

Minute on Anti-Racism West Knoxville Friends Meeting, SAYMA

Our minute is short enough to meet our local newspaper guidelines for editorial comments. This made it into the paper and we also sent it to our state and federal legislators.

As members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), we abhor the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and countless others made possible through systems that perpetuate racial injustices. This includes police practices and training that do not adequately address racial biases.

We call on our elected officials to require realignment of training priorities for those in positions of authority, especially police officers. Authority figures must focus on skills that de-escalate conflict and eradicate implicit bias, instead of assuming the worst and turning to force when feeling threatened. We call for consideration of life over property and for erring on the side of self-sacrifice over taking another's life.

Holding authority figures accountable is not enough. We acknowledge our complicity as a predominantly white organization. We have been silent too long and are compelled to take a stand, committing ourselves to actions that eradicate racial injustice.

We call on all faith-based organizations to join us and publicly condemn racist actions in our communities. This means looking for ways to dismantle the racial hierarchy that still lingers in most social systems, even in our churches. We must reach out to each other, share our concerns and really listen to what the people of color in our communities are saying. As people of faith, let us be an example and end the silence.

To have our voices heard, we support our constitutional right to peaceful protest; we value the authority figures who have supported these efforts. As Quakers, we believe that violence is never the answer and that every life and every voice is as precious as the next. The silencing of even one voice diminishes our community and makes us less whole.

West Knoxville Friends Meeting