

Minute on Confronting Racial Bias, in Solidarity with Charleston

Approved by Boulder Friends Meeting on July 12, 2015

We, the Boulder Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), are shocked and saddened by the intentional and premeditated murder of nine worshippers at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina on June 17, 2015.

We grieve with the families, the friends, and the wider community, and hold in the Light – as is our tradition – all of those close to Rev. Clementa Pinckney, Tywanza Sanders, Cynthia Hurd, Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Myra Thompson, Ethel Lance, Rev. Daniel Simmons, DePayne Middleton Doctor and Susie Jackson. We acknowledge that “this purposeful act of mass violence cuts to the very core of our hopes for racial justice and a peaceful world.” (American Friends Service Committee). Our grief extends well beyond Charleston as we are reminded that the scourge of white racism – despite many years of struggle and resistance – continues to be widespread throughout our country.

“While this despicable act was apparently perpetrated by a single individual consumed by racial hatred and a desire to ignite a race war, the soil in which this massacre took root is the legacy of slavery, white supremacy, Jim Crow laws, lynchings, and the resulting racial inequalities and injustices that persist in our individual and collective consciousness and institutions. The daily experience of violence against people of color has become more recently visible through highlighted media coverage of the ongoing brutal treatment and killings of unarmed African-Americans by law enforcement agents across the country”. (<http://buddhistsforracialjustice.org/an-open-letter/>)

In addition to expressing our solidarity with all of these victims’ families, we emphasize that such expressions are not sufficient to end the institutionalized racism that makes our African-American brothers and sisters disproportionately poor, unemployed, imprisoned, and subject to police violence, and to the death penalty. We concur with AFSC’s statement: “Arresting the perpetrator of this mass murder arrests a person, but not the problem. We will make no progress as a society if we believe that justice is done simply by punishing one individual white supremacist.

“Racism is not just a historic problem or the work of a few individual ‘bad apples.’ Racism – whether by direct intent or deeply entrenched structural factors – is a problem in all aspects of American life, including economics, housing, health care, criminal justice, policing, education, and media coverage, among others.”

The persistence of racism in all its forms requires us – especially those of us who are white – to confront the racism in our society and in ourselves. We must educate ourselves about the history of racism and about the systemic structures that allow its horrors to persist in our midst, and acknowledge the responsibility that white folks have to look at our own hidden racial biases and the subtle forms of racism that all of us participate in unknowingly. We must use that knowledge to actively resist the manifestations of racism in our public institutions, in our families, and in our places of worship.