

# Report of Peace and Social Order Committee to Pacific Yearly Meeting Annual Session 2017

**By Anthony Manousos, Co-clerk of the PYM Peace and Social Order Committee  
(PSO), with help from Stephen McNeil, Co-clerk**

Since the election, there's been an upsurge of activism among Friends as well as among other segments of the American population. We've been aroused to action by the threats posed by the current administration to the environment, immigrants, Muslims, people of color, the poor and life itself, with the EPA budget being slashed and the drumbeats of war becoming increasingly loud and insistent. The words of William Penn seem especially relevant: "True godliness does not turn [us] out of the world, but enables [us] to live better in it and excites [our] endeavors to mend it." Our divided and broken country desperately needs mending. Our Quaker message and approach are urgently needed.

Each month there is a PSO Committee conference call open to anyone interested in peace and justice. To take part in these calls, contact me at [interfaithquaker@aol.com](mailto:interfaithquaker@aol.com). Please let me know if your Meeting has approved minutes of concern and/or how its members are engaged in peace and social activism. We need to hear from and support each other.

A major task of PSO has been to present minutes of concern to annual session, but there is currently no unity on how to do so. In 2015 PSO worked on this issue for over a year with the YM clerk and presented detailed procedures based on best practices for seasoning and presenting minutes of concern, which were posted to the PYM website: <http://www.pacificyearlymeeting.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/ProcedureForPresentingMinutesOfConcern.pdf>.

M & O feels that current practices for presenting minutes of concern have not resulted in significant action or reflected changed lives, and has recommending ways to insure more accountability. PSO, Friends in Unity with Nature (FUN), and the Latin America Concerns Committee (LACC) are reviewing M & O's proposal so we can come up with a set of procedures we can all be in unity with.

For the second year in a row, PSO has no new minutes of concern to present. Minutes of concerns approved by our YM in the past that seem most alive today relate to immigration and the environment. Meetings and individuals have taking many actions around these concerns, which will be reported by LACC and FUN.

As clerk of PSO for SCQM as well as PYM, I am pleased to report that SCQM and Orange Grove Meeting co-sponsored an all-day workshop on immigration rights with Pedro Rios, director of the AFSC's U.S./Mexico Border Program. A native San Diegan, Pedro has worked on immigrant rights and border issues for over 20 years. On May 20, around 25 Friends from San Diego, Orange County, Santa Monica, Orange Grove and other MMs took part in this workshop, along with half a dozen non-Quakers. In this excellent interactive workshop we learned ways to become effective immigrant rights advocates and allies.

A new concern that has surfaced among Friends has been income inequality. An ardent advocate for social and economic justice, Philadelphia Quaker George Lakey has lifted up this concern and been on a book tour of northern and southern California, promoting *Viking Economics: How the Scandinavians Got it Right, and How We Can, Too*. Santa Monica Meeting approved a minute on income inequality and is sponsoring an all-day workshop with George Lakey in June. This workshop will focus on how to address income inequality, a core challenge to American democracy in this era of plutocracy. We'll learn how Quakers are addressing this issue and what we can do to create a social democracy in America similar to those in Scandinavia.

Involvement in faith-based based lobbying has escalated since the election. Friends Committee on National Legislation and FCL-CA have been increasingly active. FCNL Advocacy Teams have been formed in the Santa Monica area, Pasadena, and Orange County as well as in Northern California. Thanks in part to the efforts of Joelly Mejia, a young Advocacy Corps staff person, non-Quakers as well as Quakers are being trained on how to be effective advocates and lobbyists. Delegations have gone to the offices of Senators Feinstein and Harris as well as Congress members Judy Chu, Adam Schiff, and others. You can read about these visits on my blog at [laquaker.org](http://laquaker.org).

Joelly Mejia is also coming to Yearly Meeting annual session to lead an interest group focusing on faith-based lobbying.

### **Other interest groups sponsored by PSO:**

**How Can Friends Navigate and Counter Islamophobic Rhetoric?** Due to the increase in Islamophobic rhetoric and proposed policies that equate Islam as a world religion with terrorism, we will explore the production of phobias in our country in order to counter these imperial imaginary constructs. Productions of evil rely on cultivating fear in civil society, therefore, learning how to delink these social imaginaries is key to countering the fears and injustices of our time. Led by Shannon Frediani

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**Waging Peace in the Trump Era.** What are some of the Spirit-led and most effective ways to respond to Trump's militarism and jingoism? We will look at George Lakey's "Ten Steps for Stopping Trump." Led by Anthony Manousos and David Hartsough, who will also share his thoughts and experiences traveling to Russia in the past year, his seventh trip there since 1961. David is the author of *Waging Peace: Global Adventures of a Lifelong Activist*

**Quakers needed: Our country needs Friends in public office.** National politics gets the Headlines, but local government decisions affect us the most. There are about 400 locally elected officials for every state and federal elected official: school boards and water boards; city councils and mayors; county supervisors; sheriffs and district attorneys; fire districts, hospital districts, and numerous special districts. This interest group will encourage Quakers to do it themselves and, equally important, to identify, encourage, and support well qualified candidates who share our Quaker values. Led by Janet Gastil. [FCNL and FCL-CA may participate in this interest group.]

**Friends Helping Communities.** David Brietzmann, San Francisco Meeting, and Linnea Hanson, Chico Meeting, plan to continue their work on supporting social work that Friends Meetings and Worship Groups are undertaking in Pacific Yearly Meeting (PYM). Our goal is to link those that are working on similar kinds of social work to be able to learn from each other. We also would like the social work that Friends Meetings are doing to be known by others in Pacific Yearly Meeting so that their experiences can be shared with other meetings that may want to start a similar work.

**George Fox and Prophetic Witness.** In a special Sunday night session of Transformative Friends we'll look at key passages in Fox's journal dealing with "civil disobedience," "speaking truth to power," and other aspects of prophetic witness. Led by Anthony Manousos, author/editor of *Transformative Quakers 2015: True Stories of Quakers Who Made a Difference in the World; Howard and Anna Britton: Reinventors of Quakerism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (2013); Quakers and the Interfaith Movement (2013), EarthLight: Spiritual Wisdom for an Ecological Age, Compassionate Listening and Other Writings by Gene Hoffman (2003), A Western Quaker Reader (2000)* as well as other books, pamphlets and articles.

As co-clerk of PSO, I am eager to find out what your Meeting is doing to promote justice and peace and would be happy to pay a visit, so please invite me. This is a time when Friends who care about justice and peace need to work together. Most of all, we need to be faithful to the Spirit that stirs in our hearts, calling us to do utmost to mend this broken world.

### **Statements about Leadings from State of the Meeting Reports in So Cal:**

**Inland Valley:** Historically, our Meeting has had a leading in supporting people from Central America who have been driven from their homes by poverty or violence. More recently, we have become concerned about the plight of refugees from other parts of the world. We have restarted our Peace and Social Order Committee which is meeting on a regular basis. There are many ideas and questions to explore.

Many in our community have felt led to work with other faith groups. Our nation's troubled times have motivated these efforts. Meeting with others of different faiths has made it easier to see that of God in others. We are reminded that we have much more in common with other faiths than differences.

**La Jolla Meeting:** The actions of individual Friends bring Quaker values into the work of many other groups. Some Friends pursue their leadings with the help of a newly organized Leadings committee, a successor to our Peace and Social Order Committee. Several independent concerns were united this year into corporate action through an Asylees, Immigrants, Refugees (AIR) Committee, assisting Meeting families sheltering people in their homes.

**Orange County** – Our meeting tends to quietly support individual members and attenders who have strong leadings; in a sense, the interconnectedness of our community is our strongest leading. We share a deep appreciation for the Meeting's absolute commitment to the equality of all people and yearn for a Quakerly corporate response to the frightening changes we see taking place.

We want to make ourselves known to those who might yearn for what we offer, and also we wonder how to do outreach and be consistent with our commitment not to proselytize.

**Santa Monica** – We are relatively effective in a variety of individual leadings, but struggle with identifying and acting upon our corporate leadings. Many Friends noted that our work about Economic Inequality, including the related blog and the approved Minute, represent a real possibility and opportunity for a corporate leading. We continue to search for who we are as Quakers in the world around us. What is our core? What are we doing together? A Friend spoke of “the past five years as ones of self-discovery, coming to know our identity as a community and faith organization. This will support us as we are drawn into the world and begin to experience an expanding sense of community.”

### **Minute on Income Inequality from Santa Monica Friends Meeting**

**16-12-04:** Santa Monica Meeting approves the following Minute on Income Inequality, Economic Inequality and Social Justice, noting our desire to share it widely, and acknowledging the discernment involved in preparing it:

Friends (Quakers) believe that there is a divine spark in everyone, and on that basis we believe in the equality of all people. That belief leads us to create community among ourselves, foster community in the broader society and promote equal justice and equal opportunity.

We find that the laws, tax structure, and regulations of our society now disproportionately favor and reward the few, while disproportionately impoverishing the many. Wealthy special interests have used their resources and access to influence politics, the courts and regulatory agencies to redistribute wealth to enrich themselves at the expense of the middle class and the poor, who now experience declining wealth, declining earning power and declining levels of education. Our society now experiences rising poverty, homelessness, mental illness, drug addiction and environmental degradation. These factors in combination result in the weakening of our democratic institutions and our social fabric. We also find that this inequity is reversible, with correction of the tax codes, regulations, laws, and political reform.

We call on Friends to teach themselves and others about the truth of economic inequality. We call on Friends, people of other faiths and people of good will to recognize the need to change our tax code, our regulations, and our electoral processes to restore our social safety net and our educational systems to create a more just, healthier and more sustainable society based on principles of equality and respect for our fellow human beings. We call on Friends, people of other faiths and people of good will to work to reduce income inequality in our society by supporting actions that redistribute the fruits of our economy more broadly and equitably in order to build a stronger, more just, more rewarding and more stable society.

Economic inequality is at the root of many of social ills we now see. We seek to reduce income and wealth disparity, while recognizing that success in doing so will not cure all social ills. Our goal is to reduce economic stress in our society to the point that people of modest means may lead happy, productive lives and realize their God-given potential. We seek to restore the social fabric and respect for the inherent dignity of all.

Our goal reflects our Quaker testimonies on simplicity, equality, peace, community and integrity.