



June 7, 2020

Friends Meeting of Austin Minute on Responding to the Police Violence Against People of Color

Friends Meeting of Austin (Quakers) stands with those protesting the continuing police violence against people of color here in Austin and around our country and we affirm that Black Lives Matter. We are appalled by the disproportionate use of force by the Austin police and we mourn and call for justice for the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Michael Ramos, and the countless other victims of police violence and institutional racism. We recognize that this persistent violence rests on a dominant belief in white supremacy in the United States since white peoples came to the Americas. As Quakers, people of faith with a deep commitment to equality, justice, and peace, we commit to continuing our anti-racist work grounded in Spirit through study, prayer and action, both locally and nationally.

Quakers marched with the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., but in the many years since, the military-industrial complex and culture of white supremacy have militarized our police, made quality health care virtually inaccessible for black and brown people, defunded public education, destroyed black neighborhoods and businesses, and privatized criminal justice into a multi-million dollar business that has jailed millions of black and brown youth for crimes that, when whites perpetrate them, often go lightly punished or not punished at all.

We ask the mayor and city council of Austin to end the use of lethal and non-lethal weapons by the Austin police against demonstrators and the continuing disproportionate use of violence against people of color in our communities. We call on city leaders to redirect police funding toward new investment in Austin's communities of color, toward mandatory civilian oversight, and toward alternative emergency response programs.

We call on the US Congress to pass meaningful police reform legislation to eliminate the violence of our policing system, demilitarize the police, and establish uniform nation-wide standards on the use of force by police in the performance of their duties.

As Friends we recognize dismantling systemic racism is a long-term commitment and ultimately not the responsibility of people of color. It's the responsibility of white people—the people who built and continue to benefit from the system. This time of COVID19 has served to make apparent the inherent inequalities. We seek a new normal built on the inherent dignity and worth of all human beings reflected in equitable laws, quality education for all, principled foreign policy, universal access to healthcare and living wages.