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### An experiment in learning and safeguarding space at AS 2020

Our theme at this Annual Session is “Radical Inclusivity: Responding to God’s Insistent and Persistent Love.” Radical inclusivity is the vision of what I hope all of us want to work toward, where we want to grow. But it is not where we are now.

White Supremacy is embedded in the culture and institutions of the U.S and within the Religious Society of Friends. We must name it and we will name it here at Annual Session when it shows up.

There are ways that the tentacles of racism show up and when it shows up we, as individuals and as a collective, suffer damage to our souls. People of Color notice when racism shows up. White people often do not notice.

At Annual Session, we are embarking on an experiment this year. We will notice words that land in a harmful way and help us, our whole body of Friends assembled here, to learn to see and to acknowledge when words land in a way that causes harm. One might say something with no harmful intent, but it may land with harm. We will pause at those times, we will breathe together, and we will address the harm done. Addressing harm needs to include acknowledging another’s experience. Dialogue with white Friends can then occur in a private space if an individual wants to explore the learning. Dialogue among Friends of Color can also occur in a private space to address the harm done. Throughout the Annual Session there will be Affinity Groups held for Friends of Color and for white allies in separate spaces so that support for this important work and learning can occur without inadvertent harm being done.

Let us strive to hold our whole community with open hearts, to pay attention to all who share this space, and to speak with integrity. For as much as it is hard for white Friends to learn of our unseen, unacknowledged racism, it is even harder, harsher for it to land with Friends of Color. A harm to one is a harm to all. Let us see what love can do.

#### **The Process:**

Anyone in attendance may identify an ‘ouch’ by sending a **private** message in the ‘chat’ to Friends Laura Magnani and Deborah Marks who will alert the clerk to the ouch.

When there is an ‘ouch’ in the room, the clerk will stop the meeting and ask Friends to pause, breathe, and notice what has occurred so we can all learn together. The clerk will ask Friends to spend a few minutes writing what they noticed and what each is feeling in their body. This may be an opportunity to consider how the ‘ouch’ lives within you, too, and how you might forgive and repair.

We will then return to the business at hand. At the end of the plenary, the clerk will check-in to see if anyone wants to acknowledge the harm done. Please read below for examples of this.

Friends of Color are encouraged to meet in the Affinity Group for Friends of Color for further support. White Friends are encouraged to continue learning about how to uncover and dismantle white supremacy within themselves and our community in the White Allies Affinity Group.

Examples of an ouch:

- Using the pronoun 'we' when speaking as a white Friend about the Yearly Meeting when that person really means 'we white Friends.'
- A white Friend speaks about how 'sheltering in place' has not caused any change in her lifestyle, when People of Color are disproportionately affected by the loss of livelihood and death from Coronavirus infection.

What does acknowledging harm done by speaking something that causes an ouch or harm look like and sound like?

- Thank you for calling this to my attention.
- I will reflect on this and attend to learning from it.
- After some reflection:
  - "May I offer a repair?" Ask question without expectation
  - "I recognize that my statement caused harm because..." No excuses.
  - "I apologize for that harm"
  - "Is there anything I missed that I might explore with white Friends?"

What further causing harm may look like:

- Saying "yes, but"
- Asking or expecting Friends of Color to teach white Friends. Please utilize the White Allies Affinity Group for further education and support.
- Seeking soothing and comfort from a Friend of Color when speaking about the ouch with the Friend of Color (and at the expense of their time and energy). This is sometimes referred to as "white tears."

Sandy Kewman  
Presiding Clerk