

Minute on Racism and White Privilege

Approved at Westport Monthly Meeting for Business 8/23/2020

Confronted with the injustice and brutality of racism, we, as Westport Monthly Meeting of Friends, (Quakers), are called to bear witness, long overdue, to the fact that our society is structured in ways that give privilege to people who are born white and disfavors those who are not. We recognize that many of our members at Westport Meeting are white people who have benefited from privileges inherited from and sustained by institutional racism.

We recognize that the values and institutions of the society we live in are embedded with racism that perpetuates the oppression and exploitation of people of color and in the violence directed towards them.

The pain and heartbreak in the United States today has 400 year old roots in the colonization of indigenous people of the Americas and in the enslavement of human beings stolen from Africa. The policies of oppression continued after the Civil War, which nominally ended slavery but in reality perpetuated the racist system. The whole nation promulgated laws that forcibly excluded Africans, African-Americans and people of color. Both Northern and Southern states deliberately created exclusive zoning via redlining, forcibly displacing, segregating and cordoning off African-American owners. Budgets for education, healthcare, housing, and social services in predominantly black areas were severely and deliberately curtailed. Suppression of the black vote, especially egregious in the Jim Crow South, was also practiced in the North.

In this historical perspective, Westport Monthly Meeting of Friends acknowledges that the land upon which our meeting house rests was taken from indigenous peoples by European settlers, and that early Quakers owned slaves and benefited from the institution of slavery. We have only begun the work of better understanding the significance of our meeting's relationship to Paul Cuffe, an African-American-Wampanoag elder of our meeting at the turn of the 19th century.

We open our hearts to honest reflection on the ways in which those of us who are white benefit from institutional racism and how the silence of white voices perpetuates the structure that inflicts economic, emotional, and physical violence towards people of color.

We seek God's guidance in transforming our complacency into awareness and by seeking new openings for action. We take responsibility for confronting racism. We seek to join with people of color to dismantle the institutions and systems that perpetuate this injustice.

Westport Monthly Meeting of Friends recognizes that the challenge is both collective and individual. We encourage and support the witness and action of individuals. We support the work that arises from the thoughtful discernment of our Peace and Social Justice Committee on these matters.

With divine assistance we seek to be more actively involved with the wider faith community working to make the South Coast region of New England fair and equitable to all.