

Minute on the Death of Trayvon Martin

As people of faith, we of Northampton Friends Meeting (Quakers) have felt profound sorrow at the killing of young Trayvon Martin in Florida, the “stand your ground” law that made this killing possible, the subsequent discussions of the incident in the media, the trial of George Zimmerman for Trayvon’s killing, and the verdict of that trial. We recognize that our sorrow is not only for the events in Florida, not only about one young man’s demise, but about the widespread conditions of distrust, violence, and fear that led to this death. We know that this young man could very easily have been one of the beloved young people in our community.

If we think of racism or prejudice only as a political issue, or as a cultural problem, or as a flaw in the legal system, we miss the depth of the endemic hold racism has on us as individuals and as a society. Those of us who are considered white enjoy a wide range of privileges that perpetuate racism. Those of us who are considered people of color are denied a wide range of privileges, preventing us all from benefiting from the greater joys of a truly trusting, trustworthy, and free society. We will work to look with humility and respect for the Light of God in all people. We recognize that this is difficult and ongoing work, and that we in this community still have much to learn about how to live together in our differences with openness and compassion. Until we overcome complacency and privilege and learn to cherish our differences, the lives and happiness of all will not be secure. We commit to live in a truly equitable society.

We affirm to all young people, especially those who are targets of prejudice, that they are valuable, that they are the future of our nation, that we love them, and that therefore we will confront our complicity in systems that kill them, jail them, and leave them undereducated and unemployed. We will seek to assure them—with words and deeds they

can believe—that we are invested in the safety of each one no matter the color of their skin, how they dress, how they walk, or how they speak. We seek to transform ourselves from despairing bystanders to agents of change. We are learning to listen tenderly to one other. We aspire to be active and present allies ready to assist those who have little power in confronting those who have more power.

Like Trayvon Martin—and George Zimmerman—each of us is a child of the Divine and carries that same Light within that we as Quakers endeavor to follow. We are called to witness to that Light, and to work toward ending racism in ourselves and our nation.

Approved August, 2013