



***South Central Yearly Meeting***  
*of the Religious Society of Friends in Arkansas,*  
*Louisiana, Oklahoma & Texas*

**Minute on Opposition to the Death Penalty in the Midst of the Global Pandemic**

The South Central Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) affirms our deep-seated opposition to the use of capital punishment. We also dedicate ourselves to actively working for a permanent end to the death penalty.

We are deeply troubled that, in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the government of the United States of America has willfully taken the lives of seven men, including one member of a federally-recognized sovereign Native American tribe who committed a crime on tribal land against a fellow tribe member. Apart from this gross violation of Native American sovereignty, we are appalled that the federal government saw fit to murder these seven men while over 200,000 Americans and over 120 federally incarcerated inmates have died from COVID-19.

While we mourn the innumerable losses of life and livelihoods caused by COVID-19, our hearts break at the deaths of these men who were denied the power of restorative and rehabilitative justice by an archaic judicial system. The basis of our Quaker faith and tradition teaches us to respect and honor all because “that which is of God” is present in everyone. The giving and ultimately the taking of human life belongs solely to our Creator, and we believe that this divine right is absolute. We will never endorse a criminal justice system which removes this power from God and places it into human hands.

Simply put, we are horrified that the federal government used resources to end human lives when those resources could have been diverted to save human lives. We implore government officials to work together in love and unity to prioritize legislation and executive actions which may bring about a quicker end to the COVID-19 pandemic over actions and priorities which seek to murder incarcerated persons.