

Minute for Black Lives

Sierra Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends

Approved June 13, 2020

Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends approves this Minute for Black Lives, noting that some of us are challenged by the language it uses. Still, we lean into it, knowing that we have empowered the Equity and Inclusion Committee to be a prophetic voice. Acting as Christ's Body to engage in the work of justice will often be uncomfortable for those of us with privilege.

Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends witnesses the current people's uprising for police accountability and for racial justice and we take a stand for Black lives. We urge all Quakers, in our Yearly Meeting and beyond, to do the same in word and action. Neutrality is not an option if we are to fully embrace our underlying Truth as Friends: to recognize God in all people.

George Floyd is only the most recent police murder to be made public. Just the day after Floyd's killing, Black trans man Tony McDade was shot and killed by police in Tallahassee, Florida. We honor the memories of these two men, as well as Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and all those killed by police, other state violence, and organized white violence throughout the centuries back to the slave trade that is a backbone of the founding of this nation. We grieve and we feel prophetic rage.

We, as individuals and as a Yearly Meeting, especially as a body of mostly white people, are implicated in the system of white supremacy. We have the opportunity to step into this moment with our hearts wide and with humility, calling on God's support and guidance, to listen to Black leadership. We must be willing to make mistakes, to commit to the movement for the long haul, and to be part of the transformation of our communities: "on earth as it is in heaven." There is a place for all of us, whether in the streets or behind the scenes, making donations or making phone calls. We join our voices with our Quaker ancestors of all races who have worked for the abolition of slavery and for Black civil rights throughout the generations — and who have also made mistakes.

We as Quakers and as Christians are members of a great spiritual body pulling toward justice, back to Jesus whose brown body was lynched by the lawkeepers of his time and of whose resurrection we proclaim. We must all find our place in this moment, in this movement, and for a lifetime of work for racial justice. This is the way of Jesus: that the first shall be last and that justice shall roll down like waters.

- We acknowledge and apologize for the ways in which we, as Quakers, have historically and are currently benefiting from, centering and perpetuating white privilege and colonialism. We recognize that we have remained silent and passive when our voice and action were needed.
- We, as a Yearly Meeting, commit to being actively anti-racist: working to undo individual and systemic racism.
- We call for the immediate end to police violence. We demand the dismantling of current policing and criminal justice systems that enable and perpetuate racism (American Friends Service Committee resource: 6 reasons why it's time to defund the police).
- We commit to following leaders from currently and historically marginalized communities who have called on us to learn and join in solidarity in the demand for equity and justice in ways that are in line with the example of Jesus.
- We recognize that our peace testimony cannot mean passivity, that we will stand up in advocacy and not remain silent on issues of injustice.
- We recognize the unequal burden Black, Indigenous, and people of color have suffered historically and presently in this racist society. We commit to providing reparative funds to begin to compensate for this inequity.
- We commit to promoting, supporting and participating in individual, local, and yearly meeting wide continuing education about Black history, colonialism, white privilege, and police violence.
- We recognize that words without action accomplish little. We commit to taking tangible action. We proclaim with American Friends Service Committee that we won't stop until we dismantle the whole racist system.

Queries

- "How is my heart closed to the public and private suffering of Black, Indigenous and people of color? What is preventing me from living into a life of anti-racism and love for the humanity of Black, Indigenous, and people of color? How will I work on my anti-Blackness?" (Melia LaCour, *A Call to White People: It's Time to Live Into the Answer*, 6/2/2020)
- "Why have I chosen not to see the racism that is happening in front of me every single day? Why have I chosen to remain destructively silent and immobile as I watch Black people lynched in our streets?... 'How did I become so well-adjusted to injustice?'" (Melia LaCour, *A Call to White People: It's Time to Live Into the Answer*, 6/2/2020)
- What would immediate action look like for each individual and for our Yearly Meeting, as we profess our conviction to stand in solidarity and demand justice for Black, Indigenous, and people of color?
- What are we doing to educate ourselves about historic and current manifestations of systemic oppression in our nation and in our local communities?

- How has the Quaker testimony of peace masked passivity? How can we be accountable, show up and support Black, Indigenous, and people of color in ways they have asked us to?
- “You may say John Woolman sayeth this, and nineteenth century Quakers sayeth that, but what canst thou say? — What will we say? What will our actions say? What will our budgets say?” (Mackenzie Morgan, message to West Hills Friends Church, 6/7/2020)

Immediate action list: Resources for Accountability and Actions for Black Lives

For white people to begin or deepen their anti-racism work: Anti-Racism Resources and Scaffolded Anti-Racism Resources