

Reparations and Historical Injustice

Report to the FWCC World Plenary Meeting's International Planning Committee

19 May 2023

An informal group of Friends identified by the FWCC World Office held two exploratory meetings in April and May, to deepen existing discussions and to provide insights for the World Plenary (August 2024, South Africa). This report is the outcome of those meetings and discussions. We hope the report will assist the WPM and the IPC as they prepare the agenda for the World Plenary Meeting. The group considered Britain Yearly Meeting 2022, Minute 33 and Southern Africa Yearly Meeting Minute 2023/22 which stimulated a response. The discussion at BYM and SAYM prompts us to consider whether reparations can be included under the existing theme of historical injustice or needs a separate entry. The discussion also prompts us to consider issues of ongoing inequalities related to the historic injustices, such as structural racism and climate injustice. We welcome the Minutes of the two YM's and recognise their relevance. We want all Yearly Meetings to attend the World Plenary ready to take this discussion further.

Reparations: can be defined as recognition of harms committed and action to address them. This encompasses our past, our pain (present) and our hope (present/future). There is a CARICOM ten-point plan for reparations and an international UN consensus on reparations. (See attached/links)

Historical injustice: also recognises harms committed as well as acknowledging continuing injustice which persists. The call for reparations and focus on historical injustice identifies the role of power both historically and currently. A crucial step is for those who have benefited and continue to be enriched through these actions to admit, apologise, and atone for wrongdoing.

Truth talking and trauma: Speaking and seeking the truth is part of healing from the past and present and prevents the repetition and continuation of injustice in forms including racism, colourism, climate change and structural global inequality. History from only one perspective and one voice is incomplete.

Our needs: There is a need to support, frame and clarify the conversation about reparations, historical and continuing injustice. There is a need to understand and address how historical injustice currently manifests in our global Quaker family, as well as to make this part of our witness to the wide world. Raising these issues is brave, complex, and timely. As a world family of Friends, we want to deepen our discernment. What is preventing truth telling and truth seeking?

The Ubuntu theme is an opportunity to look to its traditional gathering and justice system which brings matters of injustice to the circle. This community circle is where the truth can be expressed, trauma can be acknowledged, and consensus reached on redress. Friends are invited to continue worshipful contemplation of these issues in the spirit of Ubuntu and within 'the circle' of our meetings.

Way forward

The theme of reparations be added to the agenda. This recognises both its specificity and relationship to the themes already discerned.