

Lake Forest Friends Meeting Minute in the wake of George Floyd's Murder and the Black Lives Matter Protests

In the wake of the horrific murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery our nation has been left shocked, breathless, and grieving. Added to the anxiety and bereavement occasioned by COVID-19, the frustrations borne for centuries by Black people have spilled into the streets in over 150 of our nation's cities.

Langston Hughes once asked what happens to a dream deferred. Millennials of all races have replied in mostly non-violent street protests despite the risk of death from a pandemic running wild through the country. By organizing demonstrations in such diverse communities as Lake Forest and Chicago, their message is simple: "No more! We will not let this happen again on our watch."

For many of us, it is not safe to be on the street protesting. It is literally a matter of life and death to leave our homes. Silence is not an option at this unique, historical moment, but what to do?

Lake Forest Friends Meeting over the past five years has taken halting but steadily forward-moving steps to make each other aware of how people of color move through and exist in the world. To become aware is to know there is suffering, and to know this, we are called as Quakers to ease that suffering. That knowledge is heavy. Knowing what is the right thing to do can be unclear. It is all too easy to exercise White privilege and do nothing or do something that alleviates white guilt rather than responds to the needs of my Black brothers and sisters.

In this moment we as Quakers are called to action. However, the question remains: what kind of action should we take to address racism and white privilege? After prayerful consideration and worship sharing, the Peace and Social Justice Committee assisted by our Clerk have proposed some

answers to these questions. They are only the first step. They may make us uncomfortable. The committee hopes that this minute will open the door to further actions and conversations.

Here are six of the suggestions of what we can do:

1. Recognize and support the LFFM's anti-racism work, initiated in our Meeting by the Working Group on the Impact of Systemic Racism on our Spirituality, which is grounded in Spirit and affords us the opportunity to study and grow in understanding of systemic racism.
2. On an individual level, Friends are encouraged to exercise a ministry comprised of many "little things" within and outside the Meeting like establishing relationships with people of color which provide opportunities for deep listening and mutual expressions of compassion - smiling, acknowledging and making eye contact, offering verbal support, and learning ways to be an active bystander and ally.
3. Join an activist organization that is committed to reforming the criminal justice system: e.g., repealing the felony murder laws, eliminating disparate jail sentencing, ending our bail bond system, instituting citizen review boards for police misconduct.
4. Try to empathize with what it must mean when a *Black* person says, "It took a constitutional amendment to make me a full person."
5. Remind ourselves of the radical acts of Jesus and ask ourselves what does this require of us in terms of how we interact with and relate to people of color.
6. *Infuse our First Day School with a curriculum that identifies and rejects racism in all of its insidious manifestations.* Encourage our middle school, high school and college students to participate in anti-racist initiatives wherever they live or attend school.

NOTE: The above Minute was approved on June 7, 2020 by the Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business of Lake Forest Friends Meeting. This Minute was inspired by the Black Lives Matters Movement. It is not intended in any way to diminish our support for the resolution of issues that impact other people of color including Hispanics, Asians, and Indigenous People.