

Charlotte Friends Meeting, Charlotte, North Carolina
Minute on The Treatment of Immigrants

Charlotte Friends Meeting denounces all inhumane treatment of immigrants; those seeking asylum; and the families of these individuals in the United States of America:

Our belief in peace, mercy, and equality motivates us to speak out against the current humanitarian crisis that immigrants and their families are enduring in our country. As of March 2019, the daily average population in Immigration and Customs Centers is around 45,000 people.¹ Detention center conditions, duration of confinement, maltreatment during detention, and separation of children from their families cause unnecessary traumas that last a lifetime. We also believe that too many applications for asylum status are being denied each year. Federal immigration courts in Charlotte, NC denied 88% of applications for asylum status from 2013-2018.² That ranks Charlotte 12th of the 54 cities with federal courts.² These practices are instilling fear in immigrant families. Immigrants are denied basic resources necessary for thriving and flourishing in our society. Finally, prejudice and racism are fueling a shift in our country to a more nationalist, “America First” sentiment. The collective effect of these abuses endorses the dehumanization of the immigrant population within our country.

Because Quakers believe there is “that of God in everyone,” we expect immigrants, asylum seekers, and their families to be afforded the same basic human rights as citizens. We recognize the need for comprehensive immigration reform that creates a more equitable system.

Charlotte is a diverse city where 16% of residents were born outside the US (census 2017), and 1 in 4 Charlotte Mecklenburg School students speak a language other than English at home (CMS).³ We aspire to be a part of a welcoming region and recognize that immigrants have a positive impact on our community. Our immigrant neighbors are our teachers, nurses, business owners, and friends. They continue to enhance this regions infrastructure through, academics, job creation, and arts contributions.

We stand in solidarity with immigrants and their families and speak out for justice and mercy. We will seek opportunities to raise awareness about the persecution the immigrant population faces. We will continue to find ways to translate our leadings into action.

Charlotte Friends Meeting commits to the following:

1. We recognize that “we live on stolen land and reside in a society built from stolen labor. Our country was founded on the legacy of dispossession and settler colonialism, rooted in a belief that some are deserving of rights, but only some.” We commit to seeking out our individual biases and discovering how they negatively impact the treatment of immigrants, asylum seekers, and their families.
2. We continue to search for wisdom and peace in the Light through collective and individual silence. We commit to seek spiritual leadings that guide our efforts to reduce injustices facing immigrants, asylum seekers, and their families.

3. We will continue to educate ourselves on conditions affecting immigrants, asylum seekers, and their families; we will bear witness and will resist the temptation to look away.
4. We commit to raising awareness and speaking out for justice when this group is targeted, harassed, and treated inhumanely. We will ask ourselves: How do our words, actions, and outreach support equality for all?
5. We commit to individually and collectively seek out ways to translate our leadings to action through activism at the local, community, state, and national levels. We will reach out to helping organizations; □ we will seek their counsel and learn what they need; we will donate; and we will support legislation pressing for positive change.

We carry these commitments forward while remaining steadfast in our testimonies, humble in our desire to continue learning as guided by the Light, and eager to see change come to our community and our country.

1. <https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2019/jul/08/facts-behind-detention-immigrants/>
2. Charlotte Observer Newspaper <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article232315027.html>
3. U.S. Census Bureau 2017. Quick Facts, Charlotte City, North Carolina. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/charlottecitynorthcarolina/AFN120212>
4. Charlotte Observer Newspaper. *From Spanish to Telugu, almost 41,000 CMS students speak other languages at home.* Ann Doss Helms <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/education/article121774668.html>
5. Lucy Duncan, Why I got arrested at the border, Friends Journal Feb 2019
6. National: American Friends Service Committee; Amnesty International; American Civil Liberties Union; Local: Comunidad Colectiva, the Latin American Coalition, OurBRIDGE for Kids, and the Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy.

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