

Minute on Antiracism  
Akron Friends Meeting  
Adopted February 14, 2021

As Americans, we have grown up, lived in, and benefitted from a society that, despite the lofty words of our nation's founding documents, has treated people of color as less worthy than others. From the earliest settling of our country, persons of African origins who came to this continent were brought here in chains and were enslaved by those of European origins, who used slaves' labor to build the new country. While we have made progress toward our nation's founding values of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all persons, we have never fully lived up to those values.

We recognize our country's shameful denial of civil and human rights to people of color. People of color who simply sought to vote have had their votes suppressed, and some have lost their lives. Today it is possible to witness racist acts as they take place. The deaths of George Floyd and so many others at the hands of law enforcement officers have mobilized our country and have shaken us out of whatever complacency we had. We have witnessed the killing of black people by police, neighborhood "watchmen", and self-appointed vigilantes. We have heard elected officials state that some White supremacists are "good people". We can no longer doubt the double standard in our society, which allows courts, the police, landlords and employers to view and treat people of color as less than others.

By marriage and adoption, families of Meeting members include children and grandchildren of color. We have learned from them about both the risks and hurt they face in the world and the value and joy they bring to our lives. Our work and our experiences as community members have offered us opportunities to discover the effects of racism in the world as well as ways of counteracting it by our own actions. These experiences have led us to affirm the importance of intentional thinking and action.

Quaker testimonies of equality, nonviolence, integrity and community call on us to meet this moment with more than words and good intentions. Believing that there is God in all of us calls us to stand alongside people of color and to act from a commitment to anti-racism.

Therefore, we pledge to educate ourselves about racism and anti-racism. We pledge to listen openly, with empathy, to people's stories without interrupting or interpreting. Friends of color have a story that we, as White people, can never experience, because these situations would never happen to those of us with lighter skin.

We pledge to promote racial justice in our interactions, to reflect on ways we may unknowingly hurt others with words or actions, and to treat others in ways that are warm, open, respectful and friendly.

We pledge to remember those who have gone before and the lessons of their lives. We pledge to learn from the personal examples of advocates for racial justice who did not avoid "good trouble".

We pledge to be visible and outspoken about racial justice in our communities and in our work with organizations. We pledge to support organizations committed to anti-racism with our money, time and talents and to encourage others to do so as well. We pledge to stand in solidarity with immigrants, who often experience racism, and organizations supporting them.

We pledge to vote, being mindful of candidates' records and positions on anti-racist policies. We pledge to stay informed about issues of racial justice and to communicate with elected officials about our positions on those issues. We pledge to encourage local governments and police departments to reduce violence, that disproportionately affects people of color, and to treat all citizens with equal dignity and respect.