

Memorial Minute for Donna McDaniel

(October 28, 1934 – July 9, 2024)

Donna Lee Bowen McDaniel was born in Chicago, IL in October 1934 and lived her childhood in Jamestown, RI, from where she took a ferry to high school in Newport each school day. She graduated magna cum laude from Tufts University with a major in History and then went on to Boston University where she earned a Masters in Education in Guidance and Counseling.

As a young adult, she worked with the US Department of Defense schools in Germany and Japan where she developed her life-long love of travel and immersed herself in other cultures. Returning to the US, she raised her two sons and pursued her love of writing as a journalist with the *Middlesex News* and the local *Southborough Villager* newspapers.

In the late 1980s, while accompanying her younger son in support of his own spiritual exploration, she found a home among Friends at Framingham Meeting. She soon became active on numerous committees at the meeting and eventually became an important link to the wider Quaker world when Friends General Conference invited her, along with Vanessa Julye, to write a book on Quakers and their relationship with African Americans. *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice* was published by FGC in 2009 and remains an important reference, not only for Friends with our complicated history, but also as a window into the tortured history of race relations in the US.

Donna was a Renaissance woman: a journalist, teacher, counselor, musician, active participant in two choirs, international traveler with one of them, leader of musical ventures at Christmas and other events at our meeting as well as being a loving and proud mother and grandmother to her sons and grandchildren.

Beyond her many accomplishments, Donna had a large and generous heart. She approached life with a deep passion and intellectual curiosity. When she felt called, she would anchor herself in her deep commitment to justice. She was honored in 2013 as an "Unsung Heroine" by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, both as the first woman on the Select Board in Southborough and for her devotion to that community.

Donna was justly proud of the research she and Vanessa Julye did in writing *Fit for Freedom*. Quakers had long rested on the laurels of some members who were early leaders in the abolitionist movement; however, long ignored was the way we nonetheless continued to reflect the prevailing white supremacy of the time and were not open to fully embracing African Americans as members of our meetings or educational institutions. *Fit for Freedom* has opened our eyes to our historical complicity. Donna's eyes were similarly opened in the process and she would admit that she emerged a changed person because of her intimate exposure to this painful history. The legacy of this book continues to resonate today as Quakers explore ways to be more honest and open about our continued complicity in white supremacy culture.

Donna's openness and transparency were what made her so loved in our meeting; her smile would brighten a room. She embraced the meeting as her second home and, in turn, we embraced her as she shared her life and struggles with us. It was hard not to feel a sense of reflected pride in her accomplishments because she allowed us to feel part of them. As life brought on changes that required her to leave her home in Southborough and move closer to her son and family in Boston, we missed her generous heart and grieved at the losses she faced.

Donna led with her heart and the love and pride she felt for her sons and their families were a constant in her life. At her memorial meeting in August 2024, there were many expressions of appreciation for her accomplishments. Most moving, however, were the expressions of love that were felt for her, a love that will be her most enduring legacy.

Framingham Friends Meeting

March 2025

Approved by Framingham Friends Meeting at a regularly scheduled Meeting for Worship with Concern for Business, March 16, 2025



Richard H. B. Lindo, Presiding Clerk