

ECAM Racial Justice Group

'Sessions' on offer 2023

'Sessions'

- 'Sessions' lend themselves to any format F/friends would find most useful for their local meeting. For example, they can take the form of a Meeting for Learning, a Meeting for Listening, or some other format. Just let us know what works best for you and we can adapt accordingly.
- Sessions typically last 60 or 75 minutes. F/friends can choose how long best suits their needs.
- Sessions usually involve active participation and discussion
- All sessions are facilitated by Véronique Pin-Fat with the support of two elders, Till Geiger and Annique Seddon. We are all from Disley Meeting.

A 'safe space' for reflection, sharing and discomfort

A safe space is “a place or environment in which a person or category of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment, or any other emotional or physical harm” (Oxford Dictionary).

Exploring racial justice is unavoidably uncomfortable and challenging. It involves encountering our own conscious and unconscious biases, questioning the racial injustices of the status quo, being open to challenge and the possibility of our complicity in racial inequality. Engaging with racial justice requires honesty and a willingness to share our experiences and thoughts. This will very often make us feel uncomfortable and vulnerable. However, such sharing, openness and truth is a rich path to unlearning racism.

To foster a safe space, we will put into practice our testimonies.

- Equality: "There is that of God in everyone". We will be kind, loving, respectful and generous to each other even if we might disagree. We are on a journey towards racial justice together as The Religious Society of Friends.
- Truth: Confidentiality – We all need to feel we can unlearn racism safely by expressing ourselves *honestly*. Therefore, we will not share who has said what outside the session even if the broad contours of discussion and learning are. It is important that we all feel able to say things that maybe later we wish we hadn't (!). Genuine honesty is the best foundation for racial justice.
- Peace: The session is a space of non-violent communication where we will avoid criticism, discrimination, harassment and harm of each other. Challenging our beliefs and that of others is necessary. This is not the same as criticising a person, which is to be avoided.

Content description

The ECAM Racial Justice Group currently offer a choice from three sessions. We have plans to develop more in the future. The sessions are not different stages in the racial equality journey. They are ***standalone sessions*** and can be chosen in any order according to each local meeting's interests and preference.

Unlearning racism session

This session is an exploration of how racist assumptions pervade social, cultural and political norms. It seeks to attune us to our own assumptions hence, an 'unlearning of racism'.

I. Silence and introduction

Brief outline of the session as a 'safe space'.

II. Unlearning racism

Introduces the concept of unlearning and its role in racial justice.

III. Discomfort and curiosity

Introduces discomfort as a vibrant and healthy aspect of curiosity and growth towards equality.

IV. Encountering unlearning: Black Lives Matter and All Lives Matter.

In small groups, we are invited to explore the difference and desirability of commitments to Black lives matter and all lives matter. What is the difference between them? Why might such a difference matter? What is the history of all lives matter (eg UN Declaration of Human Rights)? Why might one want to challenge the idea of the universality of human rights, if at all?

V. Discussion circle

We come together in a circle to share our reflections, puzzlements, difficulties and insights.

VI. Silence and close

White allyship session

This session explores what White allies can do to support racial justice. We explore 'where we are' and explore how to use it to promote equality.

I. Silence and introduction

Brief outline of the session as a 'safe space'

II. Personal spaces as spaces of potential White allyship

A short activity where we think about the spaces and networks we individually occupy. Such spaces are, potentially, where each person can be anti-racist and a White ally.

III. *You as a White ally*

A longer activity where we reflect upon what our racial justice priorities might be in those spaces. Here the aim is to think through one's own answer to 'But, what can I do about racism?'. It is a practical exercise designed to help us all see that we can do something.

IV. *What is White allyship?*

We come together in a circle to share our insights into how to be a White ally, the difficulties it may present and suggestions on how to overcome them.

V. *Silence and close*

Quakers, Britain's imperial past and reparations session

This workshop explores why Quakers are currently exploring our involvement in the transatlantic slave trade and its legacy. This exploration aims to provide the basis for an informed discussion of the issue of reparations before Britain Yearly Meeting.

I. *Openings*

II. *Commitment to become an anti-racist church and a sustainable church.*

- Locate in the testimonies particularly peace and justice
- Locate in campaign to abolish the slave trade and eventually slavery

III. *Reflection Prompt*

- Should we assume individual/corporate responsibility for transatlantic slave trade and our extraction of resources/human capital/wealth?
- Was George Fox a Racist?
- Was Woodbrooke built with money derived from the exploitation of worker on cocoa plantations?

IV. *Historical exploration*

- Connection between capitalism and imperialism/Atlantic slave trade
- Quakers as part of the Atlantic slave trade (eg small arms manufacture, slave trade and plantations)
- Quakers as colonists - treatment of First Nations in the USA
- Wealth accumulation and industrial revolution in Britain

V. *Implications for Quakers today*

- Continued exploitation of the global south
- Structural racism
- Our complicity and inability to escape capitalism

VI. *Worship sharing: How might we think about reparation now?*