



Many of us were horrified by the acts that took place in Charlottesville, Virginia. Amid antisemitic rants and public proclamations that white people are superior to people of color, Heather Heyer, 32, was murdered and many more were critically injured in an act of domestic terrorism.

It is also difficult for many of us in the United States to acknowledge that this is just an extreme manifestation of a system of which we are all a part to some degree. As Michelle Alexander explains in *The New Jim Crow*, the system of mass incarceration and solitary confinement disproportionately locks up people of color while providing jobs for people who are primarily white. At a more personal level, we have each been affected by a culture which teaches us to think and act differently depending on whether we are interacting with a person of color or a person of European descent.

John Woolman was a Quaker known for examining the cultural practices of his time. He travelled extensively in the 1700s asking people who enslaved others to consider whether the practice of slavery was consistent with their beliefs. He also carefully probed his own life for the seeds of war and changed his personal practices accordingly. Faithful work such as his is still required as we examine our own lives and how we are called to action.

We are reminded of queries that arose from the 2016 Friends General Conference Gathering:

- How can I join with others and admit that we were powerless over having been “colonized” by our White Supremacist culture—that our lives fall short of their full human potential because of this colonization?
- How can I join with others and come to believe that we could work in community with others to interrupt White Supremacy and practice a culture based on partnership rather than domination?

Quakers are fond of quoting George Fox in saying “...there is that of God in everyone.” A heinous act such as the one in Charlottesville provides us an opportunity, though difficult, to practice loving the person while naming the behavior as unacceptable. In the words of Charles Eisenstein, an activist at Standing Rock, “The way we see and treat someone is a powerful invitation for them to be as we see them. It starts with the question: What is it like to be you? ...we are all facing situations that invite us to choose love over fear, to listen to the heart when it feels unsafe to do so. We need to help each other obey that call. In that, we are allies. We can be allies in calling each other to our highest potential.”

Heather Heyer, and others, protested blatant white supremacy at great risk. Standing up to racism has been a risky activity for hundreds of years and still is. Do we have the faith, courage and humility, whatever our skin color, to closely examine ourselves for our internalized racism? At the systemic level, opportunities abound to join others in addressing racism in areas such as mass incarceration, solitary confinement, the treatment of immigrants, treatment of young men of color, migrant laborers, and many more. And, can we do this work with love?

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