

(minute)

Racial Justice

A testimony of Quakers is that all people are beloved and equal in the eyes of God.

We live in a society that is struggling to deal with consequences of slavery, and the failure to achieve equity for all after slavery was abolished. Conditions such as discriminatory lending practices, multigenerational inequities around home ownership, and easier access to education for white people persist in our laws and culture, resulting in institutional racism.

Some Friends once owned slaves. William Penn believed that "slavery was perfectly acceptable, provided that slave owners attended to the spiritual and material needs of those they enslaved."¹ Penn "had a curious blind spot about slavery. Quakers were far ahead of most other Americans, but it's surprising that people with their humanitarian views could have contemplated owning slaves at all."²

Picking up the work of colonial Quaker Anthony Benezet, who wrote an early tract opposing slavery, John Woolman traveled up and down the Atlantic coast laboring with Quaker slaveholders and testifying against the institution of slavery. It was through his years of patient dialogue that Quakers first freed their slaves then testified against slavery and over time became the backbone of the anti-slavery movement in America.

A gap in awareness exists today, which allows so many people who consider themselves white to continue practices that give them advantages over people of color.

The scope of these problems is extensive and deep. Racial tensions continue to result in violence and death. There is an increasingly militarized police response. The Black Lives Matter movement is helping raise awareness around these issues.

Many white people are still not as aware of some of these issues. But to continue to benefit from these privileges is not right.

Not having relationships with people of color often results in misunderstanding and unfortunate racial attitudes among white people. One significant consequence of that is the election of so many representatives who reflect these views to legislative bodies.

Building relationships with people of color is one way we can begin to address this, as we build Beloved Communities together.

We urge each person to take a careful look at their life, to identify where one is benefiting from this, and work to correct that. We urge Friends to speak out and take action against these systemic injustices and violence occurring today. We appreciate how much we learn from communities of color.

1

Wood, Betty *Slavery in colonial America, 1619-1776* AltaMira Press (2005) p14

2

Jim Powell, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute

<http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/article/2008/11/20081112170035abretnuh3.838748e-02.html#axzz4FQtSH844>