



NEW ENGLAND
YEARLY MEETING
OF FRIENDS
QUAKERS

For Such a Time as This

White supremacy, white nationalism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are contrary to God's vision for our world. White supremacy is a form of idolatry, and a sin against the God of Love and Justice. In this moment — as in every moment — the Spirit calls us to another way.

We are four white Quakers serving in positions of leadership in our faith community. Our spiritual communities across the six New England states include people of many races, ethnicities, sexual and gender identities, national origins and backgrounds. We who write to you are called to speak to those in our faith community and beyond who share with us the privilege that being perceived as “white” in this society affords. This is a message from us as white Quakers to white Quakers, white people of faith, and white people who live in the United States of America in 2017.

In this historical moment, as in so many before, the voices, bodies and spirits of people of color are rising in witness, struggle and liberation whether we as white people join them or not. The essential question is whether — at such a time as this — we who benefit because of our “whiteness” will accept in a new way the Spirit's call to act for justice and wholeness, asking for God's guidance with every step.

Our Quaker spiritual ancestors testify to the experience of how we can be painfully “convicted” when we see the true nature of our lives illuminated in the Light of God. This is one such moment of conviction for us, and we are compelled to share it.

At such a time as this, alongside many throughout our world, we condemn the acts of hateful, racist, anti-Semitic violence and terrorism in Charlottesville and elsewhere in recent days as contrary to the will of God, the witness of Jesus, and all that is holy. God is Love, and we witness that this Love is stronger than hate, fear and death. We speak this truth to that of God in each one of the white nationalists and pray that their hearts will be changed, trusting that even now there can be transformation.

Yet even as we are appalled by the horrific events in Charlottesville, we must not allow ourselves to forget the centuries-old foundation and present economic and political reality of white supremacy. Even as the torches tore through the night in Charlottesville, and as our prayers and voices joined the call for healing and justice, we bore the marks of privilege. We bear them today. Each of us who this society sees as white stands on a corrupt foundation. Our worldly power, material wealth and inherited perception of ourselves as being normative and central to history are rooted in this painful truth. This is not just about white supremacists “over there”—it is about the ways in which we too have been formed and benefited from the myriad ways whiteness oppresses whether we like it or not, whether we are aware of it or not.

None of us who benefit from a “white” identity have clean hands or pure hearts. The recent events in Charlottesville and elsewhere offer a monstrous mirror for us.

May we find the courage not to turn our eyes away from this mirror, comforted that we aren't like “those” white people. There are no easy answers or quick fixes, but we are promised that by allowing

our lives to be illuminated, convicted, and held up by Truth, a way can be made where it seems there is no way. In this searching and struggle, the souls we save may well be our own.

This is indeed a time for grieving, a time for prayer, and a time for turning again toward Love. This is a time for *showing up* with humility, courage and steadfastness—seeking relationship with those engaged in this work for the long haul. This is a time for being willing to make use of the privilege we have inherited in small and large ways, to risk some greater pain, discomfort and loss with an eye toward transforming the systems of domination that cause the ongoing suffering of so many. This is a time to affirm and live the Truth that God’s Love is stronger and more powerful than all the forces of hatred, division, isolation, numbness and fear that hold this country hostage. This is a time to act precisely because we don’t *have* to—because comfort is the payment we receive in exchange for our spiritual lives in the devil’s bargain that is white supremacy.

Tearing down these structures and systems of domination — the spiritual powers of white supremacy in our hearts, in our faith communities and in our society — is not something white people must do out of a sense of altruism, *for* those who suffer most. In this historical moment, once again God offers us the possibility that even in the face of centuries of injustice, there could yet be redemption for white people. Casting out the seeds of white supremacy so deeply rooted in our society and in our hearts is work we must take up each day.

The in-breaking of the reign of God reveals a vision of equity, justice, and joy: white supremacy has no place in God’s plans.

The work of dismantling white supremacy is our responsibility. It’s time to live as if the Truth is true.

Frederick Weiss, Presiding Clerk

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