



## Changing a Racist System Requires Persistence

By Adlai Amor



The world changed following the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other Black women and men. Millions of people were motivated to publicly protest these brutal murders and to proclaim that Black lives matter. Their deaths were the tipping point that roused the public's conscience to confront racism publicly.

As people of faith, we believe that there is that of God in every person, and we are called to create a society free of racism. At the center of our witness is an unwavering commitment to "the fundamental equality of all members of the human race."

The re-emergence of white supremacy today elevated the need to be vigilant and be more persistent in our anti-racist advocacy. We cannot afford to sit back as white supremacy wrecks our society, our democracy.

A June 2020 poll by Washington Post-Schar School (George Mason University) revealed that up to 74% of those interviewed strongly or somewhat strongly supported Black Lives Matter protests. It added that the murder of Floyd was a sign of broader problems of how Black people are treated.

Simply put, the Black Lives Matter movement exposed the systemic racism in U.S. society, which rests on white supremacy. All along, the data on racial inequities in the U.S. are plain to see:

- » Low-income Black people are three times as likely to live in an area of concentrated poverty as low-income white people ("2017 Hunger Report").

- » There are 11 infant deaths per 1,000 live births among Black people, almost twice the national average. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).
- » Black mothers and babies are harmed by global warming and air pollution at a much higher rate than the overall population (JAMA Network Open).
- » Black homeowners still pay 13% more in property taxes than white homeowners. These taxes fund local schools and police ("The Assessment Gap: Racial Inequalities in Property Taxation").
- » Since 2013, 28% of those killed by police are Black people, despite being only 13% of the population (MappingPoliceViolence.org).
- » Black people make up 13.6% of the population, but Black men make up 40.2% of all prison inmates (NAACP).

*(continued on page 7)*



Protester in front of the White House. Photo: Eric Bond/FCNL.

# I Am a Black, Latino Quaker

**VIEWPOINT** » By José Santos Woss



George Floyd should be alive today. As should Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, David McAtee, and the hundreds of other Black women and men who recently died due to police brutality and racism.

Recently, I attended one of the protests in Washington D.C. As we stood peacefully outside a public park, an organizer called out the names of Black women and men who have been murdered. For more than 10 minutes, we had a call and response: Attatiana Jefferson; *say her name*. Eric Garner; *say his name*. Sandra Bland; *say her name*. Philando Castille; *say his name*.

Each time the organizer paused for a breath, I thought that we were at the end of the list. The truth is, we had barely acknowledged the hundreds of lives stolen.

Six years ago, Eric Garner spoke his last words: “I can’t breathe.” George Floyd said the same. Six years later, we’re still fighting for Black people to be able to breathe and to exist in a world that has robbed us of so much.

We’re looking at 400 years of oppression. Years of mothers mourning their children’s murder. Of children wiping their mother’s tears—as Philando Castille’s girlfriend’s daughter did—while also whispering to her mother, “I don’t want you to get shot, too.” She was only four.

As a Black, Latino Quaker I live at the intersection of many identities. What we’re talking about isn’t just something I’m passionate about. It’s my reality.

From the comfort of a couch, inside of a home, nestled away from fires and pleas for justice, apathetic onlookers warn protesters to remain peaceful and to be strategic. But 400 years of peace and strategy later, we still cannot breathe.

Racism feeds systems that keep Black and brown people oppressed. It’s easy to be apathetic or say, “Well I’m not racist, I have a Black partner, friend, colleague”. But racism has shapeshifted; it’s not just the overt slaughtering of Black people. It’s also microaggressions, like comments about natural hair and the suggestion that when a Black woman emotes, she must be angry.

Racism is the assumption that having a carne asada while brown or birding while Black, is reason enough to call the cops.

Black people alone cannot dismantle systems that we did not create. Being a true ally comes in the form of using white privilege to advocate for liberation. It’s uncomfortable, but it’s necessary. To cast out racism and police brutality, it will take a multidisciplinary approach to identify and root out racism.

Maybe you’re thinking: “I’ve prayed, now what?” Or “I can’t get through to racist people in my circle. Now what?” Liberation won’t come overnight, but if our allies commit to do the work, a better tomorrow lies ahead—a tomorrow where Black men and women *can* breathe. I don’t have all the answers, but here are a few ideas to get started:

- » Educate yourselves. Listen to Black women. Now is the time to hear what the leaders of this movement have to say.
- » Attend a protest. Suit up with your mask and stand alongside your Black brothers and sisters, who have shown up despite being shot with rubber bullets, tear gassed, and threatened by our president.
- » If you cannot risk exposure to COVID-19, drop off water and snacks to your local protest rest stop.
- » Talk with white people in your life.
- » Of course, call your member of Congress and tell them you support bold reforms to policing in the United States ([fcnl.org/cjaction](https://www.fcnl.org/cjaction)).

The burden is on us as believers to hold Black and brown people in the Light. To alleviate poverty for poor people. To advocate for criminal justice and police reform. And most urgently, to support oppressed people—because all lives can’t matter until Black lives do.

*José Santos Woss is legislative manager for criminal justice and election integrity. A video of this article is at [fcnl.org/twtfjosewoss](https://www.fcnl.org/twtfjosewoss).* 

# Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

By Diane Randall



The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) seeks a society with equity and justice for all. How does that translate into our legislative priorities and into the organizational culture of FCNL? How do we live into that vision and become an anti-racist organization?

The reality of white supremacy embedded in our nation's history and still dominant in our culture today affects all of us, but the direct lethal consequences felt by Black people and other historically marginalized people must be recognized and changed.

White supremacy manifests at the personal level in our interactions with others and throughout federal policies that institutionalize the oppression of Black people, Native peoples, other peoples of color, and women.

FCNL has consistently lobbied for changes to these federal policies. In the last few years, our legislative priorities—established by our General Committee—have called on us to “identify, expose and work to eliminate institutional racism, institutional sexism, and other forms of systemic discrimination.”

For those of us who are white and working in a majority white organization, we might assume that because of our commitment to equality, peace, and justice that we are free of bias or oppressive behavior.

However, we know we have much work to do to eliminate bias to become more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. We have much work to do to become anti-racist. Rooting out discrimination and establishing equity requires a conscious and constant effort.

Over the last 50 years, FCNL has offered trainings, held discussions, and considered what we could do to address racial discrimination as an organization. From the 1960s onward, our policy advocacy has included legislative priorities for civil rights and tribal sovereignty.

Six years ago, FCNL staff began a process to more intentionally address diversity within our own organization. We defined diversity across a wide variety of personal identities, backgrounds and

experiences. We adopted a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) statement and a plan affirming the value of diversity to the well-being of FCNL.

The DEI plan created priorities to recruit, hire, and retain staff and program participants who are diverse and to cultivate a culture in which diversity, equity, and inclusion thrives. As we were expanding our Young Adult Program, we recruited from communities that would bring participants who are more representative of our country than the current composition of FCNL's governance or staff.

This includes the participation of young adults who are Black, Indigenous, people of color, and white; who are Quakers, Muslims, Christians, Jews, and “nones” who are LGBTQ and straight; who come from low-income households and households of wealth; and who attend elite colleges and community colleges. This diversity creates a vibrancy and opportunity for FCNL.

In February 2020, our Executive Committee approved a statement that committed the governance of FCNL to more actively engage in promoting DEI as an organization, including addressing our own behavior and actions that rest on white privilege.

We are now embarking on a new initiative that commits our staff and governance to do the work of justice more justly, with Freedom Road, a firm with experience in faith communities and non-profit organizations. Over the next 18 months, Freedom Road will work with FCNL staff and governors to close the narrative gap between the stories we tell about ourselves and the changes we can make to build our capacity as a diverse, equitable and inclusive community.

We are listening in new ways to those within the organization who have experienced oppression and considering what a racially healed FCNL will be.

I am grateful to see the enthusiasm of FCNL to embrace this challenging and necessary work. With partner organizations here in Washington, D.C., and Quaker communities across the country, we are tapping

*(continued on page 6)*

# Quakers, Race, and Police Brutality

By Alicia McBride



Friends across the country are speaking out against racism and police violence. Here, we excerpt some of the minutes and statements that they have shared with us.

A minute from a Quaker meeting or church represents the wording of a decision or agreed-upon action to be taken by the community. Minutes are also powerful advocacy tools to let members of Congress know how their constituents are thinking about and acting on an issue.

As FCNL works for a society free of racism, we affirm the statements collected here from across the breadth of the Religious Society of Friends:

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## For This Time

Western Yearly Meeting, June 2, 2020

“For God ‘hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth’ (Acts 17:26). Friends believe that any racial discrimination is essentially a violation of God’s law of love, whether by legal enactment or by inequitable practices that interfere with democratic liberties or cultural or economic development.”

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## A Time for Repentance and Transformation

New England Yearly Meeting, June 5, 2020

“As Friends serving in leadership on behalf of Quaker communities across New England, we join with people around the world to grieve, and to commit to action in opposition to the evils of racism and white supremacy that are again laid bare in our country ... We speak to reclaim the symbols of faith from their use to justify the sins of empire. We speak to publicly recommit ourselves to Truth. Black Lives Matter.”

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## Minute on Responding to the Police Violence Against People of Color

Friends Meeting of Austin, June 7, 2020

“Friends Meeting of Austin ... stands with those protesting the continuing police violence against people of color here in Austin and around our country

and we affirm that Black Lives Matter ... As Quakers, people of faith with a deep commitment to equality, justice, and peace, we commit to continuing our anti-racist work grounded in Spirit through study, prayer, and action, both locally and nationally.”

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## Statement on Racial Injustice

Evangelical Friends Church International-North America, June 8, 2020

“The global pandemic and widespread economic stress ... serve to add weight and a growing awareness to the attitudes and systems of racial injustice and violence that persist in our country. We recognize this as blatant opposition to God’s design and vision for the world ... We also recognize our need to redeem individual attitudes, processes, systems, and institutions that perpetuate injustice on the basis of race or ethnic identity.”

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## Minutes for Black Lives

Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends, June 13, 2020

“Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends witnesses the current people’s uprising for police accountability and for racial justice, and we take a stand for Black lives. We urge all Quakers, in our yearly meeting and beyond, to do the same in word and action. Neutrality is not an option if we are to fully embrace our underlying Truth as Friends: to recognize God in all people.”

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## A Message Regarding State Sanctioned Violence

Fellowship of Friends of African Descent, June 17, 2020

“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 ... that make[s] recommendations for policing ... We believe that Friends have much to contribute to the present public discourse on policing and reimagining a system of peacekeeping based on our testimonies of equality and community.”

*Has your meeting or church approved a minute on systemic racism and police violence? Please share it with FCNL by emailing Bobby Trice ([rtrice@fcnl.org](mailto:rtrice@fcnl.org)). See the statements that have been shared with us at [fcnl.org/statements](https://fcnl.org/statements).*

*Alicia McBride is director of Quaker leadership. *

# The Pipelines of Police Militarization

By Jim Cason



One of the keys to reforming police is to turn off the pipelines that are fueling the growing militarization of local enforcement agencies. There are two main pipelines—the established 1033 Program of the Department of Defense and the various anti-terrorism programs of the Department of Homeland Security, created in 2002.

The government has been disposing of its surplus military materials since the end of World War II. In 1997, this program was codified as the 1033 Program, named after a provision in the annual National Defense Authorization Act.

Since its creation, more than \$7.4 billion worth of military equipment has been transferred to more than 8,000 local police and other law enforcement agencies.

The creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2002 created another pipeline which has also militarized local police, expanded the militarization of our borders, and now the streets of Portland and other cities.

In FY 2020, DHS's grant programs to combat terrorism and other emergencies has \$1.8 billion to dispense. This includes \$10 million for local police which can be used to purchase new weapons from military suppliers.

From these pipelines flow funds and weapons of war—developed for battlefields abroad, now deployed by local police who are supposed to keep the peace. Tear gas, tank-like armored vehicles, high-powered guns, and flash grenades are now part of local police arsenals. Often, communities of color are at the receiving end of this police militarization.

These weapons of war were deployed in Ferguson, MO during the 2014 protests that resulted from the police killing of Michael Brown, an 18-year-old Black man. They were deployed in the recent Black Lives Matter protests, sparked by the killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis.

In many communities today, police militarization is manifested by the presence of Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, only 25% of communities in 1980 had a SWAT team. Today, that figure has climbed to 80%.

FCNL's response to the growing police militarization has been to document and then persistently advocate for legislation to reduce—and ultimately eliminate—the 1033 program. It is also working for greater transparency and accountability of these programs.

From 2018-2019, the 19 Advocacy Corps organizers worked in their local communities to stop police militarization. With the help of FCNL's network of advocates, Congress considered legislation to change the 1033 Program.

They ultimately persuaded President Barack Obama to issue an executive order prohibiting the military from transferring armored vehicles, high-caliber weapons, grenade launchers, and other equipment to local police. However, Donald Trump rescinded the order when he assumed the presidency. Now there is momentum in Congress to reinstate these restrictions and go further.

*Jim Cason is associate general secretary for strategic advocacy.* 




*At the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Photo: Eric Bond/FCNL.*

**DEI** (from page 3)

new resources and sharing experiences on the soul-changing effort to become anti-racist.

We are committed to institute practices to transform behaviors and attitudes that foster discrimination and inequity.

We are committed to living into our vision of a society with equity and justice for all—as an organization and in our mission to advocate for justice and peace.

*Diane Randall is general secretary.* 


**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement** (Adopted by the FCNL General Committee in 2015)

At FCNL, we embrace having a multitude of voices and talents working together to strengthen our impact in the world. In keeping with the Quaker testimony of equality, we strive to be an organization that welcomes, values, and respects the different perspectives of every individual.

This commitment presents an exciting challenge and opportunity that requires every person's involvement and investment for its success.

We aspire to weave the principles of diversity and inclusion into every aspect

of our organization. We invite our staff, committee members, and volunteers to share their diverse backgrounds, because those unique perspectives are important contributions to our work. We actively build our knowledge and skills to be culturally competent colleagues and partners working for a just and peaceful world.

We endeavor to develop a richer understanding and appreciation for the strengths of diversity and the benefits of an inclusive community through a variety of ongoing efforts, including our staff recruitment practices, nominating and outreach to community members, professional development opportunities, advocacy programs, and lobbying efforts. 



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PHOTO Jennifer Domenicki/FCNL

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 Friends Committee on National Legislation



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Clerk: Ron Ferguson  
Assistant Clerk: Bridget Moix  
General Secretary: Diane Randall

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245 2nd Street NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
202-547-6000 » [fctlinfo@fctl.org](mailto:fctlinfo@fctl.org) » [fctl.org](https://fctl.org)  
[facebook.com/quakerlobby](https://facebook.com/quakerlobby) » [@fctl](https://twitter.com/fctl)



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## Changing a Racist... (from page 1)

Until recently, most white people thought Black women and men no longer face much discrimination. According to 2014–2018 polls by CBS News and Monmouth University, racial attitudes of white people only shifted recently after several decades of stagnation.

The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other Black people accelerated this change. It is manifested in other polls indicating high majorities of white people support Black Lives Matter protests.

This shift in public opinion opened more possibilities for FCNL staff, our community, and the broader Religious Society of Friends to increase our efforts to dismantle systemic racism.

While a majority of people now agree on the need for change, it is not enough. We must use this impetus to more persistently advocate for concrete policy changes that address racism and injustice in order to root them out.

Policies are what perpetuate systemic racism, and we recognize how it is manifested today. It's not just in police brutality or the militarization of U.S. borders, but also in housing, health care, education, and foreign policy.

FCNL has long been committed to righting racial injustice and the Black Lives Matter movement has galvanized us to examine our legislative priorities: *Where have we fallen short? How can we do more?*

Our current advocacy for more equitable COVID-19 relief packages is centered on the fact that Black and Latinx people are disproportionately suffering from this pandemic.

These communities have the highest numbers of infection; they suffer from the highest rates of unemployment and hunger. Yet, the COVID-19 relief packages have largely ignored their plight.

Our faith calls us to act. As the United States becomes a majority-minority country, it is critical that the decisions of our policymakers, legislators, and FCNL itself reflect this diversity.

Ensuring that there is a diversity of perspectives—and people—in formulating U.S. programs and its representation abroad is a way of rooting out systemic racism. In a recent article, culture change expert Dr. Caterina Bulgarella stressed, “Diversity of beliefs, perspectives, and styles can have a de-biasing impact on complex decisions.”

However, the 2019 Nonprofit Impact Matters reports there is still a continued lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion in nonprofit organizations in general. More than 400 national nonprofits are headquartered in Washington, D.C.

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This lack of diversity is shown in many other ways. In terms of gender, for example, a 2018 Institute for Women's Policy Research study of foreign policy panels in Washington, D.C. concluded that women made up only 34% of experts featured.

Even the State Department, which is tasked with implementing the foreign policies passed by Congress is largely white and male. The American Academy of Diplomacy estimated that 81% of the State Department's foreign service officers and 61% of its civil service staff are white people.

While the 116th Congress is the most racially and ethnically diverse in history, it is still a predominantly white (80%) institution, with 157 female and 379 male members.

Increasing diversity in Congress, in advocacy organizations, and in decision-making is, of course, not the only solution to uprooting systemic racism.

Persistence is needed, and FCNL's unyielding pursuit of a society with equity and justice for all is especially important at this juncture in history.

*Adlai Amor is associate general secretary for communications.* 

# New Organizers Push for Immigration Reform

By Larissa Gil Sanhueza



*The 2020-2021  
Advocacy Corps.*



FCNL is proud to introduce the 2020-2021 Advocacy Corps. These 20 young people will advocate for immigration reform from August 2020 to May 2021. The organizers will engage their local communities,

build relationships with members of Congress, and advance FCNL's work towards peace and justice.

Their advocacy is needed as thousands of people across the country struggle to gain asylum and citizenship. With the November elections, this is a critical year to push for compassionate immigration reform. By organizing in 18 different states across the country, the new Advocacy Corps are primed to make a difference.

The new organizers come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Oscar Hernandez Ortiz, for instance, is joining the FCNL community after two years of teaching fifth grade in Arizona. Tanmai Vemulapalli of Apex, NC, is returning from a year in Myanmar. Karen Gamez, in addition to working for an educational advocacy nonprofit, serves on the Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission.

The other new organizers include Ariana Riccardi of Wilmington, OH; Chloe Brown of Richmond, VA; Dayana Maldonado of Española, NM; Elliotte Enochs of Edgewater, CO; Evan Saito of Richmond, IN; Faith Williams of Provo, UT; Fatema Jaffer of Longwood, FL; Gloria Rodriguez of Orange, NJ; Grey Robinson

of Birmingham, AL; Haydyn Foulke of Greensboro, NC; Istra Fuhrmann of San Antonio, TX; James Rider of Worcester, MA; Jamie Kelley of West Haven, CT; Judith Marklin of Sewanee, TN; Nedy Velazquez of Escondido, CA; Patrick Kelly of Notre Dame, IN; and Tanzania Thomas of Brooklyn, NY.

These young advocates will kick off their work virtually in August, when they will spend a week learning the ins and outs of FCNL's approach to advocacy. Then they will begin working in their own communities. While the pandemic has made travel to Washington, D.C., difficult, the Advocacy Corps will attend parts of the 2020 Annual Meeting virtually. They will also play a crucial role organizing the 2021 Spring Lobby Weekend—an event that brings 500 young adults together annually to lobby Congress on one key issue.

The new Advocacy Corps follows in the footsteps of the 2019-2020 class, whose members spent ten months organizing around the issue of gun violence reform. Last year's organizers went on 143 lobby visits, brought 245 new advocates to congressional offices, and were published 36 times in the media. They also were instrumental in helping FCNL pull off its first virtual Spring Lobby Weekend, which focused on the critical issue of climate change.

Read new organizers' bios at [fcnl.org/advocacycorps](https://fcnl.org/advocacycorps).

Larissa Gil Sanhueza is young adult advocacy coordinator. 