt and query, excerpts from which were shared at Meeting for Business. Meeting for Business requested that Power, Privilege, and Race consider comments made at Meetings for Business, reflections from the full committee reports, and feedback from individuals and bring back recommendations for consideration by the community as a whole to discern how to proceed.

Power, Privilege, and Race’s “Report & Recommendations” was approved on 11/13/22 to continue using the anti-racism Accountability Prompt and Query in Meetings for Worship on the Occasion of Business for another year as follows: “We are reminded to consider how our work (and our decisions) today support Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting in becoming an actively anti-racist faith community”, and “How did our work (and our decisions) today support SCMM in becoming an actively antiracist faith community?”

The approved recommendations also encourage all committees to incorporate reading the full “Minute to Uproot and Dismantle Racism” periodically and using the Query with time for reflection. Feedback from Friends to the subcommittee is always welcome. We will re-evaluate again in one year, the fall of 2023.

Book Study Series. June, July, August 2022.

Last summer, Power, Privilege and Race Subcommittee gathered Friends together to bring to light the history of inequality in our religious society through visiting/revisiting the offerings of *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice* by Donna Mc Daniel and Vanessa Julye. This groundbreaking and extensive work (300+ pages) gave rise to greater awareness and the need for continued growth.

A representative sample of participant comments across the three sessions is:

- "Appreciate reading the quotes together. Chagrined to say I need to be spoon-fed the history. The Friends' cultural hubris is mind boggling."
- "I have to face my addiction to not seeing this because I'm White. Quakers who are well-meaning are part of the problem. We don't deal with discomfort well."
- "This is spiritual work integral to our testimonies and our witness."

Exploring Power: A 3-part Power series.

So far, two sessions have been held on "Power". Quoting our invitation to the first session, "Barrington Dunbar, a Quaker of African descent who led North American Quakers on concerns of racial power in the 1960s, said in a *Friends Journal* article: "We need to nurture the Inner Light — the source of the phenomenal power of eighteenth-century Quakers. 'Quaker Power' can be as effective as 'Black Power' in speeding up revolutionary changes."

The November 20, 2022, session, "Exploring Power", highlighted the distinction between "power over", an oppressive exercise of one person or institution over others who are often perceived as less important, and "power with", a non-hierarchical form of sharing power through negotiation, cooperation, and mutual learning that refrains from exerting power through violence or coercion. We are working to illuminate and dismantle White, European, middle-class norms that are often unconscious and enforced through subtle, unspoken codes, so that we may grow more fully into the positive aspects of power, "the power of the Holy Spirit".

The second session, March 19, 2023, was called "Who Has the Power?" and addressed the presence of unnamed rules in our Meeting spaces, which perpetuate unclear, controlling practices over newer, more quiet, less established, and different ways of bringing more light into our midst. The impetus for this approach to power came to us through reflections on an online offering by the Quaker Theological Discussion Group, which several Friends from Strawberry Creek had attended. Our queries and discussion focused on how to recognize and transform Strawberry Creek processes to be knowable by -- and inclusive of -- us all. One Friend reflected: "I was speaking to another person who participated, and we both thought this was an especially good session with people taking risks to say what they honestly felt."

The third session is scheduled for June, 6/18/23. We invite Friends to gather to continue to labor with power.

The Doctrine of Christian Discovery: a 3-part series

Power, Privilege, and Race extends our appreciation to Peace, Earthcare, and Social Witness Committee for their continuing leadership on this topic and to the Pacific Yearly Meeting's Indigenous Concerns Subcommittee of Ministry Committee for bringing it to our Meeting's attention.

On January 15, 2023, Peace, Earthcare, and Social Witness Committee, assisted by Power, Privilege, and Race, presented the first session's film, *The Doctrine of Discovery: Unmasking the Domination Code* by Steven T. Newcombe (Shawnee, Lenape).

The Doctrine of Discovery underlies the justification since 1493 for the seizure of lands of Indigenous Peoples in North America – and throughout the world – on the basis that they are not Christian, and therefore have/had no rights, and could be displaced, enslaved, and killed. It is the foundation of land ownership "rights" and undergirds all U.S Indian Law. Therefore, the oppression of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery continues unabated.

The series continued on April 2, 2023, with the film *Doctrine of Discovery: In the Name of Christ* by the Mennonite Creation Care Network. Our exploration focused on how another Historical Peace Church is uncovering and examining its involvement in genocide against indigenous peoples worldwide and to consider the parallels with the Religious Society of Friends.

The third session in the series is scheduled for June 4, 2023. It will focus on how to build right relationship with indigenous peoples.

Black Quaker Lives Matter Film Festival & Forum. February, March, April 2023.

The BlackQuaker Project reached out to Power, Privilege, and Race to ask for our support in engaging Strawberry Creek and other Friends to participate in the free 2023 Black Quaker Lives Matter Film Festival & Forum. The 5-film series took place over eleven weeks, including Black History Month, and brought Friends together from across the globe.

One Friend expressed appreciation for The BlackQuaker Project website as an ongoing resource. "It's awesome! My newest discovery is the *Quakers of Color International Archive* in-depth video interviews."

2023 Subcommittee Reflections.

- Power, Privilege and Race voices our gratitude for the efforts of the Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting community to uproot and dismantle racism.
- We broadened our work this year, coordinating efforts with Peace, Earthcare, and Social Witness Committee, Pacific Yearly Meeting's Indigenous Concerns Subcommittee, and The BlackQuaker Project.
- We recognized the importance of utilizing resources beyond SCMM to expand understanding.
- All our work during the last 12 months has been part of a series rather than "single topic" sessions.
- The number of Friends participating in our sessions is down somewhat. [post report addition: session attendance ranged from 17-25.]
- Planning the sessions on Power was "surprisingly tough" and required repeated meetings for thinking, discussing, and laboring among subcommittee members.
- The idea of perfection is part and parcel of white supremacist judgment and important to root out as part of exclusionary power of racial and class privilege.
- Friends may have noticed that I keep saying Power, Privilege, and Race instead of shortening it to an acronym. We have learned this year from various sources and efforts that acronyms are not only exclusionary, but they also weaken the power of the chosen words. Where possible, we ask all of us to consider ending the longstanding use of acronyms in our speech as not welcoming.
- We have heard from one Friend who has stopped coming to Meeting because of the repeated use of the Antiracism Prompt and Query. We are seasoning this and may have recommendations in the future.
- It's worth reiterating that our subcommittee invites feedback.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Burr, clerk. Ragni Larsen-Orta, Laura Magnani, Deborah Marks