

# Listening Project on Diversity and Outreach in Baltimore Yearly Meeting (Conducted by the Baltimore Yearly Meeting Working Group on Racism Among Friends) July 2003

## Introduction

*There is nothing new about the Listening Project...thought leads to words leads to action leads to thought. What it is all about is encouragement of appreciation for complexity.*

**--David Grant, listening project trainer**

At its October 20, 2001 session, the Baltimore Yearly Meeting Interim Committee empowered the Yearly Meeting's Peace and Social Concerns Committee to provide a home for a group focused on issues of diversity and associated injustice. As those of us who were part of that group, which we named the Working Group on Racism Among Friends, began to meet and ponder our next steps, we decided we needed to learn what we could about the existing views and attitudes of Quakers in BYM on diversity among Friends. It also seemed to us that Friends' attitudes concerning outreach generally would also be particularly relevant to any effort to address racial diversity in our meetings.

We decided to do very detailed and deliberate listening to Friends throughout the Yearly Meeting by undertaking a "listening project." We wanted to ask questions about Friends' thoughts on Quakerism, their Monthly Meeting, racial diversity in the Monthly Meeting, outreach to their neighbors, and what, if anything their Meeting should do about any of these matters We wanted to do it in a manner that would stimulate ideas and deepen discernment.

A listening project is not designed to produce hard statistical data, but just such responses. It was developed as a community organizing tool by Herb Walters of Rural Southern Voice for Peace in 1981. Countless Listening Projects have been done around the country on a wide variety of issues including community development, environmental justice, ethnic violence, military spending, isolation and its effect on rural women, the criminal justice system, AIDS, breast feeding, living wages, and child welfare rights. Its power is based on the belief that listening can promote deeper understanding and empower people to work together to solve community problems. We decided to give it a try in Baltimore Yearly Meeting.

Bette Hoover, the Director of the American Friends Service Committee D.C. Peace and Economic Justice Program, provided Listening Project training to the Working Group on Racism Among Friends in November 2002. As part of the

training workshop, we identified several goals for our Listening Project:

1. Help members of the Working Group better understand the perspectives of the BYM Friends who are listened to.
2. Provide Friends who are listened to with an opportunity to explore beliefs and attitudes and behavior and to be heard.
3. Stimulate discussion and discernment at the BYM annual sessions by distributing and discussing the Listening Project report at Yearly Meeting in August 2003.
4. Stimulate thought and action on diversity and racism in BYM monthly meetings.
5. Promote growth and transformative change among the listeners.
6. Appreciate the benefits of the diversity we have and build on it.

We also tested and refined the questionnaire we had been developing since the 2002 BYM annual session. The questionnaire is reprinted at the end of this report. Interviewing began in earnest in January 2003 and continued through June.

We have listened to 70 Friends from 25 different Monthly Meetings in Baltimore Yearly Meeting. We made an effort to listen to Friends from all parts of the Yearly Meeting. We did not, however, concern ourselves with whether some meetings were "under represented" or "over represented" since the goal was to listen to Friends, not to produce statistics.

The Bethesda Friend Meeting Advancement and Outreach Committee decided to undertake the Listening Project as a Meeting activity and listened to 22 Friends from that Meeting--considerably more than were interviewed in any other Meeting. Interested Friends from Bethesda Friends Meeting have already met twice to discuss what they have learned from their listening and to consider next steps for their Meeting.

In the following pages, all of the indented material is quoted directly from the interviews.

## Part I: Life in our Meetings

### 1. Length of Quaker experience

Everyone we listened to has been Quaker for a number of years; though some as few as three years. Some have been attending Meeting for decades, and one person for 61 years. Most were clerks or otherwise active in their Meetings. Just over one quarter have been with the same Meeting the entire time they have been Quakers.

### 2. What do you like about your Meeting?

We heard that Friends like their Meetings for a variety of reasons, but the most frequently mentioned ones were community, family, spirituality, and people.

#### *Friends found the Meeting community...*

deep  
open  
strong  
spiritually led  
spiritual  
nurturing  
a lot of love  
hospitality and warmth  
acceptance, tolerance  
dynamic and active  
intellectual, friendly

It's a small Meeting (about five people regularly at this time) and we know each other well.

#### *Some told us the Meeting is good for their families...*

very family oriented  
sense of family  
support for family life  
so many families

It doesn't matter what your family looks like  
As a widow you can be an equal participant  
embraces children  
gives attention to children

#### *Some emphasized spiritual aspects...*

the Spirit is here  
spiritual home  
spiritual leadership

respect for youth spirituality

Meeting tends to become more spiritual when things are happening, although we sometimes need reminding.

theology

a place where I can be reminded that God and I have a relationship

the idea of direct communication with God

the inner voice

continuing revelation

centeredness

sense of calm

#### *Social activism of the Meeting was important for many...*

has a political and social consciousness,  
concerned with social justice  
involved in social issues  
our involvement with the larger world  
activism  
outreach of Quaker Meetings

#### *Others were drawn by what they found in their fellow-worshippers...*

very warm and kind  
very loving and caring  
like minded folk  
friendly, relaxed and kind of wacky  
open minded and accepting  
people listen carefully to each other  
elders  
people of all ages  
wonderful people  
a lot of smart people to learn a lot from

#### *For some, the support they felt was especially important...*

support given to people in difficulty  
the tone with which help was given  
support members feel for each other  
mentoring

#### *A number mentioned aspects of the worship...*

quality of both silence and vocal ministry in worship  
its silence  
contemplation

the messages  
thoughtful messages  
intellectual and spiritual depth in messages

***Some appreciated that their Meeting challenged them...***

being continually challenged to grow  
a challenging mix of views  
challenging and interesting

***Some mentioned the role the Meeting plays in their life....***

a place I can be a member and provide leadership and service  
center of my life  
Meeting will listen to you if you hit it over the head often enough  
I feel like I've found a home here  
The friendships  
I look forward to coming every Sunday. I feel like a sponge!

***Here are a few other interesting reasons we heard...***

concerned with actual living, practical  
what you said was how you lived your life  
close to home so I can bike there  
has history  
has answered all things  
structure is hidden but logical, can be discerned with patience  
Its egalitarianism. As soon as you walk in the door you have all the privileges of membership. I have been to other meetings that were not necessarily like that.

**3. If you could change one aspect of this Meeting, what would it be?**

***About every fifth Friend we listened to said there was nothing they would like to change. Many others, however, would like a change in the messages they hear during worship...***

messages that are less politically or personality driven  
read aloud before worship what's expected in terms of messages  
how worship is handled  
classes on speaking in Meeting re movement of the Spirit and thoughts  
messages that haven't gone through discernment

Some people speak in Meeting for Worship as if it were a self-help organization to help them with their personal problems. That bothers me a little sometimes, but I get over it.

it's too noisy  
more silence  
listen to God for God

***There were also many who said they would like their Meeting to be more diverse...***

reduce the fear response to diversity; we have fear instead of love  
more diverse and more activist  
the homogeneity creates smugness and complacency  
more diversity in both ethnicity and age  
more diverse - we tend to be all white middle class  
greater diversity  
more diversity - there are hardly any working class people  
it is richer when different racial/ethnic groups are involved and want to be there  
I feel I live in a Quaker ghetto.

***Other changes desired included...***

not be so complacent/self-satisfied  
enlarge the Meeting; it needs to grow; expand first day school space  
I would like different FMW Meetings for Worship to be separate worship groups, each with its own business meeting.  
meet earlier than 10:30 am  
Figure out how to get people to come to Business Meeting.  
more worshipful decision making  
more elders  
I think there are some members of the Meeting who consider themselves a bit more Quakerly than others. I would like them not to have that attitude.  
more hands-on outreach  
more contact with the outside world  
more inclusive of other approaches to religion  
less intellectual and more emotional  
we tend to like things as they are - pretty superficial and comfortable and don't want the boat rocked  
we often don't oblige the shape that comes up during Meeting for Worship. Ends too soon.

Our Meeting needs better processes to keep people from falling through the cracks. Sometimes people are hurt or sad and do not feel the support of the Meeting.

#### 4. What do you find most valuable about Quakerism?

*Many Friends told us they greatly valued the notion of that of God in everyone...*

not seeing anyone as better or worse, there is goodness in everyone.

*Many also valued the social action in Quakerism...*

the way we treat each other in community.

*Other responses we heard...*

Openness — being open-hearted and open-minded, seeking

spiritual focus

a way of living, the peace testimony

personal relationship with God

acceptance; lack of rules and ritual

continuing revelation

inner light and following one's leadings

silent worship

Quaker process

sense of belonging

application to parenthood

value of questioning

appreciation of nature

willing to listen

commitment to outreach

equality

honesty

democratic structure

everyone is encouraged to participate

It's non-judgmental, but calls Friends to a higher standard — not, "you're wrong", but "you're accountable."

slow, patient responses and judgement about people

The orneryness, mysticism, and institutional mysticism.

## Part II: Diversity, Racism and Quakers

### 1. Do you think Quakerism appeals differently to some ethnic groups than others? What accounts for the lack of diversity in many of our Meetings?

*Many thought the appeal was universal...*

With its silence everyone can come to it. It is incredibly transcultural

The root of the message is the same.

It is appealing to people who challenge the traditions of their ethnic group

can be a huge draw to people who are leaving a religion which is overbearing with its rules

Quakerism might be more appealing to the rebel in the family in any religious or ethnic group.

*Others chose to answer this question by mentioning social status or education...*

I tend to think along the lines of class.

We are a heady bunch.

a tendency to be too intellectual.

We are left-brained, verbal, controlled, and non-emotional.

Quakerism is more appealing to a higher education level.

We are a distinct social group from a similar social class.

It isn't about ethnic differences. It appeals to people who want to think.

*Some did try to differentiate ethnic or racial differences...*

I want my peace and quiet. Is that ethnic-specific (White Anglo-Saxon American)? I'm not sure.

There's nothing in Quakerism itself, but...something about our culture that isn't so appealing to other ethnic groups to explain why our attendance here is predominantly White.

Whites are expected to be quiet. Asians are quieter. But Blacks and Hispanics are more exuberant.

The belief that there is that of God in everyone appeals to those of us (African Americans) who have gotten the message that we are less valuable.

If you're aware of this religious group's history Quakerism has an appeal to African American men and women.

Black people don't know there are Black Quakers (and) don't know they'd be welcome.

It seems to appeal to Jewish intellectuals and white WASPy people who are not in touch with their emotions.

***Others considered Quakerism might not appeal to those from different religious traditions...***

It doesn't appeal to everyone because of their upbringing or background.

People tend to stay with the religion they grew up with.

In the traditional Black church you see something and do something and express yourself physically.

Our branch of Quakerism is not a common religious experience for a lot of ethnic groups.

Historically Quakers, despite anti-slavery work, did not invite African Americans in.

***Our lack of music and silence during worship were two aspects of Quakerism often mentioned....***

Sung music seems to be an important part of life for some ethnic groups.

Our form of worship would not appeal to some ethnic groups. This is why we don't appeal to most members of the African American community.

The Black tradition is more expressive outwardly.

***And some found this question unanswerable...***

I don't like this question much.

(I have) no idea and would not presume to guess.

We are so alike that this may color our ability to see how we are perceived.

**2. How important is the racial and ethnic composition of our meetings? How would we change if we became more diverse?**

***Some of us did not think such a change important...***

It's not an issue.

I think the individuals are what is important.

***A few opposed such a change...***

Our meeting is fine so don't push artificially the way the government has.

Some disparity is natural and correct. If you want singing and dancing become a Baptist.

I have some real hesitation with the idea that the Friends Meeting should go out and bring people from other faith communities away from their own chosen forms of

worship into Friends. If they are satisfied with their faith community then that is where they belong.

***A few had concerns about what might happen to the spiritual or social life of the meeting...***

Let's concentrate on getting our spiritual house in order; if you build it they will come.

I don't want to change basic worship.

You have to be careful not to lose the silence.

It's important so long as we don't lose our soul. I don't want to damage what we offer spiritually.

I don't want us to claim to be something we're not.

If we are reaching past our base just to attract people, we'll become a recruiting organization rather than a spiritual organization.

Once you start reaching out there may be a danger of attracting something you're not looking for.

***But the effort would be worth it if we could make it...***

It is important to be available when people want to look at the basis of their tradition.

I think it needs to be thought of...

If the meeting is too comfortable someone has to realize that...As the saying goes, "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."

***Many thought it very important and would be a major positive change in our meetings...***

I would love to see it, would be willing to challenge myself to make diversity more real.

I think something is certainly wrong, we aren't reaching out to huge portions of society. If we were really on track everyone in the room would look like a cross section of humanity and we don't.

***Benefits would include...***

It would be healthy for us.

Greater diversity would be a great gift to our community.

More diverse is better. It gives strength.

People who have been treated differently add richness to worship and social encounters.

We are losing out on different perspectives.

I like diversity. I think it's good. I enjoy sharing perspectives on the Quaker culture that come from different backgrounds - Baptist, Jewish, Islamic. They see different things in it - how the different parts of the various traditions can be integrated into one's own practice of Quakerism.

We need to cherish diversity to become a greater community.

I would love us to do that, as active as we are about peace, it's all connected. It's the local version of peace.

It would be fun to find out (how we would change).

*And it would be right, since...*

Lack of racial diversity is symptomatic of lack of openness to the Spirit.

It is most important that we mirror the world and hear different voices.

I wish that more people were pursuing their belief that there is that of God in everyone. That would mean people would work to understand the influence of US culture relative to race and gender and work through those negative messages they've gotten so they could come to a place of openness and love for everyone.

**3. If some aspect of the culture of the Meeting makes others feel uncomfortable, what ideas do you have about how the Meeting could address their discomfort?**

*Several Friends thought discomfort was inevitable when someone first attends Meeting...*

The awkwardness of the newcomer is a period to get through.

I attend the people of color meeting at FMW and it is not a matter of discomfort, but it is more comfortable there because of the shared experience.

Sometimes the discomfort is due to what the person brings in and carries around on his or her own. For example, Christ-centered Friends need to bring their leading and understanding to the Meeting with them, not to simply look for changes in the Meeting to become like them.

If you don't plant yourself in here, there's nobody reeling you in. We self select to come here, those of us who weren't scared away by the discomfort of the first four years!!! People need to give it time to become comfortable here.

You have to look at what makes them uncomfortable. If you do not see others who look like you then you may be uncomfortable. Religion is very personal. You want to feel comfortable.

Our unwritten rules (can lead to) misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

*Many Friends said we need to talk openly about the problem...*

A healthy organization would have communication — a flow of healing energy. One's spiritual life can deepen when you get help with your discomforts. It requires great effort.

Whatever it is that makes one uncomfortable should be explored quietly with the individuals concerned.

We use worship sharing when we have a discussion so people can feel safe to speak freely.

The early Quakers always spoke truth, using simple language. There was no beating around the bush.

We have had a lot of diversity of opinion on peace. But we talked, and people were not judgmental; we talked about things we never had talked about before.

Informal meetings about membership at Friends' houses are helpful. The Peace Testimony is hard on people and we had a chance to talk that through.

Discomforts could be addressed by bringing issues up in Monthly Meeting for Business or to a relevant committee, doing a newsletter article, or having a clearness committee. What approach is best depends on what approach seems most comfortable to the person.

On discomfort with jargon, When I clerk committees I try to be aware of the history behind procedures (and to explain it in plain language).

Promote small groups of common interests to organize a sharing of that narrower focus.

I'd like us to learn how to fight better — how to deal with conflict better.

Pay more attention to those who come and then leave. Ask those who came and left.

*Friends said Meetings need to be flexible...*

By being vulnerable enough to be open to the Spirit and allowing the possibility that there are different ways of doing things.

The Meeting should be willing to try new things. For example I arranged for a gospel choir to come in. And I've just given a talk on sacred music. I'd like it if we could reach across other boundaries.

The Meeting needs to understand the discomfort and decide whether to take it seriously. If it is about form and custom, address it. If it is about basic principle, it is not alterable.

(Some) people now find it difficult that things are being done differently by new people.

We might have a partly silent and partly programmed Meeting. Meeting in New England does that. But you

have to be careful not to lose silence, so then you really have to have an hour and a half or two hours.

You'd have to find someone willing to drive the changes. The Meeting is willing to change; we just don't know how.

One particular committee is called the Overseers' Committee. That name has connotations of slavery. I think that should be changed. Little things like that (may seem) somewhat similar to having a Confederate flag hanging.

We spent 6 years trying to change the name of the Overseers Committee. This word has been offensive to Friends of color and to others.

The inadvertent tendency for M&O and the clerks of other committees to be viewed as a secretive in-group such that new attenders are often shy about even posing their questions on who we are and what we do and how one gets on committees or in clerkship positions. Newcomers don't know how to find the door to getting involved in the business life of the meeting although there is an openness to involvement in worship. There has been some perceived exclusiveness with respect to committee work.

The Meeting needs to constantly be looking at its basic assumptions. You need to look at what your habits are and make yourself reach across the boundaries. People so easily go to what's comfortable.

#### **4. How important do you think it is to let people nearby know about the Meeting and Quakerism?**

*Many Friends support efforts to let our neighbors know about Quakers and some of them told us why they think so...*

I think it's very important to let people nearby know about it because it's the historical center of an historic community, not just a religion. But Quakers in general are rare enough that we need to let people know who we are and what we do so they can join if they see fit.

We need to be subtly bold... we need to let people know.... I want people to see where and how I worship.

Even if people won't come to join us, they should know about us.

Let people know. They are curious anyway. The general public sees us as flaky - pacifists, no minister, no music. But when they see a Quaker wedding or memorial service and Meeting for Worship, and there is a good social comfort level, there is a real possibility - get people

through the door and then they can make choices.

We ought to be unapologetic about people getting to know us.

It is very important in order to increase diversity.

Outreach is very important. While we don't proselytize we're not afraid to tell people our religious affiliation when the subject comes up. Doing a quick description of who we are and what we believe and practice when asked. You learn who you are when you teach others.

People don't know we are there, and might be interested if they knew.

It is important the residents in walking distance know there is a Quaker Meeting there. Looking at it from our own life, after years of liturgy I shifted to more contemplative. Probably there are others like that in Bethesda and if they know there is one here, they will come. We don't need to worry about advertising too much. It would be a joy if we got too big.

It's important to let people know that what we think about things is informed by our values. When we have things that are of interest to the community, we should let them know.

#### ***Others opposed overt efforts at publicizing the Meeting or Quakerism...***

If our commitment is Sunday only then it may not be worth the effort.

I assume people around here (in the immediate neighborhood) are not like us but that is a prejudice on my part.

I am a big believer in doing what I do and let people ask me or talk with me about why if they want to. I don't hide my Quakerism or push it.

We're still going for the self-selection model. I'm not a proselytizer, except through our lives.

Bethesda is overloaded already. Don't go door to door. Don't proselytize.

Don't worry about the Meeting's outreach; work on schools. There are plenty of congregations for people to go to.

#### ***Some urged moderation...***

One-on-one leadings should be how we reach out. Not

through advertising.

There can always be more. But there's no need to flagellate ourselves.

This is important. Many don't know about Quakerism and think it is old-fashioned. There is a lot of misunderstanding...no proselytizing. People don't want to be pushed.

## 5. How active would you like the Meeting to be in working to become more diverse?

*Many Friends thought we should go forward, but cautiously...*

This would be really useful. It would have to be very well thought out (new ideas) and broad-based (that many of us are interested). We could go there for example when it felt comfortable, arising from the Meeting.

We need to work a little harder at it. I'd like to find out more about what would be interesting about us for people of different backgrounds.

Theoretically, very active, but as clerk, I would hate for us to do something and not to do it well.

It is more important that we be open to responding to the opportunities that present themselves than that we go out and try to make an opportunity happen. If we respond willingly to all that we are asked to do, we will get there. If we go out trying to push our own agenda we will end up digging a hole.

*Some emphasized the problems in trying to attain more diversity...*

Racism in our society is our most difficult problem. It despairs of solution in many ways. It is unending. Patient seeking is how to engage it. It requires subtle self-knowledge. Where are we on affirmative action? This is in that line. It presumes color attentiveness.

I have to be careful of arrogance and self-righteousness. As a result of choices I have made to live and work in multi-racial settings, I think I know, but I don't.

Economic disparity is totally different. It is hard to address the disparity, especially if it is lower income.

This is a really difficult thing to do - better not to be too 'focused' (When psychologists come to work setting to discuss 'race relations' this can open up feelings which require support.)

*There were positive suggestions...*

Have a forum and a dialogue on how important this is to us.

The Meeting as a whole has to sign on to it - not just mouthing ideas.

We need to talk about why and then when we have bought into it, we can reach out.

What do we mean by diversity? Have target groups in mind.

Look at the barriers to greater diversity.

Having a critical mass of people of color is important.

Whites take for granted the dominant role.

We need to be willing to share the power

## Part III: Suggestions for the future

### 1. Describe any outreach of which you are aware.

*Several Friends inform others about Quakerism through their everyday relationships...*

When I meet people, I always bring up Quakerism in the conversation.

When I had an antiwar button on at a restaurant, lots of people came to talk to me about it.

Personal invitations could work to bring people to Meeting.

Our best practice is to live our testimony and to be Friends not just where we worship. It is certainly the reason I chose to come to a Friends' Meeting — because of those people I knew who were Friends.

*Meetings perform many types of outreach...*

advertise in the weekly paper

sent a half page ad in the newspaper against the war

announce special events in the local paper

have a website that is linked to the Yearly Meeting website

have published certain minutes and articles about social concern activities in local weekly newspapers.

have a sign out front, another in town, a phone and an answering machine

listed in the phone book (under both Quaker and Friends)

distribute fliers about Spring Fling

have a "Bring a friend to Meeting" day

We have a public graveyard. There's a place for a brochure to be picked up which constantly needs replenishing.

*Friends had lots of other ideas...*

Target publications that are more likely to be read by local minority groups.

T Shirts with Quaker slogans such as ‘you’ll find a friend at SS Friends meeting’

Bumper stickers

Peace signs

Hang up the peace flag that we bought

Connect with some of the agencies that share some of our beliefs. (play groups, cooperative or organic food stores, peace groups)

Talk with people of color in our meeting. What places do they intersect with?

We could have a booth at Taste of Bethesda. Put faces to the ideas of Quakerism.

### ***Some expressed reservations...***

There’s a fine line between promoting and proselytizing.

Not a big recruiting drive because that is sure to backfire.

### ***Many meetinghouses are used by other groups...***

We make the Meetinghouse available for memorial services for people who died of AIDS and open it as a Saturday night coffee house.

Both weddings and memorials under care of our Meeting seem to be a form of outreach.

Our meetinghouse is the center of an historic community. We have warm links with local black churches. This fall, there will be performed a play about three young girls who published an anti-slavery, pro-union newsletter, and that performance will be in our Meetinghouse. The purpose is to raise funds to restore the old black Methodist church here.

### ***Participation in community groups or projects, corporately or individually, connects us with like-minded people...***

We serve on the board of the local Interfaith Peace and Justice Center.

AVP project at juvenile detention center, and we did get an attender from that staff.

We used to do the soup kitchen.

We are part of an ecumenical outreach to the poor.

We had a tutoring project at the Baptist Home.

Kids in HIPP are from all over; we could do more of those kinds of things.

Get involved in the NAACP or any kind of Peace and Justice Work. That would be a way, as a white Quaker, of going to a group where the black culture is dominant.

Get involved in the Human Relations Commission.

Participation in interfaith dialogs

I think that just going in as equals on projects and committees can have the best effect.

Work with a local emergency help group. But to get away from the ‘we’re helping them’ mentality, the Christian charity thing. The better model is to join their group, meet them on their own terms in small groups, share a meal together.

Friendly Gardens (Quaker project of housing for low to moderate-income folk)

Every one of us could be a godparent to a kid — a mentor/guardian angel role.

Include the notion of reparations in our thinking. This country and we whites in it have been exploiting blacks for centuries. Folks are owed something. There are people to link up to in this regard. Instead of playing it so safe, we could be radical in our thinking.

### ***Witnessing for peace is a form of outreach...***

We sponsored peace vigils in our home community

Tell people why we are there at demonstrations.

Supporting of conscientious objectors is an important form of outreach.

### ***Some Friends get to know diverse people through Quaker organizations...***

Get involved in the work of AFSC and FCNL.

I am working with the AFSC on the African Initiative. AFSC tends to be vocal and on the right side of issues and good at coalition building. We have plans and funds from national to have educational forums and do tours linking people of African descent with new arrivals from Africa. I hope we can get more BFM folk involved.

### ***Some Friends exchange visits with other congregations...***

Have more exchanges with other congregations - black, Latino, Korean churches - visits back and forth for worship, social concern, and education activities of other congregations

We should invite the black congregation over once in a while to teach us how to sing.

First Day School children went to visit other congregations and they came to visit us.

Attend a prayer meeting elsewhere. Build up relationships with people in the community where we can kind of work together, but still acknowledging the differences.

### ***Others participate in interfaith coalitions...***

We’re doing inter-denominational meetings in the Ministerium that I attend, and we’re still mostly white.

Recently the Meeting has been working with other churches on peace services, i.e. 9/11, the death penalty; we're not initiating those, but we participate.

We take part in an interfaith woman's group.

### ***We could imitate other congregations' successful strategies...***

Often others have singles group, bingo, etc. We don't but we could.

We are not on TV the way Catholics and Baptists are. (Some churches) have all kinds of services for people - a wellness clinic and career development committee. They have scouts, gym, computer science course, SAT prep, rites of passage for teenagers - so many things. Forty-eight countries are represented in the congregation. They are recognized by flags being carried into the chapel on certain Sundays; As newcomers come, they are assigned to different "families" like the 12 tribes of Israel, and then they meet for Bible Study once a week, so you get to know people very well.

We should talk about ourselves as a Quaker church, not a meeting. The 15th street meeting in NY had an earlier programmed meeting and a later unprogrammed one. There were Kenyans and Jamaicans in the congregations, usually in transit.

I feel pleased that we have several multi-racial, multi-ethnic families that come regularly; I feel that's a good start.

### ***Friends spoke of schools as an inroad to Quakerism...***

If you look at a lot of Quaker schools, the students are mostly non-Quakers. Quaker schools could be a form of outreach.

The Meeting really doesn't have the attraction that a good school like SSFS does. The meeting would have to appeal to non-church folk, the more independent folk, who have already distanced themselves to some extent from a lot of black culture.

Share information with universities such as UDC, Howard, Bowie State, Southeastern.

When a student in high school complained about book covers with military themes, we got peace book covers to distribute.

We've set up a living history program at the local school, the first in the region to educate the children of freed slaves.

School children study lifestyles of time periods, spending a day in an 18<sup>th</sup> century Quaker schoolhouse. Our Meeting does that, and it's really magical.

The program of sending children from DC public schools to the Quaker arts camp worked well.

## **2. What are some ways the Meeting could be more welcoming to people of different cultures and backgrounds?**

***Friends had suggestions that could apply to any visitor. Many feel we should be more welcoming of visitors and less distracted by our friends and Meeting obligations after worship...***

Greet newcomers personally. We need to balance privacy and intrusiveness.

Have a committee that is aware of visitors and attenders and makes them welcome.

It would be nice to have someone by the door to shake hands as people go to the coffee hour.

People would feel more welcome if other people like them were present, and especially if those people who were like them specifically welcomed them.

### ***Friends had suggestions for helping integrate people into the Meeting...***

Sometimes that (initial) friendliness is not continued over the next several times

We should follow up people who sign our guest book

After I was a Quaker awhile, I began to forget how very strange people think Quakerism is. Sometimes they are incredulous, they need more guidance than what Quakerism provides.

Take a real interest in others' spiritual journeys.

Relationships are key, especially a variety of relationships.

If we are attentive to the gifts and potential of people, it will blossom to the benefit of us all. For example, there are probably 30 people of considerable spiritual depth who never speak in Meeting for Worship.

We need to be more willing to draw people in — to have a strong sense of what it means to be Quaker and to reach out from that perspective.

Speaking with them more directly about the business of Meeting would be helpful

We could have more social activities, mentoring of new attenders, more orientation, pairing people up (experienced and new), positive eldering.

Mention that newcomers can sign up as alternates for Friendly 8s

Have bios of members available.

I'd like to see more Quaker education; living, active, real-time treatment of Quaker education.

We need to try to be more attentive to the process of attenders becoming members.

Even if someone is interested (in joining us) it would take a lot of strength to break in; unless we close the link (between a newcomer's interest and the meeting community) they're going to go.

***Some feel that white Friends are not always racially sensitive or aware...***

On the matter of race relations, many people look at it very intellectually. How do we get beyond that? To the heart rather than the mind? There are some people who have looked at that and have figured some things out. The National Coalition Building Institute is one; Co-counseling re the isms is another. We are all good people with good intentions.

Have more open discussions about our racial makeup as a Meeting and more soul searching and self examination as a Meeting to be more confident that we are not all white because of racial prejudice or exclusiveness.

I've heard of some incidents from others at the Friends of Color worship group.

At the Independent Schools diversity group, the speakers always refer to some racial incident of being stopped by the police or encountering lower expectations (what are you doing in an AP class? You teach here and aren't the janitor?, etc.)

Being willing to listen as well as speak - to not discount other cultures and ways of thinking about things.

It's not racial...we treat everybody that way...the person of color might take it that way since we live in a racist society.

***There were many suggestions for Meetings...***

Include speakers from other ethnic groups in our adult and children's religious education.

The Religious Education Committee, because of diversity, needs to be a focal point in the Meeting, as an adjunct to a Quaker Life committee or a committee of Diversity.

An active youth group is very important. In today's life giving some type of principled center in areas of youth culture and values is critical to go out in the world with.

Having events that celebrate the diversity of our Meeting

Our potlucks ought to be celebrations of life. We have masochistic tendencies which turn off the aspiring middle class. One has to be respectful of middle class goals: the barbeque and TV are nice; sports and the military are huge.

Put up a poster showing all the languages spoken by Meeting members or showing where in the world Quakers are; something that reflects the diversity within Quakerism.

Query focused on diversity

The library is pretty good in terms of having multiracial literature.

If we had more messages delivered from the Bible we would have more people from that tradition, biblically centered; same is true with Christ centered messages

Put the diversity issue in Spiritual State of the Meeting questionnaire.

## Questionnaire

Listening to:

Date:

Meeting:

Listeners:

How chosen:

1. How long have you been attending Quaker Meetings?  
How long have you been attending your present Meeting?
2. What do you like about this Meeting?
3. If you could change one aspect of this Meeting, what would it be?
4. What do you find most valuable about Quakerism?
5. Is there anything about Quakerism that you think is more appealing to some ethnic groups than others?
6. Have you ever been made uncomfortable by some aspect of the culture of this Meeting? If so, what made you feel uncomfortable?
7. If some aspect of the culture of the Meeting makes others feel uncomfortable, what ideas do you have about how the Meeting could address their discomfort?
8. Can you identify some aspects of the culture of your Meeting that might be causing that discomfort?
9. How willing would you be for the Meeting to change any aspects of its culture in order to address that discomfort?
10. How important is the racial/ethnic composition of the Meeting to you? Explain.
11. How, if at all, would the Meeting be different if its members and attenders reflected the racial/ethnic populations within commuting distance of the Meeting?
12. What do you think accounts for the disparity between the culture of the Meeting and the surrounding neighborhoods?
13. How important is it for the Meeting to address that disparity?
14. How important do you think it is to let people nearby know about the Meeting and Quakerism? Describe any outreach of which you are aware.
15. What other ways could Meeting members and attenders reach out to people different than themselves?
16. What are some ways the Meeting could be more welcoming to people of different cultures and backgrounds?
17. How active would you like the Meeting to be in working to become more diverse?
18. Do you have other comments, suggestions, concerns?
19. Would you be interested in receiving a copy of the report of this Listening Project?
20. Would you like to discuss the results of this Listening Project within a group of other interested people from the Meeting?