

Report on the Consultation for Friends Who Have Attended the WPC through FGC Support

Twenty-two Friends gathered at Dunrovin Christian Brothers Retreat Center in Minnesota for a consultation on the impact of Friends attending the White Privilege Conference with support from FGC. The White Privilege Conference, conceived and organized by an African American man, has a diverse attendance. For many Friends who attend, it is the first time they are in a gathering largely of People of Color. They get to experience being a minority and being challenged about information and patterns they have learned throughout their lives.

Those gathered at the FGC consultation shared that attendance at the WPC was important to them because it provided:

- Connections and an opportunity to network
- Pedagogy, curriculum and a framework for diversity work
- Exposure to the intersection of multiple forms of oppression
- An opportunity to attend workshops geared to different levels of experience
- Racially specific caucuses for sharing and learning from each other

They affirmed the importance of continuing to provide the Quaker discount which makes it more possible for Friends to attend. Further, it is very helpful that we work with local Friends to provide home hospitality and transportation; this not only decreases the cost of attendance for some Friends, it also allows an opportunity to spend time with others who are interested in this work.

Friends at the consultation gave voice to the realization that fear, the socialized binary of “right” and “wrong” and forgetting that we are part of the system and can therefore be part of the change, are things we must overcome to do the work.

There is work which FGC can do besides continuing to facilitate attendance at the WPC by Friends. Some of the many suggestions made included:

- Develop, publish and provide training for a curriculum, perhaps online
- Continue to assemble a resource bank on the web
- Provide Web links to relevant materials, information, speeches
- Increase the number of workshops at the Gathering addressing diversity
- Provide support to those doing the work
- Collaborate with FGC Quaker Press and Pendle Hill to get pamphlets on racial justice and white privilege written and published
- Approach *Friends Journal* about having an issue devoted to diversity
- Share the spiritual importance of working on issues of diversity

- Open the worship times in the hospitality room at WPC to any who want to join us. (This is in response to a request at an interest group at the WPC last year.)
- Look for ways to invite teens and young adult Friends to participate in the WPC and engage in this work.
- Establish and provide networks for Friends who have attended WPC to be in touch with each other, share ideas about how to take this work back to yearly and monthly meetings, and provide encouragement to each other such as through a list serve, on Quaker Cloud, or some other method.

Friends suggested that we explore collaboration with Friends Council on education as well as other methods to establish a discount and possibly other support for Quaker Schools to become more involved in the WPC.

As a religious community Friends say we are about peace building and that peace building is central to our faith. The world is not a peaceful place and a lot of harm between people is related to a lack of understanding and acceptance, and an inability to bridge differences in peaceful ways. The work that comes out of our attendance at the WPC makes us aware of our privileges. This is a step towards greater understanding and acceptance of people we perceive as different from us. Further experience with the WPC allows individuals to be prepared for additional levels of diversity work. The group was clear that this work needs to go forward. Although we will make mistakes, that is not a reason to back away from the work. We need to learn to accept our shortcomings and work to overcome them without wallowing in the “icky” stuff.