Central Philadelphia

Monthly Meeting of Friends

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1515 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102

(215) 241-7260 🙪 cpmm@afsc.org 🙪 www.cpmm.org

 March 10, 2019

***Central Philadelphia Minute of Religious Service and Travel Minute***

Dear Friends:

As you may know, our Meeting member, Vanessa Julye, has ministered to Friends around the country and around the world to heal the hurts of racism. It is with great joy that over the past several years we have watched her ministry grow and deepen. These are trying times and we are thankful that Vanessa’s ministry is able to reach so many people.

Vanessa has worked to build support systems for African American, Asian American, Caribbean American, Latin American, Indigenous American, Pacific Island, and other Friends who feel marginalized in our Meetings because of their race.  She has also worked with Friends of European descent to raise awareness of the concerns of these Friends. Vanessa calls us all to remember that we are one race. Seeing that of God in others should also mean that we unite in identifying and eliminating the beliefs and structures that divide us.  Vanessa has traveled abroad, again with an interest in bridging between diverse peoples.

This work comes with its own challenges. We have seen the struggle and pain that Vanessa has endured as she strives to be lovingly faithful to the calling laid on her by the Spirit. Listening to stories of pain and confusion from Friends of Color who feel marginalized in their meetings is both taxing and necessary.  And she has seen how difficult it is for some Friends to look at and understand the dynamics that cause the marginalization many Friends of Color have experienced.  Vanessa has witnessed Friends struggling to come under the weight of these concerns, and she has heard some Friends question whether these concerns are real, compounding the already marginalizing experience by Friends of Color.

Vanessa and her co-author, Donna McDaniel, are celebrated for the publication of *Fit for Freedom Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice*.  Vanessa and Donna labored for seven years on this expression of their leadings and brought the book together.  The publication of the book has opened new avenues for ministry on racial healing within the Religious Society of Friends.

We are grateful for the work of Vanessa Julye and feel that we are growing, in awareness of issues of race in our own meeting. Sometimes that growth happens slowly and painfully. The legacy of conquest, genocide, and enslavement touches many parts of our contemporary experiences as Friends. Our meeting, like others, has been challenged by Vanessa's ministry.  Vanessa sees her spiritual work as a way to “make the Religious Society of Friends more welcoming to People of Color.”  People in the meeting are still in the process of understanding and unifying with this ministry and becoming an anti-racist meeting.  Vanessa has led the meeting in discussions on these topics these past few years. The commitment of the meeting to continue this work in every committee is moving us forward. The meeting has moved to make this a central concern of all members.

As we continue to find our growth edges we are experiencing the fruits of a developing awareness that the Religious Society of Friends still has much growing to do before people of all colors and backgrounds truly find themselves at home as one Quaker family. To be so enlightened about a concern has moved Quakers into corrective action and advocacy for change in the past. Vanessa’s ministry is an important contribution to the historical work Friends have done in the past to address equality, equity, and community.

We commend our friend Vanessa Julye to you.  We ask you to open your hearts, listen deeply to the message she carries and welcome her.  We invite you to join with her in discerning how our Religious Society can be faithful in seeking the wholeness we long for.

In the Light,

Dana Reinhold, Clerk