

## Anti-Racism Committee (ARC)

Since ARC is a relatively new Grail Committee, we begin with a brief history.

### Anti-Racism Committee Brief history, 2017 - 2021

- Lillian Wall, at opening GA 2017 plenary, says “some voices are heard more than others.” Ceci Figueroa, in an Oratory photo exhibit of US Grail elders, references the work Grail still needs to do around racism.
- A small group decides to convene an optional evening conversation on how race comes up in the Grail. About 50% of GA participants show up for a lengthy, rich, honest time of truth-telling, beginning with Ceci’s experiences.
- Grail GA process invites people to get into “affinity groups” identifying work they are interested in pursuing together. An anti-racism affinity group develops a workplan and brings a resolution to the full GA, which is adopted. ***The US Grail commits its collective power to becoming Anti-Racist internally and externally, viewing ALL our activities through an Anti-Racist lens.***
- The following women were part of the initial anti-racism affinity group: Co-chairs Renee Wormack-Keels and Carol Barton, Pam Cobey, Ceci Figueroa, Carol Skyrn, Marian Schwab, Nancy Richardson, Lenie Schaarman, Mary Gindhart, Lillian Wall. Renee served as liaison to the Council. Nancy agreed to serve as group scribe. Sadly, three original members have passed away, Lenie, Lillian and Mary.
- The group began by looking at [Robin Sclafani’s](#) 1998 master’s thesis on Grail anti-racism work, with an open Grail member discussion group, and several reading groups.
- The group asked council to become a committee, not an affinity group. This was formalized in 2019 when the Council affirmed a [job description](#) for the ARC as a committee of the Grail. The job description commits to co-chairs in leadership, a woman of color and a white woman.
- In 2019, Marian Ronan and Nancy Richardson led a study group on environmental racism exploring the linkages of climate justice and racial justice.
- After the Council approved funds for a member-wide anti-racism retreat in Stony Point, NY, the November 2019 event was led by Donna Bivens and Melanie Morrison, with 53 members participating. See full report [here](#). Members outlined potential next steps for action at all levels. Most immediately they identified the importance of a women of color caucus, of identifying women of color to serve on the Council, and changing the Vision and Mission statement to address our commitment to anti-racism.
- In 2020, Renee Wormack-Keels stepped down from the ARC. This left a vacancy in terms of co-chair. Pam Cobey, Ceci Figueroa and Marian Schwab had also stepped down.
- The ARC expanded to bring on several new members in 2019 and 2020. They included Judith De Four-Howard (Council Liaison), Fran Frazier, Mpanda Kalala and elmira Nazombe.
- In 2020 the ARC led the Grail in becoming a member of the Poor People’s Campaign.
- In 2020-2021, the ARC drafted language on anti-racism for the Grail Core Social Policies and made statements on hatred and violence towards Asian American and Pacific Islanders and on Black Lives Matter and policing.
- In 2020, ARC served as an informal nominating committee to reach out to women of color, encouraging them to run for Council. Four women of color ran for council, three were elected, and one subsequently resigned.
- ARC created a web-page [here](#).

- In March 2021, working with Council, the ARC hosted a Grail leadership retreat (virtual) with 20 Grail leaders, including Council, ARC, young women's group and others. This event nurtured the autonomous formation of a Women of Color Group (WOC) and a white women Doing Our Own Work (DOOW) group.
- In July 2021, these two groups met together to begin to get to know each other and create space for ongoing conversation.
- In August, 2021, Mpanda Kalala became the co-chair of the Anti-Racism Committee.

### **Anti-Racism in Grail Policy and Practice**

We will continue to work on equity within Grail leadership and policies as well as our organizational response to racial justice issues faced by Grail members in their local situation.

#### **Anti-racism in the Grail looks like:**

- Recognition that this GA is just the beginning of this conversation, not the end.
- Recognition that the work of anti-racism is not just the responsibility of the Anti-Racism Committee or of women of color, but of every member--shared ownership in learning and acting together. Every member exploring how race comes up in every context, not an add on.
- Anti-racist work as part of *all* of the work of the Grail, not an "issue group." This means in Membership, Finance, Catalyst Fund, governance, spirituality, arts and culture, programs ...
- Parity of women of color in leadership is institutionalized in our by-laws.
- Women of color will want to join and remain in the Grail.
- More white women Grail members engage in Doing Our Own Work around anti-racism.
- We create frequent spaces for relationship-building and listening.
- Grail is aware of and agile in collectively responding to a crisis, from the impact of Hurricane Ida on indigenous people to police killing of Black people and Anti-Asian hate crimes.

#### **ARC recommendations for future work:**

- Change Grail by-laws to institutionalize racial equity in Council and committee leadership, financial decisions.
- Revise the Vision and Mission statement to address our commitment to anti-racism.
- Consider joint work with Climate Action Group, others, on addressing specific realities of environmental racism, such as situation in Louisiana post hurricane Ida.
- Engage with partners such as the Poor People's Campaign, which links spirituality, climate justice, economic justice and racial justice.
- Potential ARC-hosted Racial Justice virtual event in March during Women's History Month as a next step in continuing the conversation together.

We are happy to welcome new members to the Anti-Racism Committee while, at the same time, maintaining a racially balanced group and a workable number. Please contact Mpanda or Carol if you are interested.