

FGC's Institutional Assessment

A Spiritual Challenge Intertwined with Cultural Challenge

Quakers strive to put Spirit at the center of our lives. However, we are also cultural creatures, and we have been socialized into the dominant culture. Structural oppression, for example, has played a profound role in the life and ministry of the Religious Society of Friends for over 350 years, even while Quakers have been engaged in important social justice movements such as Abolition, anti-war efforts, prison reform, and more.

Structural oppression doesn't diminish the Spirit in us or the vision of a “great people to be gathered.” It creates structural barriers that become stumbling blocks to full participation by all in our faith community. To dismantle these stumbling blocks we must tap into the power of the Spirit while we also acknowledge the truth that structural oppression and systemic racism in particular hold all of us captive. You can't address a problem if you don't think it exists.

We are challenged to develop covenants with each other – to establish right relationships among and within the diverse communities within FGC. This is not a competition for primacy. Instead, we are called to create a commitment to walk together with Spirit in supporting one another.

What are the goals of an institutional assessment on racism?

- Build institutional capacity for FGC to recognize and overcome structural racism. FGC wants to develop the skills to continue this work on its own after the assessment without further help from outside consultants.
- Name the barriers to full participation in FGC at all of its levels. FGC wants to be thorough in examining all levels and aspects of the institution and its activities.
- Develop a vision for inclusion and articulate change goals that are broadly owned by staff, governance, and our member bodies. FGC wants clear goals to which we can hold ourselves accountable in the next 3 to 5 years.
- Provide clear next steps – both content and direction towards goals.
- Share our experience and learnings with yearly and monthly meetings, with the hopes of strengthening the will and capacity for change throughout the Religious Society of Friends.

- That FGC as an institution and, we pray, Quaker communities in general become more meaningful and inviting environments for People of Color.

What are the issues to be addressed? Why the focus on racism?

At the 2016 FGC Gathering, Friends of Color experienced racial wounding and called once again for change within FGC. Learn more about this by reading **Issues of Race at the 2016 Gathering: Steps Taken & Additional Considerations (August 2016)**, available at www.FGCquaker.org/why-inst-assess

We recognize race is not the only area in which FGC falls short of full inclusion. We are concerned about marginalization of our youth, Friends who are trans* and gender nonconforming, Friends with physical and other disabilities, and Friends both working class and upper class who experience exclusionary bias among Friends. While we acknowledge the need to address all these concerns, there are several reasons why we believe the focus at this time needs to be on racism. Some of the reasons include:

- A race-focused plan is likely to generate insights and concrete changes about how FGC can become more inclusive of others who currently experience marginalization.
- A growing urgency among Friends, energized by the Black Lives Movement, that we must address the inequities of racial power and privilege in Quaker institutions as well as in the secular society as a whole.
- Many Friends of Color engaged with FGC have asked that we undertake an institutional assessment focused on race and racism. After 15 years of anti-racism work, FGC needs to focus more sharply on structural racism within FGC as an organization. We hope this will illuminate similar issues throughout the Religious Society of Friends.
- Several of FGC's member yearly meetings and a few monthly meetings have sent formal communications endorsing the request for an institutional assessment. (See [Attachment Two](#) for minutes from New England, Northern and Lake Erie Yearly Meetings, and from five monthly meetings and one monthly meeting peace and social action committee.)

Costs of an Assessment

The current estimate is \$60,000. This includes conventional consulting fees and travel costs, a large initial training workshop (including room and board costs for everyone and some travel assistance), and meal and travel costs for the rest of the work of the Assessment Committee. It also includes the costs for a half a day a week for a year for the (FGC staff) Assessment Coordinator, Vanessa Julye.

We are not hiring consultants to undertake the Assessment. We are hiring consultants to train the Assessment Team to undertake the Assessment. In this way it will more fully be our Assessment, and we will build Quaker capacity to undertake future similar Assessments.

Likely Timing of an Assessment

- Co-Clerks of Assessment Team approved February 2017
- Fundraising goal reached by April
- Contract with consulting firm signed May
- Initial training for Assessment Team, FGC leadership, and other stakeholders, September 2017
- Assessment undertaken by Assessment Team with collaboration by staff, governance, and others
- Report with recommendations comes to FGC Central Committee, October 2018.
- Report shared with yearly and monthly meetings, November 2018
- Central Committee authorizes implementation of some or all recommendations, October 2018
- Ongoing reports to yearly and monthly meetings about implementation of Assessment, 2019 and beyond

Conclusion

We are seeking the beloved community, where every person is valued and that of God in every person is respected and cherished. Removing barriers to inclusion for all who would be part of the Quaker way is fundamental to nurturing that beloved community.

See also these documents

The can be downloaded at www.fgcquaker.org/why-institutional-assessment

- 2016 Minutes Supporting an FGC Institutional Assessment
- Yearly Meetings with 2016 Statements concerning Racism and Inclusivity in the Religious Society of Friends
- Racial Issues at 2016 Gathering