

To all Friends everywhere,

From 2 August to 6 August 2021, 11 young Quakers, 2 Arrangements Committee members, and 6 Adult Team members met together in Gather Town, having created and designed our own unique space. We explored the theme 'For our comfort and discomfort: how can we use Quaker testimonies to live faithfully?', through the lens of anti-racism, climate justice, and other issues that intersect.

With the event being held online, there were concerns over the ability to foster community amongst the participants. However, we were extremely impressed by how quickly, easily, and organically, the community of young people came together and bonds formed. This ranged from small groups talking in 'private spaces', to post-epilogue conga lines with Clare Scott Booth. The surprising similarity to an in person event and use of the chat function allowed participants to engage more fully with theme sessions, in perhaps a more accessible fashion.

Throughout the week, Rachael Swancott, Edwina Peart, Beatrice Liese, and Daniel Nteziyaremye delivered sessions on a range of topics that allowed us to address the theme from different perspectives.

Rachael's session left us with a strong metaphor that carried us through the event: if your life is a boat, who makes up the crew? What role does Quakerism play – is it the wind in your sails or is it the anchor keeping you grounded? And finally, how is your boat equipped to make change in this world?

To start us thinking about race, racism, and how to navigate anti-racism Edwina Peart quoted Stuart Hall's book *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation*, saying that race is "one of those major or master concepts (the masculine form is deliberate) that organize the great classificatory systems of difference that operate in human societies. Race, in this sense, is the centerpiece of a hierarchical system that produces differences". It is this sense of "difference" that causes the issues we have with race in society today. She drew our attention to the racial abuse that the members of the England football team that are black, brown, or people of colour received after the final of the Euros and we heard Marcus Rashford's open letter about the abuse he received and the support from his teammates. This was extremely moving for many members, leading us to discuss the uncomfortable and comfortable aspects of the story, and what kind of world that we ourselves would like to create. She closed the session with a conversation about the links between modern racism, and how we are taught about colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade. Participants particularly responded to the words of Professor Kehinde Andrews; "Society can only ever be as equal as the knowledge it is built upon".

We had 2 workshops led by Beatrice Liese from the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) and Daniel Nteziyaremye from Turning The Tide (TTT). Beatrice spoke to one small group about the work of QUNO in international negotiations, particularly about working towards climate justice. We then practiced Quiet Diplomacy – speaking from the heart, answering the question "What can I do to support myself and those around me to act on climate change?". Daniel gave an overview of the advocacy that TTT carries out with young people in Rwanda, their philosophy and methods for engagement, and encouraged us to think about issues that were local to British Quakers.

In the final theme session, we reflected on institutionalised racism within Quaker bodies, and the attitudes that allow it to go unchallenged, in preparation for our Meeting for Worship for Business. This allowed the participants to engage with the theme one last time and bring their thoughts to the front of their minds, ensuring that they attended with hearts and minds prepared.

Participants were enriched by Meetings for Worship at the beginning and end of each day, allowing space for all to be calm, reflective, and engaged with the Spirit. Themes of different worships included starfish, change for the common good, and remaining in touch with your conscience. In order to emulate the refreshing nature of prologue this was held on our beach, and to preserve the soothing nature of epilogue we gathered on the sofas of the virtual rooftop.

During the course of the event, we welcomed several guests – Paul Parker, Jasmine Peripanayagam, Clare Scott Booth, Rob Francis, Wendy Sender, and Ella Otomewo – who joined us for worship, story telling, base group sessions, and gave us their own perspective of the theme and how it relates to their Quakerism.

To keep us excited and energised, the evenings were filled by community sessions ranging from a retro game show themed quiz to a dress up drama. These sessions encouraged participants to let go and express themselves through performance and healthy competition. The high number of participants that opted to stay on during their break for optional community activities, such as crane making or a musical quiz, is a testament to how well the community formed despite being online. Our Adult Volunteers facilitated base group sessions which were at times very thought provoking, and at other times had debates on whether banana has a place on pizza.

This week has been an exciting week of learning; learning about the theme, learning about online events, and learning about ourselves as individuals and Quakers. We have been encouraged to engage in deep reflection and introspection from start to end, and we can leave this event content in the knowledge that our participants have come away feeling equipped to make positive change in themselves, in our community, and in the wider world.

Signed in and on behalf of Junior Yearly Meeting 2021,

Kit King, Clerk, and Sasha King-Smith, Arrangements Committee