

Assessing Racial Inclusion and Justice

Friends Meeting of Washington

2017

The leading to undertake this Meeting-wide assessment started with a growing concern over the lack of diversity among our membership. This Meeting in no way reflects the make-up of people within our city or even our zip code. Instead, our membership is predominantly of white European descent.

Although we do not know all the reasons for this, we can safely assume that we are doing something—perhaps a lot of somethings—which creates barriers and stumbling blocks to participation by people of color. The goal of this assessment is both to identify these stumbling blocks, and to discern a way to remove them. To do so, we will rely on the wisdom, reflection, humility, knowledge and creativity of both existing Meeting committees and the Meeting as a whole. Identifying and removing these barriers, we believe, is a necessary and overdue act of restorative justice. .

We recognize race is not the only area in which FMW falls short. The meeting needs to address the concerns of all who feel excluded or poorly served by society. However, we feel that we need to focus on race because of:

- The longstanding lack of participation in FMW by people of color
- The growing urgency that many Friends feel, energized by the Black Lives and Sanctuary Movements, to address racial power and privilege in FMW and other Quaker organizations
- The role institutional racism continues to play in aspects of the Religious Society of Friends despite our notable accomplishments over the years.

An assessment was authorized in the fall when the Meeting for Business established a Task Force on Race to look at the FMW's policies and practices affecting racial inclusion and justice. The Task Force began by leaning on an anti-racism audit developed in 2004 by the United Church of Christ, for which we are grateful. We later decided to develop our own assessment process focusing on broad questions that reflect the experience of our Meeting. We also decided that the process should be a self-assessment that represents the views of the various FMW committees, task forces, worship groups, and other groups. The role of the Task Force is to facilitate the initiation of this self assessment and pull together the responses of the various groups.

We ask that your group consider the questions provided with an open heart, and seek truthful answers to each. Awareness is the first step, and is often the most uncomfortable one—so much so, that we often seek ways to avoid it, or to diminish the extent of the problem. We seek as clear-minded an evaluation as you can make of our current practices. Later, when we are fully clear about these practices, we can together consider the ways they may be serving as stumbling blocks, and work to create practices and skills that are inclusive and barrier free.

Thank you for your willingness to undertake this assessment. May we all be strengthened by your courage and commitment to creating a fuller, more diverse community.

Assessment Questionnaire

1.UNDERSTANDING

Queries:

How do we seek to deepen our understanding of white privilege? What more should be done?

→ As adults

→ As children

How are we educating ourselves around issues of racism? What more should we do?

Illustrative Actions:

Conduct workshops on topics such as microaggressions, how racism affects both whites and people of color, etc.

- Organize discussion groups on being a person of color, using memoirs written by people of color and media (TV, movies) directed specifically to them.
- Educate ourselves about issues of particular interest to people of color by taking advantage of the resources in the “Black Studies” department of local universities.

Practices Recommended

(To be filled in by FMW committees, groups, etc.)

2.REACHING OUT

Queries:

Are we letting people know about Friends Meeting of Washington? Are we regularly reaching out to people of color and their communities?

What should we do to improve that outreach?

Illustrative Actions :

- Let people know we exist in ways other than “word of mouth” such as print, broadcast and online media
- Make sure information about the Meeting shows up in communities of color and in media read by those communities
- Conduct a listening project within the Meeting on diversity and outreach.

Practices Recommended

(To be filled in by FMW committees, groups, etc.)

3.WELCOMING

Queries:

What does it mean to be welcoming to people of color? Are we actively engaged in such welcoming?

What should we do to improve our welcome to people of color?

Illustrative Actions :

- Become sensitive to the existence of specific barriers individual people of color may encounter in becoming involved and work to overcome them. Welcome input from people of color who are already part of the meeting community.
- Conduct First Day School programs that assume the presence of children of color and work to meet the needs of all children
- Learn how houses of worship attended largely by people of color support their membership and consider using similar approaches in the Meeting

Practices Recommended

(To be filled in by FMW committees, groups, etc.)

4.WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY

Queries:

How do we interact with our neighbors who are people of color? Are we working together on issues of mutual concern? What do we have to bring to the table?

How can we improve our community work, particularly on peace and social justice issues of concern?

Illustrative Actions:

- Develop joint youth program with a multicultural congregation or one serving mostly people of color
- Become actively involved in social justice work in our community that is led by people of color.
- Reach out to other local congregations to see where our interests and programs may coincide.

Practices Recommended

(To be filled in by FMW committees, groups, etc.)

5. THE MEETING'S BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

Queries:

How are we fostering racial justice in our Meeting's business relationships such as banking and investments, purchase of goods and services and employment?

How could we improve?

Illustrative Actions:

- Review the FDIC's Community Reinvestment Act Report and determine the compliance record with respect to fair lending, mortgage lending or other rules regarding equity of access to financial services of any financial institution with which we are doing business or are considering doing business.
- Advertise our employment and service needs in ways that reach businesses and communities of color.
- Obtain any existing and current lists of businesses owned by people of color and use those lists to let those businesses know of opportunities to do business with the Meeting.

Practices Recommended

(To be filled in by FMW committees, groups, etc.)