

A Minute on Friends' Concern for Immigrants

By Fort Collins Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Quaker history bears witness to how we have acted upon the belief in the essential equality of all humanity. From the earliest days, men and women were equally regarded and equally charged with responsibilities for the care of others and themselves. Friends have always sought to empower those who are oppressed and to find ways to improve their lot. Likewise, recognizing the equality of all people regardless of race, we strongly opposed the inhuman institution of slavery. We have examined our consciences in the matter of immigration and immigrants among us by considering the following query:

"Do we search diligently for ways to assure the right of every individual to be loved and cared for, educated appropriately, to obtain useful employment and to live in dignity?"

Fort Collins Friends Meeting acknowledges that there is a "right" for everyone "to obtain useful employment and to live in dignity." In examining this query, Friends search diligently for ways to assure this right to every one of God's children.

Friends have faith that the direct and unmediated experience of the Divine is available to everyone. That which Quakers call the Inward Light lives in each human being. We agree that living a life of dignity is a right and, further, that the means of reaching that life will be decided by every adult, following the Inward Light, "that of God" in everyone. If the options a person sees before him/her in one situation do not seem to lead to a life of dignity, the Inward Light may lead her to leave one locality and go to another.

We see this as a difficult choice for people to make. We have seen that many risk their lives to leave a situation in which they cannot meet their needs in favor of one in which they may face hostility and great challenges in regularizing their status. And many have lost their lives. We view this as a tragedy.

We commit to continuing to educate ourselves on the issue of economic and social displacement leading to immigration and to participating in this important national discussion following the lead of the Inward Light, seeking truth in seasoned discernment of the Meeting. As a Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, we commit ourselves to a diligent search for ways to assuring a life of dignity to every human being, to becoming a society that values all cultures for the richness they add to our collective lives, and to finding ways to welcome the stranger in our midst. We recognize that Friends will interpret this moral commitment in different ways, according to the Inward Light. Our traditional testimonies—truth, equality, peace, simplicity, and community—are outward and visible signs of our faith. The testimonies point the way as we put our faith into action. Communal and individual concerns and actions are weighed in the light of these testimonies.