

## Report to Meeting for Business, October 12, 2025

### Power, Privilege, and Race Subcommittee of Worship and Ministry Committee (PPR)

Power, Privilege, and Race Subcommittee of Worship and Ministry Committee (PPR) makes periodic reports to Meeting for Worship on the Occasion of Business. This one covers the time period since the report brought to Meeting for Business on June 9, 2024.

#### PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES:

- On June 16 and August 18, 2024, PPR hosted adult ed sessions to discuss director Ava DuVernay's film "Origin". The film weaves together author Isabel Wilkerson's process of the writing of *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*, the author's personal story as a modern African American writer/researcher, and her discovery of "8 pillars of caste": structures and strategies used to maintain systems of domination in the US, Nazi Germany, and India. Wilkerson's line of research took her back 2000 years to origins she found in India with a through-line to 400 years of subjugation of African People and their descendants in the United States. The through-line connects us to Nazi Germany, which based its subjugation, murder, and attempted extermination of Jewish People on U.S. Jim Crow laws. With the killing of Trayvon Martin, the connecting line brings us to the 21st century, and to the pervasive system of dehumanization that our faith community has committed itself to uproot and dismantle. Friends were encouraged to experience the film with others at "watch gatherings" in one another's homes, and many were able to do so.
- On August 11, 2024, Meeting for Business approved the changes PPR had recommended to SCMM's Antiracism Accountability Practice. The changes were the result of a lengthy, meeting-wide discernment process, including a listening session, and had been seasoning since they were brought to M4B in June 2024.
- On September 29, 2024, PPR In collaboration with Peace, Earthcare, and Social Witness Committee (PESW) co-presented the program "Retrospective Justice: The California Reparations Report (AB 2131)". This session was the 3<sup>rd</sup> in a series on the CA Reparations Task Force Report. Although the Reparations Task Force Report is clearly not a Quaker document, we found the Report to be a key tool to bringing to light the myriad ways California colluded with and participated in slavery and continues to maintain its injustices today. We believe this secular awareness to be necessary to discerning next steps to take as a faith community. The September 29, 2024, discussion addressed chapters 7 and 24, "Racism in Climate and Infrastructure", focusing on how "the legacy of slavery, legal segregation, and government policies known as redlining have created environmental impacts that have harmed and continue to harm African Americans". To prepare for the discussion, Friends were offered three opportunities to read the material aloud in a group via Zoom. Twice since then, including very recently, SCMM Friends have been encouraged to contact California legislators and the governor to bring into law bills informed by this historic, comprehensively researched 1100-page document.

- March 16, 2025, session, “Toward Beloved Community: Healing Harms in Sacred Space” had as its focus a video clip by Diego Navarro, former Pacific Yearly Meeting Clerk and member of Pacific Yearly Meeting’s Racial Justice Subcommittee. The clip we chose from the presentation made in 2023 to Baltimore Yearly Meeting addressed the query: “What changes do we need to make to nurture and not harm Friends with marginalized identities in the Religious Society of Friends?” Some marginalized identities are People of Color, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, women, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. To be in Beloved Community, Friends need: 1) to “become conscious of our assimilation into the dominant culture that causes us to act in ways that are not always loving and compassionate, caring and inclusive”; 2) to understand the experience of harm which is not the same as a hurt feeling; and 3) to build spiritual muscles (resilience) that allow us to go beyond Safe Space and Brave Space into Sacred Space, a space in which healing can occur. In Sacred Space, Friends know harm has occurred, we suspend judgment, worship deepens, and everyone holds the space in prayerful attention.

**Notes from Diego’s video clip for reference.**

1. SACRED SPACE. Here we know harm has occurred. Sacred space is about seeking Truth/what is being revealed. The genius of Quakerism is a way to heal harm. We have good and experienced clerks; elders/people that can see, hear, listen at a deeper level.
2. What is being revealed? Not everyone knows that harm has taken place. Some are confused, resistant to knowing the harm. In Sacred Space: suspend judgment, sense what is to be resolved, allow Spirit’s agenda to take focus, occurs when worship deepens, everyone present holds the space in prayer, all settle into the love of the community that surrounds us. Friends create conditions for Truth by not arguing or using logic, turning attention toward the Presence that binds us and opens our hearts to love. Witness what may be present: deep hurts, frustrations, anger. Allow selves to be uncomfortable. Hold our meetings in deep worship where each holds a facet of Truth, trust Quaker discernment process which allows a truth to come forth by sharing our facet of it, then letting go.
3. The following query was considered at the SCMM adult ed program: How do you understand how a harm is not the same as a hurt feeling?
4. Diego’s prayer for Friends is that we “be willing to embrace the process of questioning, becoming conscious of our assimilation into the dominant culture.
5. A culture of waste gets our fight-flight-freeze-appease response going and causes us to defend our position when we disagree with others. We learn logic and debate skills in college. We’re unaware we have been socialized to defend our position and argue our points of view rather than seeking Truth. “One of the geniuses of Quakerism is seeking Truth.”
6. Part two of the video begins: “What we’ve learned: To have a Beloved Community we need to understand the experience of harm.”
7. Two types of listening – judgmental, curious.

- August 17, 2025. Discussion of Robin Wall Kimmerer's *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World*. This year, as the annual selection of the book for PPR's summer reading approached, we were discerning the spiritual needs of the Meeting in relation to power, privilege, and race in these urgent times. We chose *The Serviceberry* and program as a result. The book's message is that interdependence and reciprocity can be used as a basis of economic interconnectedness instead of scarcity, competition and the hoarding of resources. In discussion, Friends offered good examples of where reciprocity is available to us even now, in the society that we are in. We asked, "How do we deepen our ability to be "in right relationship", not just be stuck with the terms of capitalism, or the terms of segregation, or the terms that have kept us apart and racist for so long?" One Friend lifted up the arts as inspiration for amplifying our interconnectedness. We can choose to lean into belonging in a serious, beautiful, life-affirming way that also incorporates all of creation. If you haven't had a chance to read *The Serviceberry*, you wouldn't want to miss it.

### **SUBCOMMITTEE REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

Going forward, PPR will be reviewing our job description and working with the Worship and Ministry Committee to revise it as needed. As a subcommittee, we are looking for ways to stay connected to the committee we belong to, Worship and Ministry, through revitalizing the liaison between the subcommittee and the full committee. Our relationship to Peace, Earthcare, and Social Witness continues to deepen as we have done important work together this past year and a half.

PPR is heartened by the Meeting's willingness to keep examining our reactions and behaviors within the colonial contexts we have inherited, in order to become a truly anti-racist faith community. This falls squarely within Friends' history of using queries and advices. We appreciate the thoughtfulness of our current and previous clerks in bringing their learnings to us on those topics as they are led at Meeting for Business based on the Strawberry Creek Antiracism Accountability Practice. We are confident that Friends will experience transformation toward collective healing to foster a more inclusive and spiritually enriched faith community.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Burr, clerk, PPR