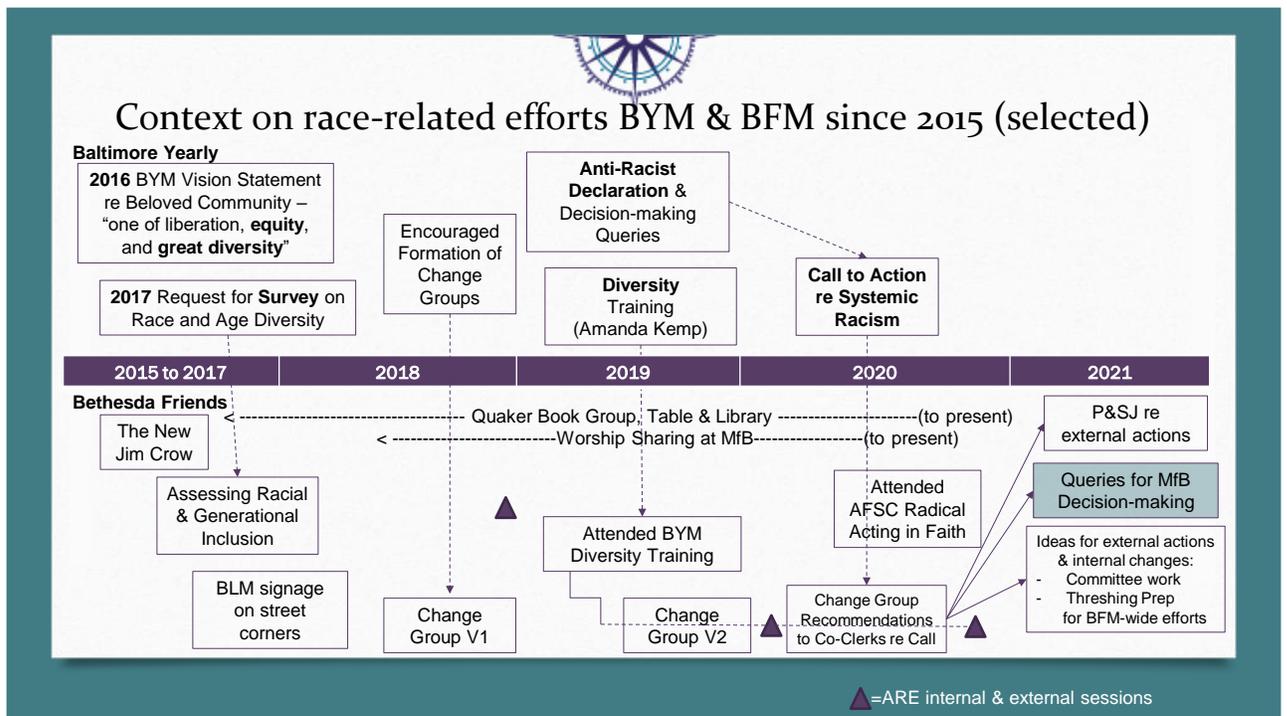


**Bethesda Friends Meeting (BFM)
Anti-Racist Queries for Decision Making
Meeting for Business July 18, 2021**

For several years, Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM) and BFM have been seeking to raise awareness about the presence and impact of systemic racism. This past year our Meeting community has been working to respond to BYM “Call for Action against Systemic Racism” in several tangible ways. The BYM Call for Action document was drafted by a group that included our own Lauren Brownlee and Peirce Hammond; it asked the BYM Monthly Meetings to start a discernment process to determine *what we can do as a Meeting, as committees, and as individuals within our Meeting to help confront systemic racism.*

Our efforts to-date have been on many fronts (see chart below). Specifically, this past year we have elicited:

- **Committee actions to confront systemic racism:** Our committees have been working to consider and implement committee actions that will confront systemic racism, and they have begun reporting at MfB about their actions.
- **Meeting-wide identity and action:** We have set up a Threshing Prep Group that is working with the Change Group to organize a threshing process to discern what - of the Meeting-wide actions proposed by committees - BFM is committed to taking. The plan is for the threshing process and threshing sessions to open a spirit-led way to first determine our identity as a Meeting as we confront systemic racism and then to engage in meaningful Meeting-wide action.
- **Anti-racist queries in decision-making activities:** The Change Group encouraged the co-clerks to follow the BYM example and create anti-racist queries that can be applied to our decision-making process at Meeting for Business and during committee meetings. As a result, and drawing upon the BYM queries and modifications made by other Monthly Meetings, the co-clerks drafted the anti-racist queries below for use at BFM. The expectation is that the co-clerks will seek approval of the queries at MfB, apply them at MfB, and encourage members of the Meeting and committees to utilize them.



The proposed anti-racist queries:

The anti-racist queries below were seasoned at the May 23 Coordinating Gathering, introduced at the June 6 MfB, and are being re-presented today at MfB for approval. As a co-clerk of the Change Group wrote, “The Change Group enthusiastically supports the Meeting proceeding to adopt the queries, confirms that they should not impede any upcoming threshing process, and encourages the Meeting to consider them as ‘living’ queries that could be revisited in the future, if desired.” In addition, adopting and using these queries could be considered a tangible and meaningful step in confronting systemic racism as a Meeting within our own decision-making processes.

First query: **How might our pending decision reflect underlying biases and risk a negative impact?** - To what extent are privilege, class, stereotypes, and other biases unwittingly affecting this decision-making process? If carried out, how might this decision impact adversely those who have been harmed or marginalized by systemic or interpersonal racist behavior?

Second query: **In what ways would our decision promote racial opportunity and equity?** - What opportunities does this decision provide to those harmed or marginalized by racist behavior or systems? How else would this decision promote racial equity and/or diversity and inclusion?

How might we use these queries during decision making?

- For example, if at MfB, we decide to set up an ad Hoc group for some purpose, the queries could remind us to include members of our community who are often overlooked, for recruitment on committees or in leadership positions.
- As another hypothetical example, a committee such as Outreach & Communication might place a particular weight on increasing diversity after considering these queries as it discusses and proposes actions to help BFM become a more welcoming community.
- In addition, the hope is that these queries will serve to sensitize us to consider factors beyond our usual ones as we make decisions at MfB and during committee meetings. As an example, where this kind of decision making was used at MfB, last year we were asked to host the BYM Interim Meeting. In choosing between the Lower School campus or the Upper School one, the tie breaker for selecting the LS campus was its close proximity to the Metro that would allow a younger, more diverse group of people to attend who do not have cars.
- Finally, although the queries are intended for decision-making situations at MfB and during committee meetings, the queries could be a reminder to all individual members of the Meeting to apply these queries in our own personal lives.

How have other Monthly Meetings used such queries?

Friends Meeting of Washington and Annapolis Meeting are two examples of BYM Monthly Meetings using such queries. Both write the queries onto their MfB agenda sheet as a reminder to incorporate them into their decision-making and have used them when relevant issues have arisen. For example, after the George Floyd killing, the Annapolis Meeting planned to hold a meeting with the police to talk about their local police policy. After they applied the query to the process, they decided that it was not appropriate for a White group to organize that meeting alone. They joined with a Black Church in their effort to do this.

For all Quaker Meetings, these anti-racist queries should be in the back of co-clerks' and other members' minds and used especially when confronting issues or proposing actions with racial impacts, but also in an ongoing manner. Their purpose is to help us all, as members of a faith community, to become more aware of and to move forward in confronting systemic racism.