

St. Petersburg Monthly Meeting
August 9, 2020

Statement of Support for the Black Lives Matter Movement

We support the Black Lives Matter movement. We grieve over the loss of Black lives and over the trauma and tragedy the Black community has endured at the hands of our police and our criminal justice system. We support the demands for eliminating racial bias and the excessive use of force in policing, which have so disproportionately targeted Black people.

We unite with those calling for a radical re-imagining of how policing is defined, funded, and implemented in the larger context of community safety and services. Where this approach has been adopted, the results have been lower crime, safer communities, more trust between police and the public, and a less burdened and less traumatized police force.

We unite with those who protest peacefully; who engage in non-violent action and civil disobedience to challenge systemic racism and the killing and harassment of Black men and women on the streets of our cities. While we understand the anger that leads some to react to oppression with violence, as Quakers we lift up non-violence as the way to bring about real and lasting change. The transformation we seek begins both in ourselves and in how we engage in the struggle for justice.

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

---Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Those of us who enjoy the benefits of a good education, health care, jobs, and safety in our homes and streets must wake up to the ways that Black people are deprived of these basic rights, and speak up. We must wake up to how Black people are denied opportunities to create the basic wealth needed to sustain their health and their families. We must wake up to how Black people are disproportionately incarcerated and disenfranchised. And when we are awakened, WE MUST SPEAK OUT! These injustices and inequities cannot be allowed to continue.

As Quakers, we unite with Martin Luther King Jr.’s vision of the Beloved Community. It is our experience that as Spirit speaks in our hearts, we are called to create communities of equity, reconciliation, inclusion and justice --- where every person is recognized as a beloved child of God.

“The Beloved Community is a realistic vision of an achievable society, one in which problems and conflict exist, but are resolved peacefully and without bitterness. In the Beloved Community, caring and compassion drive political policies that support the worldwide elimination of poverty and hunger and all forms of bigotry and violence. The Beloved Community is a state of the heart and mind, a spirit of hope and goodwill that transcends all boundaries and barriers and embraces all creation.”

---Coretta Scott King

St. Petersburg Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends