



1216 Arch Street, 2B, Philadelphia, PA 19107
office 215.561.1700 | bookstore 800.966.4556
www.fgcquaker.org | www.QuakerBooks.org

January 24, 2013

To Friends Everywhere:

-----Friends of color and their loved ones gathered 11th Month 2 - 4, 2012 at Pendle Hill and at Providence Friends Meeting in Media, Pennsylvania, to explore the gifts and challenges we experience as Quakers. Several of our fellowship enjoyed home hospitality with local Friends or commuted. There were 18 Friends of Color and 4 European-American Friends in the group. We were sad that two Friends of Color were prevented from coming because of Hurricane Sandy. As we worshiped, cooked, ate and explored together, Friends formed deep bonds of connection. The weekend provided a sacred space to talk about issues and concerns, and to share needs and gifts.

On Friday evening, we gathered together at Providence meeting and began to explore our gifts and challenges. Deep worship and a chance to share our most valued Quaker Testimonies grounded us in our faith and initiated special connections which carried us through the weekend. Friends felt stronger for having attended. We had the opportunity to get to know one another, to really be together. We learned that being together has its challenges and its gifts.

We took a field trip on Saturday morning to the African-American Historical Museum and also visited the President's House exhibit near the Liberty Bell that spoke of the lives of several people enslaved by George Washington. We ate our bag lunches at Arch Street Meeting and had an opportunity for spirited conversation there before returning to Providence Meeting for the rest of our program. This time brought us an opportunity to look at our needs from one another and from our Meetings as well as what we were willing and able to give. We recognized a need for Committees of Support and of Clearness when we were stressed by ministry laid upon our hearts and stated our willingness to such service. We acknowledged the need to work to improve our outreach efforts and the relevance of our place as Quakers in the communities where we live. We shared a deep desire for increased ministry to institutions, families and individuals in need, particularly: Detroit Friends School, children who do not have father figures in their lives, those who are or have been incarcerated and Quaker women in Africa who face myriad challenges due to sexism and economic disadvantage. We lifted up a wish to stay in deeper community with one another and explored methods to secure that connection.

Friends marveled that the all too rare experience of being in connection with so many other Friends of Color was "like a good massage", relaxing and energizing at the same time. We relished the soul-nurturing satisfaction of having an opportunity to share our Quaker being with a group where we were in the majority and where we saw faces similar to our own. A European-American member of the group reflected on the importance of listening with an open heart and found nourishment for her soul through non-egocentric listening to what African-American Friends have to say, something the Great Spirit has been telling her to do

all along. Our time together was enriched by the diversity of ages and experiences in our group and Friends were appreciative for that diversity; we agreed on the need to seek ways to bring more young Friends of Color into our fellowship. Many were moved by folks truly feeling heard and by the love, support and embrace we shared because we took the time to listen to one another. We will take back strength, remembering the faces and knowing that we are never alone.

We shared worship and fellowship with members and attenders of Providence Friends Meeting then parted with a profound sense of love and gratitude, and feeling replenished, renewed and rededicated to the work ahead. We will seek ways for ongoing connection throughout the year and several Friends have already committed to serve on the planning committee for our Gathering next year -11th month 1-3, 2013 in Washington, D.C. at William Penn House where we invite Friends of Color and their Loved Ones to join us in fellowship and exploration of our shared faith journey in the Religious Society of Friends.

We agreed that "...coming to these gathering is like going to summer camp; everything is different and better and I get to take that back to my home meeting!"

In the Light,

Jean-Marie Barch, Lynda Black, Arthur Borgerhoff, Corie Borgerhoff, Jane Borgerhoff, Michelle Brimage, Ernest Cuff, Ellen Deacon, Janice Domanik, Avis Ellis, David Etheridge, Victoria Greene, Keith Harvey, Heshimu Jaramogi, Vanessa Julye, Sharon Knox, Sabrina McCarthy, Anita Mendes, Barry Scott, Helen Garay Toppins, James Varner and Greg Williams