

Export "Interview- Fit for Freedom, Not Friendship La Jolla Book Group" as of Wed 26 Jan 2022 04:04:45 PM EST - complete responses

Notes: Duplicate and blank responses have been removed in this version. I didn't correct spelling or grammar or otherwise edit the responses except for one addition and a couple of suggestions in brackets. Since some people responded in more than one paragraph, bulleting the responses seemed like the easiest way to indicate which lines and paragraphs go together.

What excited or drew you to join this book group?

- When I first heard about the discussion group, I knew immediately that I wanted to join. I had read parts of the book earlier and really [really?] wanted to be able to talk it over with others. It is wonderful to see all these faces on Zoom, all of us having just read and pondered the same chapter, sharing different "takes" on the ideas along with individual experiences that have helped shape their own views and actions. It gives the reading a whole new dimension.
- I had the book already and I knew that joining the book group would get me to read the book sooner rather than later.
- I wanted to take my study of U.S. racial injustice toward African Americans to the next level. While it is painful to consider the sins of my country in this regard, it is even more painful to consider the sins of my beloved religion!
- I was familiar with Susy's name from PoC meetings and I wanted to receive and read and discuss the book
- Hearing Vanessa speak at a recent virtual gathering.
- Connecting with a new community of Friends about this important book - and reviewing it after a number of years since publication (when I engaged actively with it in my monthly meeting context).
- interest in the book
- I have been meaning and wanting to read this book for several years and it has sat languishing on my bedside table. I was hoping to read it with two members of my meeting over the summer of 2021, while we had a hiatus from the monthly racial healing workshops we conduct for our meeting. Alas, that did not come to pass. I was so excited to read with a large group, especially given that the effort is under the care of La Jolla MM and coordinated by friends I hold in high regard- of La Jolla and elsewhere, and friends of Color and European American friends, as well.
- This book has been on my shelf for years and I hadn't read it yet. I appreciate the discipline of reading in order to be prepared for a group discussion.
- The chance to revisit this important book after this many years since publication (when I read and engaged with people in my meeting about it, at that time)
- I was very interested in the book itself.
- The book looked interesting and a bit intimidating. I'd been intending to read it for some time, and the having a schedule to provide the discipline to read the book and a group of thoughtful people to discuss it with was just what I needed.
- As part of the FGC P&D folks who published this book decades ago, I was super excited to see how well the book is still encouraging the growth of anti-racist work among Friends.
- I wanted to gain insights regarding my views on race and racism.
- Title of book

- The quality of research in the book and how it corrects the simple myths we were taught about how Quakers helped end slavery.
- I needed to learn more about the history of enslavement and the roles that some Quakers played in not opposing it. People from multiple meetings were invited to join the book group.
- I had this leading about reading this book as a group experience, and was only planning to include our local San Diego and La Jolla Meetings. I worship, meet remotely and socialize with Friends throughout California, the country and internationally.

I thought other Meetings would benefit from reading it also and was prompting a few friends to do the same, when I quickly realized, not every Meeting has enough members or capacity to replicate what I wanted to do in San Diego. That's when I thought, why not invite my friends? And the rest is history! It really exceeded my expectations. I truly hope we will all still be involved by the end of the reading of the book.

- learning history of Quaker role in US history of slavery and post-slavery eras. The title of the book had a lot to do with my joining the book group
- I've had the book for years and (evidently) needed something to get me going!
- Vanessa and Donna's excellent scholarship in bringing to light the reality of our history.
- Getting a more thorough understanding of the relationship between Quakers and enslaved or formerly enslaved people.
- The negative reaction of a significant portion of Americans to Black Lives Matter
- I was very interested in how Quakers were going to help in the education against racism.

What has been the most surprising to you about the book thus far?

- The immense scholarship that went into the writing.
[T]he many associations and strong individuals who worked tirelessly over centuries to end slavery and the interesting parallels to today.
- The detail of events described within it. I am happy to learn the details.
- I think I am coming to understand more complexities behind the myth of early Quaker abolitionism. While many abolitionist organizations were initiated or led by Quakers, most Quakers were as resistant as the rest of the European American population. And then, Friends retreated into "Quietism".
- That Friends are prejudiced, from the 1600's to 2014. I don't see evidence that European American Friends are very different today.
- How deeply it has researched into Quaker history
- How relevant it still is - not surprising, really, but important to note and take into account.
- that only a minority of Friends were really active in the anti-slavery movement

- The reluctance, and refusal, of many colonial Quakers to condemn enslavement and those who enslaved other humans. Even more so, the frank way that George Fox and other prominent Quakers spoke explicitly about enslavement without insisting on its incompatibility with Quakerism. Quietism, I now understand, is the name for the willingness for Quakers, throughout our existence, to abide, while sitting still in accommodating and respectful silence, violence against the 'other'. If we cannot stand up to loudly and firmly oppose injustice everywhere, then why do we bother to continue on as a community?
- These are stories that I did not know. I appreciate the style of the telling, it is thoughtful and not sensational.
- Nothing that surprising, given I've been immersed in this journey for so many years now.
- It presents a more nuanced view of Quaker support for emancipation. In all social movements, certain members of a group are more supportive and active than others. It was surprising to learn that certain Quakers weren't even in favor of emancipation.
- The most surprising thing was the depth of the involvement of early Quakers with slavery, and how long it took to reach the conclusion that slavery was or should be incompatible with Quaker practice. Quakers may have been ahead of their time in this regard, but not by much. The Quakers of colonial times and early U.S. history were very much part of their time in their attitudes and practices.
- The degree to which it generates deep examination of our individual meetings now, how Friends work together (or don't) to fight racism and to do other work in line with our testimonies. I was delighted with how readily it fosters great group discussions.
- The idea of slavery was ingrained in our country and in all social units. Quakers might have been opposed to the institution, but when it came to their money and assets, they were no different from other white people. It is challenging for me to put my mind back 250 plus years and appreciate the bravery of Quakers to go against the ruling caste.
- Movement to end slavery, integrate schools, fair housing etc came from Quaker individuals rather than from the main body of Friends.
- How murky and complex the path was to end Quaker involvement in slavery, because of how reluctant many Friends were to change the system.
- That so many famous Quakers participated in slavery. Some directly and some as investors.

- Penn and his wife owned slaves.

Separately, through my own research and readings about this book, I learned that some Friends joined the Ku Klux Klan VOLUNTARILY!!! I literally screamed in my living room, after reading that. I emailed our planning committee group right away to share my shattering discovery.

- Learning about the role of individuals in advocating for freeing enslaved, but the resistance in the monthly and yearly meetings to taking a stand. Also the involvement of many Quakers in colonization societies promoting "exporting" freed slaves
- How much the Story of earlier friends coming to unity around abolition mirrors the struggles we are currently having in our meeting on racial justice issues.
- How reluctant Meetings were to 'read out of Meeting' enslavers but readily 'excommunicated' others for what today we'd consider infractions and minor offenses.
- The amount of resistance among Friends to calls for freeing enslaved people and ending slavery in general.
- The actual history of slavery and abolition among Friends
- That Quakers are fallible human beings.

In the light of February being Black History month, what has this book taught you about Black history?

- The consistent involvement and frequent leadership of African Americans in the movement to abolish slavery.
- It has taught me the not so pleasant side of Quaker relations with Black people even when efforts were there for abolition. History is always a lot more complicated and dark than we would want to believe.
- I am glad to have learned the names of African American Friends from recent history.
- That despite many years of "black history" being promoted in the U.S., the dominant culture (me) knows little about the African-American experience.
- That "Black" history as recounted by white people is not Black history.
- racism is endemic
- That black Quakers have always had to channel Jesus Christ himself to exist in European American Quaker spaces.
- Black history is American history.
- This book gives a vital update and clarification (to long-held "notions" folks have about Quakers, both inside and out of the RSOF) about the real nature of Friends' journey in relationship to African heritage people over the centuries. It is a "must read" for any Quaker who cares about healing and ending racism.
- Too many things to mention. For example, I learned that similar to Japanese Americans who were forced out of their homes and into camps during World War II, African Americans in Ohio were forced to sell their property in 1829, because a state law demanded they either pay a prohibitive bond or leave the state.
- The book reinforced the all pervasive effect of slavery on the early American economy, and the way this permeated through the rest of life in that society. (We've only read and discussed the first two chapters, so I'm sure there will be more enlightenment to come.)
- It has broadened the story beyond what we knew of a few Quakers and even fewer Black agents of positive change. It has led me to want to learn even more of the truth of Black strength behind the myth of passive recipients of Quakers' efforts to the hundreds of unknown folks whose stories enrich us, filling us alternately with outrage and with hope.
- Black history is erased. And, if and when it does come to light, white people don't want to feel uncomfortable so they ignore that systemic racism still exists. Whenever I learn of Black history, I am amazed at their resilience. The fear of the white class never ceases to surprise me.
- A long history of very slow progress to being accepted as deserving equality of opportunity and American citizenship
- I understand more why Quakers aren't known and lifted up in the Black community as the "backbone of the underground railroad." For most of the time that chattel slavery was a legal institution in the US, Quakers were willing participants. The white Quakers who had the leadings to struggle hard against it had a very difficult time struggling with other Quakers, for generations, before unity was achieved.

- Please note, we have only met three times, and we were very privileged to have our beloved Vanessa Julye presenting on our very first gathering. Right now, this week, we just discussed our reading of the second chapter. The information that you gather from us now, will NOT be the same six month's from now, or by next February 2023. It would be interesting to ask the same questions then, and compare results.

I have learned that the kidnapping of these African youth, to enslave them for free labor in this country, was a very well thought out and intentional plan. This was not a casual conversation or decision. The vast amount of human influence and dominance behind accomplishing this successfully, proves how their corporate and financial alliances were extremely powerful.

- The importance of learning more about our history from the perspective of those who were "silenced"
- The way it's been taught, especially to white people, is so sanitized, compared to the truth.
- Black history IS American history ergo Quaker history. It is not 'separate but equal' but rather integral to any realistic understanding of our Quaker history.
- That the "colonization" movement (sending freed Blacks to other lands, Liberia, mostly) had come under the control of people using it to undermine, rather than support, abolition.
- A reminder of the dehumanizing effect of slavey and the resilience of many enslaved people
- Listen to people of color about their history. They know what has been perpetrated against their people more than white washed history books.

How has reading this book in a book group influenced the way you understand and interact with the book *Fit for Freedom, Not Friendship*?

- Absolutely. Firstly, I am reading slowly -- a chapter a month --and carefully. Sharing the experience of this new knowledge with others, even over Zoom, is powerful. I find myself connecting with the book more than when I earlier read "into" it by myself.
- I enjoy gathering with Quakers to learn and study. It is always such a pleasure to gain insight from others.
- It keeps me motivated to read, looking forward to the deep discussions to be had.
- I am struck by how elementary the discussion is, with all the European Americans who are in the book group.
- Not so much influenced my understanding of the book as broadened my sense of community around reading it and taking in/acting on what it teaches us.
- not really
- This is the first time I am reading it. I am finally motivated to read it because of the group.
- The questions from the study guide help shape the sharing. Hearing other people's reflections, excitement and curiosity encourages mine.
- It has allowed me to listen to the variety of experiences, learnings and other responses to this story and the issues it relates to in today's world. I love getting the perspective of West Coast folks on all this, being only familiar with East Coast Friends and a little with Ohio YM (Conservative) Friends
- Reading this book with a group has forced me to keep reading, even when the contents are unsettling. The discussions with the group range beyond the contents of the book itself and help to anchor the concepts in contemporary reality.
- It has helped me realize the particularity of what I bring to reading it from my own background, and how many different kinds of gifts and challenges it might present to others, from very different parts of the country. It helps me question my assumptions
- I enjoy the breakout sessions. People from all over are participating and their personal stories are enlightening. All of us have a different experience.
- It lets me know that we are transforming our understanding of this ignored part of history together.
- I have some eye problems, I struggle through the reading because I have a commitment to the group.
- Not influenced, as much as opened my consciousness to appreciate "patiently" on the themes of focus by people of different races. We are not all reading the same book, because it can be perceived so differently by some. Fortunately, the authors' do not leave a thing to interpretation and it's very easy to honor its intended purpose. Focusing on this history is not as personal a wound for some friends.
- I put much more thought into the reading because I know I will be sharing in a breakout room
- Because I know I'm going to discuss it with other people, I think I'm more attentive when I read. Also, other people bring out aspects of our history that did not immediately come to mind when I was reading the book on my own.
- N/A
- This setting forces me to think about the perspectives other people bring to the book, as well as what I might say about it, thus deepening my engagement.
- It's interesting to get other's take on the subject, but hasn't changed my understanding of the issues
- I'm actually learning what it is about! I have a hard time retaining what I read. This group is a tremendous help in my learning.

Has this book moved you to look at or do anything in your meeting, personal life, community ect? If so what?

- To try to be more aware of racism around and within me and of the frequent disconnect between words and actions.
And there's lots more reading I want to do.
- The thing I grabble with is Vanessa Julye stating that the Quaker form of worship can be and is attractive to Black attenders -- even though we have so few. It has made me think about how we may be pushing others away by being so much "in the know" about how we worship and perhaps not being open enough to some greater variant of our practices.
- Yes. I'm looking at my organization now.
- I have long been acting on the insights from this book as well as other sources of support for addressing racism effectively. The book unfortunately had little palpable effect on our meeting when it came out, but things are moving better by now.
- just to realize how much self-interest dominates what we do
- It feels as though seeds are being planted, too soon to see the growth.
- I have been working actively from a deep place so long on all these issues, that I don't have a ready response to this. I look at all these things almost daily, and have so for many years.
- I would like to see more African Americans at my meeting. I have always felt this way, but the book brings this into sharper focus.
- The book has moved me to look at the range of attitudes and the capacity for activism within my meeting.
- I want to write up the book group experience for my meeting's on-line newsletter. As I'm already involved in a number of anti-racist activities that I see as effective, I don't foresee adding other new activities. It probably will remind me to incorporate the FGC anti-racism queries into every decision I help Quaker groups make.
- I am more aware of my inner conversations regarding race and class in my daily life. Living an active conversation regarding how our meeting can reach people of color. What do we have to offer??
- Take part in Black Lives Matter , support presentation of unknown African American achievement to the community. Take part in vigils for an African American whom I believe was murdered by local police. I have been taking part in the above for some time but reading the book makes me realize there is more to do
- It was part of a number of influences that strengthen the foundation of my continual anti-racism work. It helps to know that even when the struggle is long and drawn-out, that that is also the case with all progress in the past.
- Very funny.
The fact that my Meeting has agreed to host this reading group, doesn't mean everyone is in agreement, or content about its continued success. The word "modest" is articulated frequently, when expressing their anticipated expectations about this reading group. I look at it as "there's too much work ahead, to focus on negativity and the haters."

I believe this book was written for such a time as this, and was shocked to discover that some Meetings and Friends had already read the book. I want to see tangible changes for the better after we are finished reading this book.

- I have shared with several individuals about the parallels I see in our meeting today

- Not yet.
- Helped me appreciate the need for reparations to make all of us whole again.
- Not yet.
- No, since the topic and issues were already at the forefront of concerns
- I'm super isolated physically. I do recommend the book to anyone I can (including Bailey Sarian for dark history!)

How strongly would you recommend this book to other Quakers?

- Very strongly
- Strongly
- Very strongly
- Strongly
- Very strongly
- Strongly
- Very strongly
- Very strongly
- Very strongly
- Very strongly
- Strongly
- Very strongly
- Strongly
- Strongly
- Strongly
- Very strongly
- Strongly
- Very strongly

Is there anything else you would like to add?

- I'd be OK with my name on some of this if you can tell me what you might use.
- That's all for now.
- No.
- interesting that almost no FOCs were involved in the last on-line discussion

- This book may be hard for some to accept. It paints a different picture of the relationship between colonial Quakers and enslavement, as compared to the conventional wisdom. It is a difficult reality to take in and accept. But we must see the past accurately before we can make amends, heal, be healed, turn in the direction of, and then inhabit, the beloved community.
- I appreciate the careful preparation and facilitation. Gratitude to the Friends at La Jolla for their faithfulness and hospitality.
- Nothing, except to THANK, hugely, the Friends who organized this experience for us.
- Thanks for seeking this input.
- So appreciate the efforts of those who have made this group possible.
- I am not an American citizen and not a birthright Friend

- Thank you for running this survey!
Would you please share its results with me?
I will greatly appreciate it!!!

- Susy Cervantes
Susana_Cervantes@icloud.com

- Always more to learn - being open to new ideas about past events and their impact on our lives today

- I would encourage one and all to continue their study of our Quaker past understanding the role Friends played as financiers, traders, ship builders, ship captains, and enslavers of African descent. And how we continued right up to the present to discount spirituality expressed in ways different from our usual expression. Our integration of Quaker schools did not precede American integration but rather proceeded along with school integration generally. We need to face this inconvenient truth forthrightly and endeavor to make amends so that we all have the lived experience of recognizing the divine in everyone. I would especially encourage one and all to listen and learn from Vanessa's excellent F.G.C. lecture on Radical Transformation. It is worth in depth investigation.
- Not at this time.
- Thank you for all of the hard work you do.