

Open Letter from the clerk of URJ to the clerk of SAYMA Finance

Sharon Smith

Sun, Aug 9, 2020

Geeta McGahey:

You are wrong. You have not acted according to Friend's principles, nor like you ever intended to be welcoming to people of color.

The Friendly thing to do, when you hear negative comments against other Friends is to have a private conversation with those who have been accused first, before gleefully spreading malicious rumors, let alone act like you are some judge and jury concerning another Friends character or purported activities. You would do that IF you cared about the Friends in question, and truly meant them well.

BUT, you didn't do any of that. Instead you rushed to judgement and moved swiftly attempting to hold other Friends accountable, for what has under the Light of TRUTH been shown to be dubious claims, at best. Looking back, since you became clerk of finance you have done nothing to support URJ and have only tried to maintain Charles Schades' racist agenda to criminalize URJ, its clerk and its members. I knew about it, but could not prove it before. However, with this last stunt, concerning Tanya Rodriguez's misguided revenge-motivated claims, it is now abundantly clear to everyone who witnessed it, where you stand. You have clearly shown yourself to be opposed to Uplifting Racial Justice, whatever that means to you, and opposed to myself in particular, based on NOTHING but hearsay and the anguished cries of frustrated racists who are outraged because they cannot control URJ's membership or how URJ operates. News Flash: URJ is about racial justice, nothing else. So, as clerk of URJ, I testify to the truth that URJ has never done anything illegal, or immoral. You have not been able to prove otherwise, so far, and you never will, as long as I am clerk of URJ.

That said, I knew how racist the environment was when I stepped into the role as clerk of URJ -- over your objections, I might add. Therefore, I have followed SAYMA Faith and Practice to the letter, in all URJ discernment and transactions. I did this knowing there would be people like you, just looking for a reason to justify their racist attitudes and activities toward URJ. If you had taken the time to read SAYMA Faith and Practice, like I do, you would have known that. But you obviously did not read it, because you had already made up your mind. Your heart was already hardened against me, personally, and those Friends who are led to serve as URJ members. Basically, you have not followed any kind of proper Quaker process regarding URJ, its members or its clerk, since the beginning. Have you ever had a conversation about ANYTHING at all with any of us? Have you tried to get to know me, as a person or as a Friend? No, you have not.

So, it looks to us like we "Colored" folks, know more about being a Friend than you do. Which begs the question: How did you get to be clerk of finance? It is obviously not due your understanding of Quaker principles or practice. Could it be because you are white and willing to uphold Charles Schade's white supremacist agenda that he picked you to succeed him? Which begs another question: How are you going to become an anti-racist if you keep on this way?

Thanks to you, finance now owes URJ another official apology. And, you must CHANGE your attitude and behavior toward Friends of color, especially URJ members, if you want us to believe your apology is sincere. Because, you have never even pretended to be anti-racist toward us, have you? In fact, there were several instances when either you or Charles could have used your authority to support URJ's work, but you chose instead, to divert everyone's time and ours, to mislead the gullible into finding fault with URJ, no matter how frivolous or petty, attempting to bring me down and co-opt the committee. How is any of that WELCOMING or Friendly?

Because it is the mission of SAYMA-URJ to help SAYMA become a multicultural anti-racist faith community that is welcoming to people of color, we are asking you to step down as clerk of finance, for the sake of the yearly meeting's progress toward these goals. Also because, looking through an anti-racist lens, it is not your place, nor any other white Friends' to dictate to URJ and its members--ALL of whom are people of color and veterans in the struggle for racial justice--who its members can be, nor how we go about our work. IF you are not prepared to be part of the solution, you can only be part of the problem. Working for racial justice is not, and cannot be, about your supposedly fragile white feelings, or about pacifying angry racists bent on denial, nor can it be about white folks' cultural addiction to power, control and domination over people of color. News Flash: We are NOT your pet Negroes. We will not bend to your will, only to the Light within us.

If you cannot meet the parameters I am setting for you, as clerk of URJ, which has only experienced racist hostility from you and Charles Schade, ever since URJ was still an ad hoc committee, you need to step down as clerk of finance. You should probably step down anyway, now that your husband is clerk of SAYMA, else some might accuse you of having a "conflict of interests." Oh, but you are white, so probably no one would think such a thing of you, and if they did they wouldn't dare say so. Right?

In the light of racial justice,

Sharon "Star" Smith