



Fellowship of Friends of African Descent
Ujima Friends Peace Center
1701 W. Lehigh Avenue
Philadelphia, Pa. 19138
www.fofad.org

“Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.” -Genesis 4:10

To Friends with a Concern for Black Lives in America:

In August 2016, members of the Fellowship of Friends of African Descent, moved by the Holy Spirit, in response to the murders of Philando Castile and Anton Sterling, approved a Minute Regarding State Sanctioned Violence. Our Minute was circulated and adopted by monthly and yearly meetings throughout the United States as well as Quaker organizations such as the American Friends Service Committee.

Identifying the persistent realities of systemic racism, militarism, materialism, wealth and educational inequality as major contributors to the violence that ravages our communities, the minute called for the following:

- a. Establishment of Peace Forces
- b. Community based police training
- c. Opening of Peace Centers
- d. Disarmament in the community

The Fellowship began to live into this minute by establishing the Ujima Friends Peace Center in a historic Black Community in North Philadelphia in June 2017. The Peace Center serves as a Black Quaker worship community that addresses various forms of violence through its rental rights classes, freedom school programs for youth, and food/clothing distribution ministry. The Ujima Friends Peace Center has also served as a place for conflict resolution.

Given the continued murder of black men and women at the hands of police and vigilantes, we feel the Spirit’s urging to return to our minute and the other three action items that make recommendations for policing.

We offer to Friends our minute for reconsideration, not as a prescription but as a point of departure for discussion. We believe that Friends have much to contribute to the present public discourse on policing and reimagining a system of peace keeping based on our testimonies of equality and community. Attached please find the original minute. We hope that the reconsideration of this minute will lead to actions that move us closer to communities and a world that is safer for black and brown bodies.

In faithfulness,
Ayesha Imani, Clerk



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Fellowship of Friends of African Descent Minute
Regarding State Sanctioned Violence

The Fellowship of Friends of African Descent at its 2016 Annual Gathering approved the following minute for public circulation to Friends and concerned communities worldwide:

The Fellowship of Friends of African Descent is a 25 year old Quaker organization that supports the spiritual nurture of Quakers of African descent and provides opportunities for the sharing of our concerns. As those of us in the United States witness the media portrayal of high profile police violence and the resulting racial tensions, we are moved by our compassion for our communities to call for action that will lead to justice and respect, particularly for black men but also for black women and children in America. We stand with those who have identified bigotry, structural racism and state sanctioned violence as historical and continuing sources of senseless suffering and death among our people.

We grieve the loss of any human life, including the lives of police. However, the presence of the police too often seems like an occupying force designed to protect and serve an invisible elite instead of protecting those who reside in our communities. We also recognize that the violence and tragic killing of innocent civilians have touched so many in our communities. We believe that these evil forces cannot be overcome through retribution and retaliation, and can only be overcome through respect, resources and love. Jesus taught us that the love of God and our neighbor is the greatest commandment.

The problems of racism, militarism and violence that we face are rooted in the deeper, less recognized sicknesses of materialism and greed. From the slave trade and plantation economies of the American south to the terroristic subjugation of Jim Crow to the modern-day profits of miseducation and mass incarceration, racial stereotypes have been used to mask and justify the exploitation and denial of economic human rights to people of African descent. As a result, these communities are under-resourced, as is evidenced by the lack of jobs, healthcare, quality education and decent housing. In the absence of real opportunities for employment and economic self-sufficiency underground economies rise up in our communities to fill the gap. People in these economies are criminalized and prosecuted even though they are only seeking to provide enough resources to support their families. We realize that we cannot have a meaningful conversation about ending racial oppression without also addressing classism, joblessness and wealth inequality.



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In response to these realities, we, as Quakers and as people of African descent call for the following:

1. PEACEFORCE. The training, support and employment of a “peaceforce” consisting of police officers and community based peacekeepers, none of whom are armed. The peacekeepers will be local residents who have the community relationships and street credibility (especially with young people) to cultivate the capacity and inclination for the use of non-violent methods for de-escalating conflict. [Returning citizens are an important resource for this work.]

2. PEACE CENTERS. The development and support of ‘peace centers’ in our communities which will provide safe havens and educational, cultural and recreational opportunities for young people in our communities. Quaker Alternatives to Violence trainings can be redesigned to be rooted in the cultural experience of African people. These centers will also function as spaces where Quaker worship and values can be modelled and developed.

3. COMMUNITY TRAINING. Police training will be ongoing and consistent including sub-conscious bias training that is not just academic but rather is community based. Police departments need to revamp their training so its members are trained to deescalate potentially dangerous situations and are not expected to “shoot to kill” in every situation they consider dangerous.

4. DISARMAMENT. Promoting the disarming of our communities (including segments of the police force responsible for minor offenses) through the elimination of handguns, rifles and automatic weapons. We realize that this goal is long term and will require a cultural shift from our current reliance on violence to solve social problems. However, we believe that we are all safer without guns than with them.

In the words of the poet, Nikki Giovanni, “Black love is Black wealth.” We as Quakers of African descent are making a personal commitment to these ends and invite others to join us in this effort. We call on Friends’ organizations to use some part of our substantial corporate investments to support this work.