



Yearly Meeting of the  
Religious Society of Friends  
(Quakers) in Britain

## MINUTES

### BYM Trustees' Reparation Working Group

Tuesday 10 March 10.00 - 17.00

In person at Friends House and online on Zoom

#### 2006.03.01 Opening Worship

During our opening worship Mathew 6 verses 19 – 21 were read.

#### 2006.03.02 Updates

##### 1. Clerks Update

###### a. APPG for Afrikan Reparation Panel Event.

This meeting on 09 February in Committee Room 10 of the House of Commons was well attended by over 50 Friends in London & activists working on Reparation.

We noted that the Baptist Church apologised in 2007. They have not yet reached any consensus on payment of reparation.

We were disappointed to find that no MPs other than Bell Riberio-Addy the Chair of the APPG were present.

###### b. Communications Plan.

We accept this plan and thank EN for her work on developing this and liaising with the BYM Communications Team. Major events will be highlighted with blog posts in Quake and on the website to raise our profile across BYM. We are aware that this plan has already resulted in two articles highlighted in Quake.

We are aware we need to share the journey of the Reparations Working Group.

We need to consider ways in which Woodbrooke may become more involved.

Our desire is to bring Friends along with us in the first place to make an apology. We need to acknowledge the past involvement in enslavement and colonialism but at this moment many meetings do not have the awareness of the 18<sup>th</sup> century history. We recognise that this is an ongoing process and some may be more willing to acknowledge this history. Yearly Meeting and local meetings need to be involved in this discernment.

We have heard that this was discussed with Area Meetings in 2020 where EP asked the question should Quakers apologise for their involvement in the enslavement of Africans? No meeting spoken with felt it to be inappropriate. The Special Interest Meeting March 24<sup>th</sup> will reopen this discussion.

We are agreed that we see our work being in stages. We hope it will include an acknowledgement, an apology, and on-going work healing relationships plus financial reparation.

##### 2. Workstreams Annual Plans

###### a. Network and Listening

We accept this plan which includes the programme for the Special Interest Meeting to be held in advance of May Yearly Meeting.

We have the contact tracker working now so that we have a better idea of Area Meetings we still need to speak with. The SIM will attempt to prepare hearts and minds for the July and November Yearly Meetings.

The FWCC is developing further conversations across the Global South so that they can engage with reparation.

We will return to this in April

#### **b. Historical Research**

We cannot avoid researching Barbados and London both of which we are scoping. The 7 London Area Meetings are being invited at their March meetings to provide funds for historical research in London. Following this EN will scope and organise the research. The Treasurer will write to SS explaining how the funds will be managed.

We need to speak with the historians about their intellectual property rights if they are to be placed on the database being developed by Kelvin Beer-Jones.

We will return to this plan in April.

#### **c. Theological Research**

We will consider this plan in April.

agree that the report will be available for the conference on 20 November 2026. A minimal charge will be applied once we have sight of the report in June.

### **2026.03.03 Listening to Friends from Africa: Edwina Assan, Leslie Sergius Ephson and Nozizwe & Jeremy Madlala-Routledge**

We welcome our Friends from Africa. We ask that our greetings are taken back to the meetings where these Friends worship.

We wish to hear the voices of the Global South and to listen to their views of the harms they experience today resulting from the enslavement of Africans and colonisation of their countries. We are grateful for this opportunity to hear from Friends

The meeting opened with Friends reflecting on the need to acknowledge historical harm caused by colonialism and the transatlantic enslavement, and to seek pathways towards healing and justice.

**Historical context and acknowledgement of harm** - Friends heard that approximately 12.5 million Africans were forcibly trafficked during the transatlantic enslavement, with around 3.1 million transported on British ships. Ports such as London, Bristol, and Liverpool played significant roles, with Liverpool becoming the largest slaving port.

It was noted that when enslavement was abolished, enslavers received substantial financial compensation, while enslaved Africans received no compensation.

Friends acknowledged that although British Quakers may not have been among the worst actors within this system, their actions and inactions were inseparable from the structures of the time, and the legacy of these systems continues today.

Participants also noted current international discussions, including the intention of the President of Ghana to present a resolution to the United Nations recognising the transatlantic trade in enslaved people as one of the greatest crimes against humanity.

**Psychological and cultural impacts** - Friends discussed the concept of the “colonisation of the mind,” described by African writers including [Wole Soyinka](#) and [Chinua Achebe](#).

Colonial systems created an internalised sense of inferiority, encouraging the belief that European standards were superior and devaluing African traditions, languages, and knowledge.

Participants noted that this legacy continues to influence attitudes toward culture, education, and economic systems.

**Impact on food systems** - Friends heard that pre-colonial Africa was largely agriculturally self-sufficient. Colonial policies reshaped agriculture to prioritise cash crops for export to Western markets, weakening local food systems.

In the present day:

- African countries import a significant proportion of their food (up to 80%).
- Subsidised agricultural goods from Europe and the United States often enter African markets at prices that local farmers cannot compete with.

This was described as a structural continuation of historical economic patterns.

Mining and other extractive industries were also discussed as contributing to food insecurity through environmental impacts such as water pollution and land degradation. Mining usually carried out to support Western industries.

**Structural and economic inequalities** - Friends identified several continuing structural challenges linked to colonial history:

- Unfair trade systems, discouraging value-added processing in Africa.
- Debt burdens, which limit economic investment and development.
- Resource extraction, where natural resources leave Africa without fair royalties or local benefit.
- Political interference, including the undermining or removal of leaders.
- Education systems, which often prioritise European history over African history.

Friends also reflected on the breakdown of traditional governance systems, disruption of cultural and religious practices, and the generational trauma caused by enslavement and colonial rule.

**Language and colonial legacy** - Friends reflected on how colonial languages continue to shape communication, travel and influence power dynamics.

At a gathering of the Africa Section of the FWCC, most communication occurred in English and French, illustrating the enduring effects of colonial linguistic boundaries. When Swahili was spoken, a majority of participants understood..

Participants noted the importance of supporting indigenous languages and cultural knowledge.

**Reparations and Justice** - Friends discussed reparations as a matter of justice rather than charity.

Suggested approaches included:

- Ending the dumping of subsidised goods that undermine African farmers
- Cancelling unsustainable debt
- Reforming international financial institutions
- Ensuring fair royalties from natural resources
- Supporting local processing and manufacturing
- Reforming education systems to include African history and perspectives

Friends emphasised that reparations processes should not be controlled solely by Western institutions.

**Quaker Responsibility** - Friends reflected on the relationship between Quaker history and colonial systems.

Questions were raised about how Friends worked within these systems and how they might have challenged them more strongly. The discussion acknowledged both actions taken and opportunities missed.

Examples referenced included Quaker involvement or presence during colonial expansion in southern Africa and Namibia.

Friends agreed that systems of exploitation are inconsistent with core Quaker values of equality, justice, and peace.

### **Future planning**

Friends discussed ongoing and potential initiatives:

- Advocacy to end agricultural subsidies that undermine African farmers
- Promotion of food sovereignty
- Curriculum reform to teach the full history of colonialism and enslavement

The work of QUNO was noted, though Friends observed that there are currently no Quaker UN offices based in Africa.

African-led initiatives were also highlighted, including the Ubuntu fund and Ubuntu Web – Africa based projects aimed at strengthening collaboration and self-reliance among African Quakers, with the development of regional hubs across Africa.

### **Questions and continuing conversation:**

Friends expressed a desire to continue the discussion and deepen understanding through:

- Historical and theological research
- Collaboration with African scholars and institutions

- Further reflection on Quaker institutional responsibilities
- Exploring practical actions toward justice and reconciliation.

**Questions included:**

- Rowntree apology in 2021. Is money from these charities used to support BYM activities?  
What is the RWG doing to further reparations by these organisations?
- Edwina – Who will pay reparations? Who to appeal to (to claim)?

We send this minute to our Friends in Africa with our grateful thanks to for them sharing their thoughts and reflections with us.

**2026.03.04 Listening to Bethany Johnson from the Jamaica part of the Diocese of Liverpool's Triangle of Hope.**

We welcomed Bethany and ask her to take our greetings back to her church in Jamaica.

Liverpool with the association with a diocese in Virginia (USA) and Kumasi diocese in Ghana has set up a Triangle of Hope. This equips young people from the three dioceses with prayerful and worshipful space.

We heard that reparative justice conversations can be very divisive.

Bethany provided us with the lived experienced of how colonisation and enslavement have impacted the lives of her community. She spoke of how despite the majority of the enslaved being trafficked from Africa there is not a strong tie between the Caribbean and Africa when looking at legacies of enslavement.

She told us that the indigenous population of the Caribbean are very different from the enslaved brought to the Caribbean. They are a culturally distinct group who require different reparation.

She stressed the need to address the legacies and the positives that come from that period of history. The current Caribbean culture has taken positives from the hybridisation of the history. She also talked of siloed working practices and the need to avoid isolation.

Bethany spoke of a project sponsorship by USPG (United Society Partners in the Gospel) focussing on the Codrington estate which has enabled research into its history. That history is now being used to establish a link with the Codrington Trust. She stressed that they were not going to shy away from the history. There is a need to look at how the current situation can be improved. A lot of thought is needed when looking at reparation in the Caribbean. She asked how much is understood about the current Caribbean culture in Britain? She felt it is seen as holiday and entertainment venue.

We heard that the vast majority of Caribbean society exists to put food on the table, there is no job security and you have to be exceptional to get a better job. One has to try twice as hard. Reparation, if able to diminish that, would be very helpful.

She was clear that the Caribbean was not looking just for money but a true understanding of the situation. Reparation does not need to be something new, there are things happening which just need support she told us.

**Q& A.** What could have been done better by the religious organisations?

Before the Triangle of Hope we had few opportunities to hear and share of the atrocities of enslavement. The populations had to deal with the atrocities themselves. The Caribbean was not looked at. I know that CARICOM is formed to look at reparations and what it means across the islands. However, there is a need to regularly justify the need for reparation and there is a challenge to get people to accept the atrocities of the past. The onus has fallen on the Caribbean to work for justice and to quantify the generational legacies of enslavement. She quoted Damian Marley, the legacies remain in a different form 'the old slave mill is grinding slow and grinding still.'

Is there any value in the churches getting to know of each other's work?

Bethany is from the Anglican tradition in Jamaica. The Churches Reparation Action Forum is the United Church of Jamaica & Cayman Islands which she heard of from the RWG. She believes that the churches can learn from each other, hold each other accountable regarding each other's initiatives. She asked how does this actually translate into all working towards the common goal of reparation? She felt there is benefit in a joint statement.

When asked about education Bethany replied: How do I have an opportunity for it to be beneficial to my life? Scholarships exist, they provide a wonderful opportunity to further experience.

She was asked if some of that academic learning should be directed to other areas of education such as vocational education. This was felt to be beneficial.

We send this minute to Bethany with our grateful thanks for her spending time with us.

## **2026.03.05 What might Reparations look like?**

Friends have received Paper 6. This challenges us to think about the power dynamics of a reparation process. We will continue to work on this and return to this issue at a future meeting.

**We closed at 16.00 in worship.**

**Clerked by Ann Morgan & Marghuerita Remi-Judah**

