

On 7/25/2013, approximately 60 people met to respond to the Transgender Youth Policy which was finalized by the Education Standing Committee (ESC) about a month earlier. The policy was published by the Yearly Meeting a week earlier and was suspended by the PYM Clerk 7/24/2013. The group included one member of the ESC who was active in creating the policy, and one who was not active in creating the policy.

Many feelings were strongly expressed including: shock, hurt, anger, confusion, pain, rejection, and feeling degraded and devalued.

Many Friends were confused by the policy. Much of the policy used strong trans-inclusive language. And yet the requirement to segregate bathrooms and sleeping rooms by “biological sex” was understood by those gathered to be unwelcoming to trans Friends and harmful to them and others.

We heard many concerns about the process that generated this policy. Prior to finalizing the policy, the Education Standing Committee heard from staff, Young Friends, and about 15 parents and other adults interested in youth programs. The resulting policy did not reflect the wisdom or desires of these groups.

We kept asking, “Why?” Why was a policy created for a group of Friends who did not unite with it? Why did Education Standing Committee think it necessary to change the long-standing practice of designating bathrooms and sleeping arrangements by gender identity? One member of the ESC suggested that the Committee experienced both a generational barrier and inexperience with transgender issues, and that the Committee failed to overcome these challenges.

We learned that PYM youth staff communicated to the General Secretary their conscientious objection to the new policy. The General Secretary forwarded these concerns, as well as others identified by youth staff and the Associate Secretary for Program & Religious Life, to the ESC almost three weeks before it was made public. The Committee did not respond to these objections before the policy was published. Why was the Committee unable to engage with these concerns before the policy was made public?

### **What is needed now?**

Friends called for apology, reconciliation, and healing. One ECS committee member apologized personally. There will be more work for the committee to do in this area.

We need to examine and understand the roots of this problem. What were the structures and institutional habits that allowed this to happen? How could we change our institutional practices to avoid similar problems in the future?

We need to involve Young Friends in any policy changes that impact them. This means that the Young Friends Liaison with the ESC should be a Young Friend. Also, ESC will be stronger if it includes young adult Friends who were in the Young Friends program

previously and other adults with connections to the Young Friends program. [This type of “fix” is applicable to all committees: let’s follow the principle of “no decisions about us without us.”]

Young Friends policies should be developed collaboratively with Young Friends and ESC, and approved by both bodies.

Many Friends suggested that the next version of the policy be drafted by a group of Young Friends who would then send their draft to the ESC. Ideally, the two groups would communicate with each other until unity is found.

Written by a self-selected group present at the conversation:

Samara Rockwood, co-clerk, Young Friends

Sebastian DiMino, participant, Young Friends

Peter Lane, member, Education Standing Committee

Carrie Sandler, mother of Young Friends participant

Grayfred Gray

Traci Hjelt Sullivan

Walter Hjelt Sullivan

Tesla DuBois

Juliette Lane