

# Sacred Space Healing: What We Are Learning About Healing Harm When It Happens in Our Midst.

## Where We Are

In the past three years, with the leadership of the Pacific Yearly Meeting Racial Justice Subcommittee, people have begun to speak out about harm that has been happening in our midst. People ready to speak about race-based harm have inspired people from other groups—people with disabilities, people from the LGBTQ+ community, people with mental health problems, and so forth—to speak up as well. We have a pressing need to go beyond awareness of harm to the healing of harm.

We are beginners in healing these hurts. We notice that, as beginners, we do not necessarily start out being very good at this. We will continue to make mistakes, and we expect to learn from them. *We want to stop the harm and heal the wounds!*

## What Have We Learned So Far?

We have a precious strength to bring to this task: our practice of gathering together in the sacred space of deep listening. Like any other practice, it gets stronger with practice.

As a reminder:

- Listen deeply.
- When you are in a Quaker group or meeting, invoke the sacred space of listening deeply *together*. There is a divine mystery that moves among us when we make space for it.
- If there is discomfort in what you hear, notice your response, and tolerate the discomfort. Expect that some truths that are revealed to us will be uncomfortable truths.
- Speak when spoken through.
- At all times, but most especially in meeting for worship, a spoken message that calls your attention to harm is received like any other spoken message.
- Keep listening. The Messenger speaks with the flawed voices of imperfect humans. It's our practice to listen through the flaws for the truth and wisdom that is trying to come through.
- Above all, *love ye one another*. Love and compassion for one another and for ourselves is the central requirement to get us through this mess.

## Learning More

For this year's annual session, we will have several opportunities to share our experiences and learn more:

- Online workshop before annual session offered by the Racial Justice Subcommittee for facilitators, group leaders, and clerks of AS groups, focusing on guidance for how to handle hurts as they happen during a session.
- Daily meeting for worship on the occasion of healing harms.

- An interest group on healing harm, offered by RJSC and led by \_\_\_\_.
- Affinity groups—white allies, Friends of color, LGBTQ+
- Ministry Committee open committee meeting—questions and concerns are welcomed.
- Informal conversations with committee members at lunch and elsewhere.

The Ministry Committee would love to hear about *your* experiences and *your* learning around noticing, responding to and healing harm that happens in our Quaker spaces—or, indeed, in any other aspect of your life. Communicate with our clerk, Gail Eastwood [geastwood@asis.com](mailto:geastwood@asis.com),

#### FAQ:

- Why should we do this during the session where the harm was experienced—wouldn't it be better to address it privately later?

*The harm has affected everyone present and needs to be healed in the gathered body, not just in the harmed person/people.*

- People have told us that they feel accused and shamed. How can we become aware of and heal these harms without going to shame and blame?

*We try to give and receive these messages in a spirit of love and compassion, including self-compassion. We expect to improve in this effort, both in the giving and receiving. That said, feeling ashamed of our speech or action might sometimes be a useful and appropriate response! Early Quakers expected to have their shortcomings—"sins"—brought into consciousness during worship.*

- How can this process work for people who don't like the "ouch, oops, whoa" language that the Racial Justice Subcommittee brings to us?

*Use the language that comes to you; the idea is to name and acknowledge the harm. Hear the messages of others with this understanding.*

- Some people have been upset by some messages. There is concern that we will lose some of our beloved members.

*It's a risk that underlines the need to abide in love on all sides. Keep in mind that we are already losing people, mostly silently and invisibly. Because these sacred space spiritual practices touch the whole community, it's important for some participants who experience racial and other hurts to identify this as it occurs, even though it can feel upsetting for others. It's hard to both name and heal the felt-hurts at the same time. In this process of pointing out racial and other hurts, there's potential to be felt by some as divisive and upsetting. Thus, it's critical that everyone approach this process with genuine love and compassion that resonate in our hearts.*