

## **SAYMA-URJ Report:**

9.26.2020

### **SAYMA-URJ Vision Mission and Goals**

[URJ clerk's commentary is in brackets.]

#### **Vision:**

SAYMA-URJ envisions a Yearly Meeting community where every Friend of color feels welcome. We see a SAYMA community where the divine Light within every Friend of color is affirmed, their unique history, spiritual journey and lived Truth is honored, where our messages and concerns are heard and respected with due consideration. We see a SAYMA community where Friends of color are empowered to build close spiritual Friendships, appreciation, love and support for the weighty responsibilities we carry as people of color, embodying Quaker Testimonies. Within and outside of the Religious Society of Friends.

#### **Mission:**

To help SAYMA become a welcoming place for Friends of color. The committee will do this by providing safe space for Friends of color to bring issues and concerns regarding racism within their Monthly Meetings and SAYMA, to find support and advocacy. The committee will also work to raise awareness about White Supremacy aka racism within SAYMA, by compiling and disseminating educational resources.

**Goals:** (The following goals were originally compiled by canvassing SAYMA FOC. We asked what they felt they needed to feel safe and welcome among Friends.)

1. Help navigating Quaker culture and process--like a FOC welcome committee, a printed guide to Quaker culture for newcomers and or assigned mentors.

[URJ decided (Sept. 2018) that gifting every new Friend of color a copy of SAYMA Faith and Practice was rightly orderd, and monthly Meetings are encouraged to do that, as a first-step welcoming gesture.]

2. Opportunities to connect with other FOC to build a community of support, share experiences and get emotional and tactical support from other FOC.

[URJ established the Paul Cuffee Worship group to address some of the needs of Friends of color. But SAYMA covers a wide territory and there are very few SAYMA Friends of color. Therefore, URJ needs adequate **funding to host retreats for Friends of color**, at least once a year. SAYMA FOC asked for, people-of-color-only time together. Why? Because, as people of color surrounded by whiteness, as we are in the RSoF, the need for community building and fellowship among ourselves, separate from white Friends, is of paramount Importance for Friends of color. This is no different from having a yearly meeting women's group, which some YMs have, or an LGBTQ group which has its own gatherings. And, because Friends of color have a different kind of anti-racism work to do together. We have different spiritual needs as well, especially within predominantly white faith communities that are just beginning to acknowledge their racism, which the RSoF is.]

3. Commitment from SAYMA to address/respond to the concerns of FOC in a timely manner, with sincere listening not defensiveness, avoidance, scapegoating, labeling, "management" and process violence.\*

[When Friends of color said they wanted, "sincere listening not defensiveness, avoidance, scapegoating, labeling, "management" and process violence" they were telling you what is happening in their Meetings. This is what they are experiencing as SAYMA Friends of color. Please note: Their message was intended for white Friends, NOT for URJ--all of whom are Friends of color. So it is ignorant and racist of any white Friends to assume URJ can address this. URJ has no authority over what you do or how you treat Friends of color in your Meetings. Remember, we have been marginalized and our integrity as Friends is always up for question, so, ONLY white Friends can change those dynamics.]

4. Work with SAYMA M&N to **develop a conflict resolution/reconciliation process that does not expect victims to**

**facilitate or take responsibility for what happened to them. SAYMA must stop blaming victims for their own oppression.**

[Not only is this written in the official goals of SAYMA-URJ, but URJ has been officially and actively asking SAYMA for a conflict transformation process since September 2019, and been completely ignored, until the finance committee brought the idea forward, in March of 2020]

5. Hire skilled facilitators for private FOC only sessions, to help FOC understand and heal from generational racial trauma and develop personal and group empowerment.

[How is URJ going to do that without an adequate budget? Every statistical report on economic inequality says the same thing: People of color do not have access to the same kind and level of economic resources as white people. So, do you really think you are going to arrive at the mystical place called racial justice and equity without giving URJ the funds we requested?]

6. Arrange dismantling racism workshops for everyone in SAYMA.

[URJ had planned to do that in May, but then the pandemic happened. If you read the URJ Report for the March representative meeting, which was cancelled, you will see it in print. URJ had also been invited to facilitate workshops at Barea KY Friends Meeting and Cookeville TN Friends Meeting. The Cookeville visit happened, but the Barea visit had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. Know that URJ will travel anywhere we are invited.]

7. Only FOC can be “voting” members of SAYMA-URJ. **URJ will choose it’s own committee members and clerk.**

[This idea was controversial from the beginning, but it was approved, separately, by SAYMA Friends of color in March 2017, and by the larger body of SAYMA, sometime later.]

8. SAYMA/URJ encourages white Friends to play supportive roles, as non-members. (Maybe form an auxiliary group)

[The auxiliary group became active at SAYMA Sessions in 2019. They are currently still operating as an ad hoc formation committee. Shannon Roberts Smith is their clerk.]

9. URJ will meet in real time at SAYMA in June, at September and March Representatives Meetings, and as often as needed by conference call or video conference.

[URJ has been meeting regularly, informally. When URJ meets we follow all the usual Quaker M4B practices, enhanced by culturally appropriate Indigenous and Black group processes.]

10. URJ needs financial autonomy, its own bank accounts, to prevent well-meaning unconsciously racist white Friends on the Finance Committee from delaying or withhold URJ's funds over differences of opinion as to how URJ's funds can or should be used. URJ will have unlimited access to its own set-aside and donor restricted funds which only URJ will decide how to spend.

[URJ has decided not to push for that right now. In fact, due to the racially motivated false accusations lodged against URJ for financial mismanagement, we are thankful that the SAYMA treasurer and finance committee hold all of URJ's money and financial records. Their records prove without any doubt that URJ's spending has all been in compliance with its mission and goals, despite claims to the contrary.]

11. URJ will create a Racial Justice Fund with enough cash to dispense grass roots reparations,\* as needed. Such as: occasional rent/mortgage money, auto repair and maintenance, travel expenses, and any other purpose Friends of color request financial assistance for. Also to cover the cost of Friends of color retreats and skilled facilitation for Friends of color. In short, **any legal use for which money can be used to address issues of economic injustice which disproportionately impact People of color.**

[The Racial Justice Fund is the same as URJ's Donor restricted Fund. All white SAYMA Friends are encouraged to donate to this fund.]

\*Process Violence: Using Quaker Process to cause harm and/or block the flow of Spirit.

\* Grass Roots reparations: Giving generously, according to your capacity without waiting for a corporate decision or an act of Congress.

**[Reformatted**, not revised, and approved by SAYMA-URJ on August 20th 2019]

Dear Friends:

It is true, that SAYMA-URJ has had difficulty living up to its vision, mission and goals. However, it has not been due to a lack of trying to do so, as some have claimed. In fact, **URJ has accomplished a great deal, considering the extreme racial hostility we have been subjected to, primarily by SAYMA Friends in leadership positions, particularly yearly meeting clerks, clerks of finance, and the clerk of Ministry and Nurture.** As a committee, URJ has faced all manner of racial discrimination and obstruction tactics, such as but not limited to, Friends baring false witness against URJ and its members as individuals, holding URJ to discriminatory standards which white Friends have never been held to, instigating divisions between Friends of color and between White Friends, withholding funds and threatening to withhold funds from URJ, without which, URJ cannot fulfill its mission and goals. In spite of all that, URJ has ALWAYS operated according to Friends' Testimonies, followed Quaker Process and acted in complete accord with its mission and goals.

For these and other reasons, **URJ asks, how can SAYMA achieve its oft stated goals to become an anti-racist faith community that is welcoming to people of color, while it has yet to welcome URJ and its members?** The answer is simple: It is not possible, as long as Friends of color who have been led to commit themselves to doing the work URJ was approved to do, are relentlessly undermined, maligned, racially profiled and criminalized simply for doing what we are called to do.

URJ's accomplishments, in spite of constant interference from a few SAYMA Friends intent on undermining the committee's efforts, are easy to find on the SAYMA website at [sayma.org](http://sayma.org). URJ's financial records are

included in the Treasurer and Finance Committee Reports, also on the website.

Therefore, for the sake of the yearly meeting's progress toward its previously stated goals, URJ asks for the resignation of any SAYMA Friend in a leadership capacity who has abused their authority by upholding white supremacy and perpetuating racism against Friends of color. To be precise, **URJ requests that Geeta McGahey and Ron Mc Donald resign as clerks of Finance and Ministry and Nurture**, in favor of SAYMA Friends who are at least trying to address their implicit racial bias, own their racism, and do the necessary work to become anti-racists.

**URJ Finance Requests:** SAYMA-Uplifting Racial Justice (URJ) is a SAYMA approved YM committee with a specific mission: To help SAYMA become a welcoming place for Friends of color. The committee will do this by providing space for Friends of color to bring issues and concerns regarding racism within their monthly meetings and SAYMA, to find support and advocacy. The Committee will also work to raise awareness about White Supremacy aka racism within SAYMA, by compiling and disseminating educational resources.

To that end:

A. URJ Requests \$10,000 of set-aside funds for fiscal year for fiscal 2021.

B. In addition, URJ is requesting a line item in SAYMA's annual budget of \$10,000 each year, or unless URJ requests a different amount.

C. As per recommendations from the FGC Institutional Assessment of Systemic Racism, to create an endowment to provide funding for People of color engaged in social change, anti-racism and/or counter-colonial work, URJ is soliciting donor restricted funds from individual Friends and Monthly Meetings for its **Uplifting Racial Justice Fund**. The Racial Justice Fund will enable URJ to provide support for Friends of Color to participate in SAYMA and FGC sponsored events, including sponsoring their own events and projects in support of people of color who are engaged in anti-racism work and/or most impacted by systemic white supremacy and settler colonialism.

D. White supremacy is maintained by controlling the NARRATIVE, the PROCESSES and all RESOURCES. Therefore, SAYMA can only become an anti-racist faith community by giving Friends of color the freedom to control their own resources. This was the original reason for items 10 and 11 of SAYMA-URJ's Goals. URJ has not given up on these goals and will continue to promote them. URJ goals 10 and 11 read as follows:

10. URJ needs financial autonomy, its own bank accounts, to prevent well-meaning unconsciously racist white Friends on the Finance Committee from delaying or withhold URJ's funds over differences of opinion as to how URJ's funds can or should be used. URJ will have unlimited access to its own set-aside and donor restricted funds which only URJ will decide how to spend

11. URJ will create a Racial Justice Fund with enough cash to dispense "grass roots reparations,"\* as needed. Such as: occasional rent/mortgage money, auto repair and maintenance, travel expenses, and any other purpose Friends of color request financial assistance for. Also to cover the cost of Friends of color retreats and skilled facilitation for Friends of color. In short, any legal use for which money can be used to address issues of economic injustice which disproportionately impact People of color.

E. During the time of the Covid pandemic, we know that BIPOC are disproportionately impacted both economically and medically. Therefore, URJ also requests that Friends donate the money they might have spent to attend the Yearly Meeting, Pendle Hill retreats and/or FGC Gathering to the Uplifting Racial Justice Fund. URJ has requested this before, with little success, therefore URJ asks that the clerks and representatives assist URJ with fundraising by encouraging SAYMA Friends to donate their unused travel funds to the Uplifting Racial Justice Fund.

To which the Finance Committee responded in a previous report:

"Assuming no other budget amendments, allocating \$10,000 for the URJ set-aside in the current fiscal year would increase the deficit... assuming that our income to date is representative of the rest of the year and reduce the **undesignated equity (?)**... For FY21 and beyond, adding \$10,000 to the budget each year would require either reductions in other expense categories or an increase in assessments from monthly meetings, assuming that assessment income would actually change. Getting approval takes time, it generally takes at least a year to show up in actual payments, and several meetings use a different means of determining their

assessments. Another option is again doing fund-raising to individuals to get more income.”

Approved by SAYMA-URJ and submitted on September 18<sup>th</sup> by Sharon “Star” Smith, clerk of URJ