



**Fellowship of Friends of African Descent
1515 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
August 14, 2016**

Greetings to Friends everywhere:

Friends of African Descent, their families and friends, representing meetings from across the United States, attended the Fellowship of Friends of African Descent's annual gathering, August 12–14, at Arch Street Friends Meeting in Philadelphia, PA. The theme of the gathering was *Recharge, Renew, Rejoice*.

Affirming the presence of God in all people, Friends gathered for three days of worship, worship with a concern for business, presentations and fellowship. The gathering explored the concerns and crises facing the African American community, including state-sanctioned violence against men, women and children of African descent. A minute was created to express the Fellowship's testament concerning the state-sanctioned violence against people of African descent. The minute contained four action items: to create a peace force; to establish peace centers; to promote community training of the police; and to advocate for disarmament of both the police and the community. (See attachment.)

The gathering began on Friday with a dramatic performance by Amanda Kemp which included a historical collage of quotes from the Constitution, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Assata Shakur and autobiographical writings. She was accompanied on the violin by her husband, Michael Jamanis.

On Saturday, Friends gathered for a semi-programmed meeting for worship, led by Ewuare Osayande, Chief Diversity Officer of American Friends Service Committee. Out of the silence a message was shared that witnessed the struggle of singing God's song in a strange land with a call for spiritual and cultural authenticity. Ewuare's ministry, "Black Love for Black Lives," opened with a reading from Jeremiah 8:22: "Is there a balm in Gilead?" His message highlighted the components needed for a just and civil society. Ewuare also quoted Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: "Power without love is reckless and abusive and love without power is sentimental and anemic." After worship Friends shared a time of memorial remembrance of our ancestors.

Friends reaffirmed our purpose for scheduling a trip to Ghana which grew out of the mission of the Fellowship to uplift Quakers of African Descent around the world. Friends agreed that it was important to have young Friends be a part of the Ghana trip and worked to find a date that the Peace Leadership and Arts Camp of Chester would be able to attend. As a result, the trip will probably be in August 2017.

The finances of the Fellowship were discussed and a clear need was expressed for more financial support from the wider Quaker community. Friends pointed out that the work of the Fellowship was a ministry filling a need for Friends of African Descent that is not being filled by Monthly, Yearly meetings or other Quaker bodies. It was also pointed out that, as the Quaker community mirrors the larger American society in having great racial wealth disparity, how Quakers address this issue could be a model of racial justice for American society.

Friends minuted our appreciation for the hard work and dedication that Deborah and Felisha Saunders have given to the Fellowship. Friends also minuted our sincere gratitude for the faithful service of our interim clerk, Francine Cheeks.

Two afternoon workshops were offered. Sa'ed Atshan, Visiting Assistant Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at Swarthmore College, presented "From Ferguson to Bethlehem: Black-Palestinian Solidarity," examining the history of Black American and Palestinian reciprocal solidarity. Fellowship member Claudia Wair shared nurturing self-care practices that can be used to soothe the body and soul during difficult times.

Saturday night's keynote address was given by Lewis Webb Jr., a former New York City prosecutor, and the Healing and Transformation Justice Program Coordinator for AFSC, NY. Lewis' talk, "Gathering the Villagers: A Call to Action on Behalf of the Children of Mass Incarceration," explored the plight of the children of those who have been devoured by the mass incarceration machine. Lewis asked the group to take on five questions without being dishonest and without destroying what we believe to be an 8-year-old's sense of fairness or hope. Participants found this to be a challenging exercise that brought out compassion and an urge to take action.

The gathering ended with Meeting for Worship on Sunday with Arch Street Friends Meeting.

On behalf of the Fellowship of Friends of African Descent,

Ayesha Imani, Clerk