

# Pacific Yearly Meeting Friends of Color Subcommittee Report to Annual Session 2021

## **SUMMARY**

We are grateful to have the opportunity to work together and support the community. We wish to continue doing this service so that Friends of Color have spaces to branch out and thrive, hold space to heal and find solidarity among others with similar experiences, and to open the way for change through love.

## **REPORT**

The Friends of Color Subcommittee was formed following the 2020 Annual Session to address needs and concerns of Friends of Color. This is the report of our first year.

We are a Subcommittee with five members. We started out as Friends and have now become a family. Our Elder is Black African American, three other Friends grew up speaking Spanish as their first language and hail from three separate Latin American countries, and one is Arab American. We all share one very important thing in common: we believe fervently in our need to gather in a space for Friends of Color that is free from racism that we have faced in our white-dominant Society of Friends, and foster our spiritual growth and health.

The mission of our Subcommittee is clearly set forth in our Job Description: to provide meaningful brave space for fellowship and worship for Friends of Color. We met initially as a subcommittee twice a month and then once a month as the year progressed. We planned and hosted one Open House and one Worship Sharing for Friends of Color every month. These were well attended all year. In the spring we began planning for Annual Session, and for our very first Pre-Annual Session Retreat, which we hope becomes a yearly event.

We five came to volunteer for so many different and beautiful spiritual reasons and we want to share them briefly here.

One Friend thought of themselves as inexperienced and first volunteered to be supportive, yet with time, they became more invested spiritually and emotionally, and more committed to being a meaningful and vulnerable loving Subcommittee member. They appreciate feeling safe in the spaces we have fostered, and not having to worry about, or be burdened by, the limited freedom currently experienced by Friends of Color in white-dominant spaces.

Another Friend shows their love by doing things for others. The Subcommittee has been a joy because organizing events and spaces for Friends of Color feel like very specific, tangible gifts for our beloved community. It has been a long journey, and it's wonderful to look back on how far we have come. They look forward to setting up our work as something that will continue onward and are very grateful to have the opportunity to serve together.

Another Friend was excited to serve because of their experience at the Annual Session and how it didn't address the needs of Friends of Color. In the past they have loved being an ear for Friends and helping make things happen for them, so they feel honored and blessed to be a part of the Subcommittee. It hasn't been perfect but it's been very effective. The seed we have planted has grown up and is almost too big for its pot. It's exciting to think about providing even more space to branch out and thrive.

One Friend came to this Subcommittee after difficult interactions with dominant Friends that left them wondering if their experiences were similar to the unequal treatment faced by Friends of Color in the US. They acknowledge that being from another country means their experience is not exactly the same as that of Friends from the US. So they prefer to think of their role as "holding space." They

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know we will struggle in the beginning to work through many difficulties, but hopefully that will save other Friends in the future from pain, and they feel well suited to fulfill that service.

And finally, our other Friend came ready to fight for change, only to fall in love with their new Family. They volunteered to take bold action and better the experience of Friends of Color, and found instead an opportunity for healing themselves. The smiles and voices were medicine for a hurting heart, and friendships became family. Now they look forward to meetings because they calm down and feel more like a whole being connected by the wonder of spirit. They look forward to the spirit opening way for change through love and thoughtful action.

We appreciate the support this Subcommittee has received in its first year, and look forward to continuing the work of building community, fellowship, and spiritual growth for Friends of Color.

The Subcommittee consists of Susy Cervantes, Nathan Moon, Daniel Lean-Moctezuma, Marlene Coach (co-clerk), Bertha Peña (co-clerk)