

**Draft report to SAYMA
Ad Hoc Conflict Transformation Planning Committee
September 2020**

The Ad Hoc Conflict Transformation Planning Committee is comprised of:

- Sharon Smith (Paul Cuffee Worship Group, SAYMA-URJ)
- Laura Seeger (Chattanooga Friends, SAYMA M&N)
- Jan Stancel (Nashville Friends, SAYMA M&N)
- Karen Morris (Atlanta Friends, SAYMA Ad Hoc Racial Justice Working Group, SAYMA Finance)
- Shannon Roberts Smith (Berea Friends, Ad Hoc Racial Justice Working Group)
- Plus Angela and Judy from Friends Center for Racial Justice (FCRJ)

This ad hoc was formed by the previous clerk of SAYMA, Barbara Esther, with the purpose of coordinating and planning a conflict transformation process at SAYMA. SAYMA Finance, SAYMA-URJ, the ad hoc Racial Justice Working Group, and various other SAYMA meetings, committees and individuals have all expressed an immediate and urgent need and desire for the development and implementation of a conflict transformation process at SAYMA. Believing that there was excellent momentum at SAYMA to work on conflict transformation, the ad hoc Conflict Transformation Committee had reached unity in our first meeting, that FCRJ is an ideal partner for SAYMA to work with in this process. Not only is FCRJ a Quaker organization, having familiarity with Quaker traditions, processes, and practices, but FCRJ is also uniquely qualified to help us understand conflict transformation through a racial justice lens.

With many points of active conflict occurring at SAYMA on an ongoing basis, FCRJ began its work with SAYMA in an observational, listening capacity. Over the last few months FCRJ has attended many of our SAYMA committee and business meetings, including providing significant support through an active conflict that arose in the work of the Finance committee, which has now been resolved.

FCRJ encouraged our ad hoc, as a necessary first step in conflict transformation, to identify the conflicts we see happening at SAYMA. At this early diagnostic stage, we have found unity around identifying the following as SOME of our pressure points:

- Money
- Insufficient lines of communication outside of business meeting
- Identity and participation as SAYMA Friends (who is included?)
- Interpretations of Quaker/SAYMA Process
- What is and is not “acceptable” behavior among Friends

It feels important to note that while we at SAYMA, and indeed on this committee, are in very different places in our understandings of these dynamics, all of the above points of conflict also intersect with the racism that we, as a predominantly white organization, must grapple with. We look forward to the deeper work of exploring how race and racism in SAYMA has underpinned and exacerbated these and other conflicts in our midst.

Next steps: Our committee was hoping to be able to report that we had invited FCRJ to take over the leadership of this ad hoc, continuing and deepening SAYMA's collaboration with FCRJ as we develop conflict transformation practices and processes at SAYMA, beginning with the points of conflict listed above. Instead, unfortunately, we must report that FCRJ has decided to take a step back from their work with SAYMA at this time.

It has come to light that hurt and harm has been caused towards FCRJ (and Angela Hopkins personally) because we at SAYMA are not, in practice, actually in unity about following the leadership of FCRJ in conflict transformation at SAYMA. Symptoms of this include SAYMA's inability to approve funding for conflict transformation, as well as individuals, informal groups, and committees moving forward with actions that will impact this work, (for instance recent proposals to work with other racial justice organizations) without due diligence of consulting and coordinating with all who are currently directly concerned and involved with racial justice work at SAYMA, but especially with FCRJ.

This committee is deeply appreciative of the labor of FCRJ over the recent months. We hope that SAYMA's relationship with FCRJ can be repaired and rejuvenated so that we may continue on this long journey of healing that we had begun and which showed such great promise. It is clear, however, that this will not occur in the near future without apologies being made, and a clear mandate that it is the will of SAYMA to fully commit to this work.

While we are united on this ad hoc, that we would like to see SAYMA's relationship with FCRJ repaired, and that we would like to continue our work as a committee, we are not clear on a way forward at this time, without both an unequivocal mandate supporting conflict transformation from SAYMA, and the leadership of FCRJ on our committee.

Respectfully submitted to the body of SAYMA,

Shannon Roberts Smith
Acting Spokesperson
Ad Hoc Conflict Transformation Committee