

Introduction

We of the Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, by which church leaders authorized the original sin of European Christian settlers: the enslavement of Africans and the genocide and land theft of the Indigenous people of Turtle Island. Africans were kidnapped as slaves to do the hard labor necessary to extract economic wealth from what is now known as the United States. European colonists stole Turtle Island from its rightful inhabitants, the many sovereign Indigenous nations still present here. The Doctrine of Discovery justified European Christians in claiming this land and making it their own, through means including waging war, rape, destroying people and their lifeways, stealing children, forcing people to use English as their language, and requiring them to renounce their spiritual ways, coercing them to profess Christianity. This was done violently.

The United States has created a sweet origin story about how we became a nation. This collective narrative has been drummed into us until the ugly reality was suppressed. We of SCYMF are convinced that we must learn and bear witness to the truth of our complicity in the harm of what happened. We will make restitution to Indigenous and African American people. We will renounce white supremacy and learn to live in peaceful ways with our environment. This is not going to be easy. We will look to our Indigenous relatives each step of the way to make amends to them, and we will also make amends to people of African descent, taking their requests as being right and just.

As such, we commit to the ongoing work of healing and orienting toward right relationship between our portion of the Friends denomination and Indigenous people and people of African descent as articulated in the following minutes: a Minute of Right Relationship with Indigenous People (2022) and a Minute for Black Lives (2020). Though these minutes are written separately, we recognize that both the original sin and the work ahead of us are intertwined.

“The 27th grievance [of the Declaration of Independence] reveals that the original sin at America’s founding was twofold. America was built by the labor of enslaved people. It was also built on stolen lands and the genocide of [I]ndigenous peoples. To understand where this country is now and to imagine a truly just future, America needs to reckon with both of these hard truths.”

—Jeffrey Ostler, “[America's Twofold Original Sin: the Shameful Final Grievance of the Declaration of Independence](#),” *The Atlantic* (February 8, 2020)

Minute on Right Relationship with Indigenous People

Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends repudiates the Doctrines of Discovery, the basis for European colonization around the world. We must understand and lament Friends' complicity in the genocide, land theft, and forced assimilation of the peoples indigenous to Turtle Island and worldwide, including Friends' role in operating and legitimizing compulsory residential schools for Indigenous children. We will seek out opportunities to apologize and work toward repair of these atrocities. We affirm the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We commit to courageously and compassionately listening and facing the learning required to comprehend settler colonialism and do what it takes to heal relationships with Indigenous people. We intend that relationships and feedback from Indigenous people will guide us to develop thoughtful, grounded actions to oppose the ongoing systemic dehumanization and material dispossession of the original peoples of the land on which we live and worship.

This Minute was drafted by North Pacific Yearly Meeting and adapted by SCYMF's Equity & Inclusion Committee, with the mutual goal of collaborating in this work with other Friends in the Pacific Northwest.

With support from the Equity and Inclusion committee, and guided by feedback from Indigenous people, SCYMF encourages our Monthly Meetings and Yearly Meeting to commit and live into the following actions:

- To self-educate about the history of Indigenous life before European contact, the arrival of settler colonial peoples, and the current effects of colonization specific to their land and region. We encourage Friends to compensate Indigenous people who provide us with their expertise, and to learn how to interrupt anti-Indigenous behavior and language.
- To self-educate about the transgenerational trauma that Indigenous families continue to suffer, stemming from Indigenous boarding schools where children were forceably removed from their families and subjected to brutal physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual abuse.
- To acknowledge and repent of the harm that Quakers inflicted on Indigenous children and their families by operating Indigenous boarding schools and day schools and by promoting the federal policy of forced assimilation of Indigenous children.
- To provide space for collective lamentation: a time and/or space to acknowledge, grieve, and integrate these truths, with the guidance of the Spirit.
- To recognize that integrity requires us to uphold the self-determination and sovereignty of Indigenous nations, including those not federally recognized. Friends acknowledge that it is not the place of non-Indigenous people to define or decide the priorities or realities of Indigenous people, and that right relationship requires respect for Indigenous people's autonomy and leadership.
- To defend the reinvigoration of local Indigenous cultural knowledge and wisdom. For example: language restoration; land, air, and water stewardship; food and medicine; wildfire management techniques; spirituality; mental and physical healthcare; programs for youth; and Indigenous-led healing work.
- To explore the sources of its property and wealth, and to invest in Indigenous nations or Indigenous-led projects that support Indigenous rights, health, or autonomy. These investments

could include sharing property, paying rent as suggested by tribes, or returning the land. Example projects include movements to protect missing and murdered Indigenous relatives; ecological protection movements like Standing Rock or coal train opposition; or any Spirit-led project that upholds Indigenous autonomy and leadership.

- To identify ways in which the commitments made in SCYMF Minutes regarding racism and Indigenous sovereignty are finding life in our Meetings, and to be open to Spirit's leading for actions not on this list, with the understanding that the work of living into this Minute will be ongoing and intergenerational.

Resources

For more information, please see: [Resources to Support Coming into Right Relationship with Indigenous Peoples](#).

Minute for Black Lives

[Minute previously approved June 2020, included for reference]

Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends approves this Minute for Black Lives, noting that some of us are challenged by the language it uses. Still, we lean into it, knowing that we have empowered the Equity and Inclusion Committee to be a prophetic voice. Acting as Christ's Body to engage in the work of justice will often be uncomfortable for those of us with privilege.

Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends witnesses the current people's uprising for police accountability and for racial justice and we take a stand for Black lives. We urge all Quakers, in our Yearly Meeting and beyond, to do the same in word and action. Neutrality is not an option if we are to fully embrace our underlying Truth as Friends: to recognize God in all people.

George Floyd is only the most recent police murder to be made public. Just the day after Floyd's killing, Black trans man Tony McDade was shot and killed by police in Tallahassee, Florida. We honor the memories of these two men, as well as Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and all those killed by police, other state violence, and organized white violence throughout the centuries back to the slave trade that is a backbone of the founding of this nation. We grieve and we feel prophetic rage.

We, as individuals and as a Yearly Meeting, especially as a body of mostly white people, are implicated in the system of white supremacy. We have the opportunity to step into this moment with our hearts wide and with humility, calling on God's support and guidance, to listen to Black leadership. We must be willing to make mistakes, to commit to the movement for the long haul, and to be part of the transformation of our communities: "on earth as it is in heaven." There is a place for all of us, whether in the streets or behind the scenes, making donations or making phone calls. We join our voices with our Quaker ancestors of all races who have worked for the abolition of slavery and for Black civil rights throughout the generations — and who have also made mistakes.

We as Quakers and as Christians are members of a great spiritual body pulling toward justice, back to Jesus whose brown body was lynched by the lawkeepers of his time and of whose resurrection we proclaim. We must all find our place in this moment, in this movement, and for a lifetime of work for

racial justice. This is the way of Jesus: that the first shall be last and that justice shall roll down like waters.

- We acknowledge and apologize for the ways in which we, as Quakers, have historically and are currently benefiting from, centering and perpetuating white privilege and colonialism. We recognize that we have remained silent and passive when our voice and action were needed.
- We, as a Yearly Meeting, commit to being actively anti-racist: working to undo individual and systemic racism.
- We call for the immediate end to police violence. We demand the dismantling of current policing and criminal justice systems that enable and perpetuate racism (American Friends Service Committee resource: [6 reasons why it's time to defund the police](#)).
- We commit to following leaders from currently and historically marginalized communities who have called on us to learn and join in solidarity in the demand for equity and justice in ways that are in line with the example of Jesus.
- We recognize that our peace testimony cannot mean passivity, that we will stand up in advocacy and not remain silent on issues of injustice.
- We recognize the unequal burden Black, Indigenous, and people of color have suffered historically and presently in this racist society. We commit to providing reparative funds to begin to compensate for this inequity.
- We commit to promoting, supporting and participating in individual, local, and yearly meeting wide continuing education about Black history, colonialism, white privilege, and police violence.
- We recognize that words without action accomplish little. We commit to taking tangible action. We proclaim with American Friends Service Committee that [we won't stop until we dismantle the whole racist system](#).

Queries

- “Why have I chosen not to see the racism that is happening in front of me every single day? Why have I chosen to remain destructively silent and immobile as I watch Black people lynched in our streets?” (Melia LeCour). “How did I become so well-adjusted to injustice?” (Cornel West quoted in Melia LaCour, [A Call to White People: It's Time to Live Into the Answer](#), 6/2/2020).
- “How will I work on my anti-Blackness? How is my heart closed to the public and private suffering of Black, Indigenous and people of color?...[What is] preventing me from living into a life of anti-racism and love for the humanity of Black, Indigenous, and people of color[?]” (Melia LaCour, [A Call to White People: It's Time to Live Into the Answer](#), 6/2/2020).
- What would immediate action look like for each individual and for our Yearly Meeting, as we profess our conviction to stand in solidarity and demand justice for Black, Indigenous, and people of color?
- What are we doing to educate ourselves about historic and current manifestations of systemic oppression in our nation and in our local communities?
- How has the Quaker testimony of peace masked passivity? How can we be accountable, show up and support Black, Indigenous, and people of color in ways they have asked us to?
- “You may say John Woolman sayeth this, and nineteenth century Quakers sayeth that, but what canst thou say? — What will we say? What will our actions say? What will our budgets say?” (Mackenzie Morgan, message to West Hills Friends Church, 6/7/2020).

Resources

For immediate action: [Resources for Accountability and Actions for Black Lives](#).

For white people to begin or deepen their anti-racism work: [Anti-Racism Resources](#) and [Scaffolded Anti-Racism Resources](#).