Each of Us Inevitable

Some Keynote Addresses,
Given at
Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns and
Friends General Conference Gatherings,
1977–1993,
Revised, Expanded Edition

**Becky Birtha, Thomas Bodine, Elise Boulding,
John Calvi, Stephen Finn, Ellen Hodge,
Janet Hoffman,
Arlene Kelly, William Kreidler, George Lakey,
Ahavia Lavana, Muriel Bishop Summers,
Elizabeth Watson,
David Wertheimer, and Dwight Wilson**

Edited by Robert Leuze

**Published by
Friends for Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns**

Published by
Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns

FLGBTQC website: http://flgbtqc.quaker.org

Cover Illustration by
Melanie Weidner
melanie@createstudio.com

Book Design and Production by
Robert Leuze
Robert Leuze & Associates
245 West 104th Street, 16 C
New York, NY 10025
RLeuze@rcn.com
212-662-3252

Complete Contents

"Each of us inevitable,
Each of us limitless—each of us with his
or her right upon the earth,
Each of us allow'd the eternal purports
of the earth,
Each of us here as divinely as any is here."

—Walt Whitman: "Salut au Monde," 11, Leaves of Grass

Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC), until recently known as Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (FLGC), is a North American Quaker faith community within the Religious Society of Friends that affirms that of God in all persons—lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, transgender, and transsexual. It gathers twice yearly: Midwinter Gathering is held over the long weekend surrounding U.S. President's Day in February and Summer Gathering is held with the larger Friends General Conference Gathering the first week in July. Once known as Friends Committee for Gay Concerns, the group has met since the early 1970s for worship and play, its members drawing sustenance from each other and from the Spirit for their work and life in the world—in the faith that radical inclusion and radical love bring further light to Quaker testimony and life.

Preface to the Internet Edition

The new, revised and expanded edition of *Each of Us Inevitable*—the printed compilation of keynote addresses given by beloved Friends at prior Gatherings of Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (FLGC) and Friends General Conference (FGC)—includes all the talks in the original edition and eight additional keynotes, bringing the total to 19. The added talks were given between 1979 and 1993.

In February 2003, the community united on changing its name to Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC). The talks are available as separate Adobe Acrobat PDF files for each author on the FLGBTQC website, <*http://flgbtqc.quaker.org*>.

It is hoped that keynotes given after 1993 also will be published someday; however, the richness of content in these additional already-edited talks suggested moving ahead in the present when the possibility of publication exists.

❦

It may be helpful for some readers browsing on the internet if I offer here at least brief hints, however inadequate, of that "richness" that lies in specific talks.

Elizabeth Watson (1977: "Each of Us Inevitable") came to help us accept ourselves. Her message is not "love the sinner, not the sin," but, "I love you, and I love you *for* your givenness, not in spite of it." She offers an account of the life story and the healing words of Walt Whitman.

Arlene Kelly (1979: "Estrangement and Reconciliation") brought answers in the form of difficult questions: How can we remain engaged with people who are different? From what do we feel estranged? What has caused hurt and anger within us? Do we see that we come to Gathering both as oppressor and oppressed? Can we find ways to step into the shoes of the other person? What is involved in being "reconciled"?

Janet Hoffman (1982: "Eros and the Life of the Spirit") spoke on themes of exploring and wrestling with new insights; fiery passion; relinquishing our need; and transformation. Eros, she believes, drives us toward God and gives our life its basic meaning. Love demands a complete inner transformation. Love (not guilt) leads to social change.

Dwight Wilson (1984: "Nurturing Our Relationships within an Often Hostile Community") spoke from his personal experience as a black man. His message was concerned with trusting one's own perceptions and understanding—not society's mainstream view, not scripture, not the internalized hatred that society may try to induce in us. He spoke of the sometimes negative role of the institutional church for blacks, women, pacifism, gays, and lesbians.

Arlene Kelly (1984: "Nurturing Friendship and Lover Relationships") sees "coming out" as a step toward taking responsibility for ourselves as individuals. In our friendship and lover relationships, are we feeling defective, she questions; have we relinquished some of our power? She discusses ten factors essential to building relationships that are whole.

Elizabeth Watson (1985: "On Wholeness") recognizes our patriarchal, hierarchal, and homophobic civilization and religious heritage. She discusses the Christian church and Jesus; the power of the human community; "dwelling in possibility," and her personal odyssey into wholeness. Can we take charge of life and healing by imaging a desired outcome?

Elise Boulding (1986: "The Challenge of Nonconformity") acknowledges the need to bond across differences—because we need others to make us whole—and the fact that it's more difficult for those called to "nonconforming witnesses." For "publicly gay" persons, special strengths are needed; they are the social change activists. The "gay witness," she says, includes equality, nonviolence, community, and simplicity; gays should be viewed not as embattled victims but as co-workers in reweaving the social web for us all.

Thomas R. Bodine (1987: "Caring Matters Most"), drawing on his own experience, began with a description of the wide diversity of Friends throughout the world. How to change people? How to bridge the differences? he wondered. What happens if we seriously try to practice Christian "gifts of the spirit" in those parts of the Quaker world that hate homosexuality?

Janet Hoffman (Friends General Conference, 1987: "To Listen, To Minister, To Witness"). Her wide-ranging talk includes: living "without seatbelts"; following a corporate leading, not censoring it; "dis-illusionment"—a good thing ("Offend me!" she declares); to minister—sometimes just by being oneself; to love someone—to become in some sense the person we love; to witness—to be faithful to the spirit. She touches on personal growth, the true evangelist, continuing revelation, seeking, stages of development in pacifism, and committed unions.

David Wertheimer (1988: "Bias-Related Violence, Gay Marriage, and a Journey Out of the Society of Friends") shares some personal, Quaker-related experiences: seeking marriage with his (male) partner under the care of his meeting; studying and later teaching at Quaker schools; enrolling as a Quaker in divinity school. He asks whether Quakerism works well only when it can function one step removed from the harsh realities that it contemplates. He sees FLGC as a committee on sufferings, a critical group to helping Quakerism discover how to survive. Death threats led him to question his Quaker belief in nonviolence. His talk includes input from those present at Gathering.

Ahavia Lavana (1988: "Helping and Healing"). When Ahavia's son Hunter had AIDS and later died of it, what helped and what did not help? What was healing and what was not? She speaks on accepting what is beyond our control.

Bill Kreidler's address (1989: "Tending the Fire") is his intensely personal but often humorous account of learning to tend his spiritual flame following an addictive, abusive relationship—by being honest, by being open, by practicing, and by being easy with himself. He talks of the ministry of our community and of how it helped him reach the goal he had envisioned ("old Quaker ladies" tap dancing).

Ellen Hodge (1989: "Tending the Fire") offers differing images of fire: Kristallnacht, persecution of "witches," a 1963 bomb in a Birmingham church, Vietnam and Cambodian napalm; candlelight vigils for the slain Harvey Milk; the Japanese *Bon* festival. She retells, in modern vernacular, the Biblical story of Moses for its relevance to our situation.

Stephen Finn (1990: "Celebrating *All* Our Being") describes a personal journey, illustrating reasons some people have trouble celebrating their being. He asks, does one feel shameful rather than worthy of experiencing "heaven on earth"? Does one adopt compensatory mechanisms to get through a life without heaven? Does FLGC sometimes serve to shield us from the need to be open about our shame?

Muriel Bishop Summers (1990: "On Living in Integrity") spoke of living with integrity—the quality of one's relationship with all of creation—and with oneself: a process. She discusses the balance between integrity and safety; the need of being whole, not fragmented; some essentials for wholeness; and the Divine Presence as ultimate reality, whose nature is love and whose character is truth.

John Calvi (Friends General Conference, 1990: "Laying Down the Weapons 'Round Our Hearts") offers steps to healing: surrendering; inviting one's angels; receiving, with honesty and tenderness, the messages that are sent; entering upon the dance between hope and fear.

Becky Birtha (1991: "'Accept It Gracefully'— Keeping Our Creative Gifts Alive") shares her personal experiences with healing, growing, dealing with pain, and loving herself—often as expressed in her poems.

George Lakey (1991: "Our Bodies, Our Elves") sought a vision of the new creation. He emphasizes, in six general areas, gifts that lesbians, gays, and bi's can give to the Society of Friends and the larger world; the areas are embodiment (in a human body); the erotic (as a bridge to spiritual experience); vulnerability (seen as a doorway); facing pain; reaffirming difference; and love (moving beyond judgmentalism).

Elizabeth Watson (1993: "Night and Day") relates how the titles of some Cole Porter songs evoke reflections from her own life. "Night and Day"—falsely dividing the world (a continuum) into opposites. (Are we the "good guys"?) "Down in the Depths"—unlearning the shame and guilt inspired by our Judeo-Christian tradition. (If there is sin, it is in not caring.) "In the Still of the Night"—embracing the darkness; finding it full of possibility, a time for gestation, for creation, for rest.

—ROBERT LEUZE

❦

EDITOR ROBERT LEUZE has been involved with gay Quaker groups since 1973, first in New York City where he attended Morningside Meeting and subsequently with the group that evolved to become the present-day Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns. He grew up in rural Northern New York near the eastern end of Lake Ontario, amid the extreme homophobia of the McCarthy period. During his college years at Yale University no one he knew (or knew of) was openly gay. He came out (to himself and two or three others) his senior year and, a year after graduation, moved to New York City. He and his present wife Sarah fell in love in the late 1960s and were married in 1969, believing that psychoanalysis had changed his orientation. He came out for the second time in the mid-1970s, but he and Sarah remain very happily married after 34 years. He pursued a career as an opera singer in the 1970s and 1980s and continues to perform in solo concerts—concerts that usually include songs relevant to the gay experience. He is a longtime member of the Yale Gay and Lesbian Alumni/ae Association (Yale GALA), and of Outmusic, a GLBT organization for singers and songwriters.

Kim Hanson

Robert Leuze

Bias-Related Violence, Gay Marriage, and a Journey Out of the Society of Friends

David Wertheimer

Keynote Address, Midwinter Gathering
Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns
February 1988
Fifteenth Street Meetinghouse, New York City

The topic I've been asked to address is, "What should be the Quaker response to bias-related violence?" It's a question I don't have an answer to. To help us enter into a discussion of this topic, I'd like today to try something a little different. I don't want to do the usual cut-and-dried presentation on facts, figures, and statistics or the gruesome details of the harsh atrocities of this community's experience on the streets, in the home, and in the workplace. Rather, because I feel close to this group, I'd like to move into this topic through sharing from my own experience. Sharing, as George Fox would put it, some of what I've come to know experimentally.

When I was asked to join with the Midwinter Gathering, I was very excited about coming here to be with you. I didn't know at the time just how fitting this week would be. As of Tuesday of this week I am no longer a Quaker. So perhaps the subtitle of this session should be: "How I survived Quakerism."

It's a rather long story, but I'll go into it briefly. It is quite relevant to a discussion of violence. Almost five years ago, my life partner and I applied to my meeting to be married under its care, or united under its care (we didn't particularly mind what word was used: It seemed ultimately to matter more to the meeting than to us). Our simple request became a good old-fashioned Quaker knockdown, dragout exploration, moving from committee to committee. There was a committee to talk about whether or not the meeting could talk about a committee for clearness—that kind of thing. I couldn't figure it out. And it went around and around and around for more than two years, and finally about two and a half years ago the meeting finally decided for the *second* time, that not only could it not unite us, but that the topic had become so divisive that the meeting could no longer consider the issue.

The more I get involved in this work, the more Quakerism's simplicity and Quakerism's occasional quietude seem not to fit the world of New York in 1988. Even just a few years ago I would have expected myself to say just the opposite, that the quietude, the simplicity of Quakerism is the Answer.

Upon learning of their decision, I wrote back to my meeting, and I said basically, "Look, you know, it's too bad that this has happened, and too bad that two classes of membership in the Society of Friends have been unfairly delineated, and that I fall into a second class or category." And I wrote in this letter that, in the olden days, when an individual was found to be incompatible with his or her meeting, that individual was asked either to leave voluntarily or was read out of meeting. And I said in the letter that since it didn't seem the meeting had the courage to read me out, I must resign.

It's not that hard to make Quakers feel guilty. *[Laughter]*.

Well, overseers received my letter and wrote back the kind of letter that I never expected to receive from Quakers: We regret to inform you that at this time we cannot accept your resignation from the meeting. And so I couldn't even quit! It was awful. I was kept on the mailing list; I kept getting the monthly minutes (which I enjoyed). Although I no longer lived down in the area (this was a meeting down in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting), my sister lives right nearby the meeting and I visit her quite often—it would have been possible for me to remain quite active in the life of the meeting. But I really didn't feel like going back there. And, over the years of committee inquiries, my lover had become totally alienated from the meeting and said, "David, how can you put up with those people?"

But I kept getting the monthly meeting notices, and also, of course, the solicitations. The meeting still wanted my money. I wrote back the first few times that I got the request, saying I couldn't give anything now, but that when I felt that I was a full status member of meeting I would certainly be able to reconsider it. And I thought of really nasty ways of responding to the appeals, such as sending half of a check for a hundred dollars as a symbol of being only half a member of meeting. But I never got quite that rude. *[Laughter]*

Well, the impact of my economic boycott finally set in. The yearly meeting share that every monthly meeting has to cough up was becoming increasingly difficult for my monthly meeting. I received a call on this past Tuesday from one of the meeting's overseers, a man I feel very close to and respect enormously, in fact. They chose well whom they had call me. And he said, "Look, David, you haven't sent us a contribution for some time, and we're wondering if you're willing to have your name dropped from membership."

And I said, "Friend, let's talk a little history here."

I said, "Two and a half years ago I resigned from meeting, and my resignation was not accepted. I've never withdrawn that letter. If meeting sees fit at this time to drop me from membership then that must be the meeting's decision, not mine. You own it. You take it." And the overseer said, "Well, that's fair." And as far as I know I've been dropped from meeting.

So this is the first time that I've ever been in a meetinghouse as an ex-Friend.

Let me back up at this point, because this space—this room we're in today—is a very special space to me. This room is very much part of who I am, and how I have gotten to be where I am right now. I went to school over there, [pointing toward the window and Friends Seminary across the courtyard] from sixth grade through twelfth grade. And that was a time when this space, particularly the AFSC next door, was bustling with activity around war, and peace, and Vietnam, Indochina. I became very, very interested in all that. And I started in the sixth grade as a volunteer in the AFSC office, stuffing envelopes. And I saw all these people who were calling themselves Quakers (I wasn't a Quaker at the time) involved in all this neat stuff, and I wondered where their commitment came from. Why did they do what they did? And that led me to meeting for worship.

That led me here. To this room.

And it was a very powerful experience. Some of it in retrospect was a little amusing. I remember from sixth grade through about tenth grade I would come in here, and the first thing I would do was pray that I would never be drafted into the military. And I decided that the best way to do this (this is a sixth grader's mind at work now) was to focus my prayers to the highest point in the room. I have never told anybody this. This is a true confession. I would look up into that thing [in the ceiling of this room], the ventilator, and pray that I would never be drafted.

Well, it worked! *[Laughter]*

Maybe it wasn't so silly after all. I remember that by the time I made it to twelfth grade I had been under, in, on top of every possible piece of this building. Once when I was in the attic I found that thing [the ventilator]. And I said, Wow! You can pull off that cap, you can pull off the top, and look down into the meetinghouse. So I went up to the cap and pulled it off, and I said, "Oh, it's the meetinghouse!" And I realized where I had been praying to all those years—a hole in the ceiling.

I went from here to Haverford College. I wanted to go to a Quaker School. And it was at Haverford that I finally decided I wanted to become a member of meeting. I actually waited until after the draft issue had passed because I wanted to be sure that I *really* wanted to be a Quaker, not just so that I could tell my draft board that I was a Quaker in order to avoid going into the military.

After college I had no idea what I wanted to do, or of who I was. So I did what seemed logical; I became a Quaker school teacher. I went to the Westtown School to teach, stayed there three years, and transferred my membership to the Westtown Meeting. While at Westtown I became a dean of boys—an administrator of residential life. I also came out as a gay man.

In my third year at Westtown I decided to throw caution to the winds, and that it didn't matter who knew that I was gay. I decided that if being gay was nothing to be embarrassed about or ashamed of, it was also nothing to hide. And that led to some interesting times at Westtown. But I finally decided that I needed to leave there because there was too much conflict generated by being a boarding school dean, being gay, and being open about it. The school didn't force me out, I want to be clear about that. I just decided that I wanted to leave. I still didn't know what I wanted to do with my life, but I was beginning to sense that my gayness was becoming part of the plan.

> [FLGC] is itself almost a committee on sufferings of many kinds. I think it will be a critical group to helping Quakerism discover how to survive, how to retain meaning, how to facilitate its continued growth in this world and not its continued stagnation.

So I went to divinity school. A lot of the people at this gathering have gone to divinity school. When a Friend goes to divinity school, there are always interesting reactions. People ask: "Oh, what's your denomination?" And you say, "Well, I'm a Quaker." Then you get one of three responses: You get people who say, "What's a Quaker?" You get people who say, "What's a Quaker doing in divinity

school?" And then you get the one that I like the best, "Oh, you're another one of those Quakers in divinity school!" *[Laughter]*

I realized after my second year in divinity school that a Quaker with a divinity degree is something akin to a moose with a hat rack. So I did a social work degree, too. I figured I needed something to help myself get a job after I graduated from divinity school.

As I was finishing up my schoolwork, I really started wrestling with the question, What did I want to do? And I must say this book, *Faith and Practice,* 1972 edition, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, was very helpful. The section on the peace testimony had always been the most important piece of *Faith and Practice* for me from those first years of volunteering with AFSC onward. And one of its paragraphs reads,

> Since our peace testimony is not only active opposition to war but a positive affirmation of the power of good to overcome evil, we must all seriously consider the implications of our employment, our investments, our payment of taxes, and our manner of living as they relate to violence. We must become sensitive to the covert, as well as the overt, violence inherent in some of our long established social practices, and institutions, and we must attempt to change those elements which violate that of God in everyone.

Now, that's a mouthful.

I spent a long time pondering how to activate that testimony in my own life. And I finally decided that I wanted to try to combine what were my passions for two issues: the gay movement and the anti-violence movement. I had been involved in one for a long time; I had been involved in the other for only a short time but no less passionately. So I decided to get involved in the gay and lesbian anti-violence movement.

In New York the clear way to do that was to become involved with the Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project—which had been around for some time.

Dealing with acts of physical violence on a daily basis hasn't been easy. This is where I'd like us to focus today. The things that I've witnessed—the brutalities, the atrocities, the incredible violence that lives on the streets of this city—have challenged my faith in an extraordinary way: Twenty years ago when I was sitting here looking up at that [ventilator], I never would have dreamed that what has happened to my thinking would happen. The more I get involved in this work, the more Quakerism's simplicity and Quakerism's occasional quietude seem not to fit the world of New York in 1988. Even just a few years ago I would have expected myself to say just the opposite, that the quietude, the simplicity of Quakerism is the Answer. I don't know that anymore.

The millenarian passion of the early Friends, when I go back and read it, seems a bit anachronistic today. Certainly the smug contemplative silence of

many contemporary Friends is fraught with denial. Denial is one of Quakerism's best weapons.

I've come to believe, in part, that today's Quakerism works well only when it can function one step removed from the harsh realities that it contemplates. Out at the Westtown School, Quakerism works quite well—in a very homogeneous, comfortable, pastoral atmosphere. And you can sit in those country meetinghouses, or even in this city meetinghouse, and contemplate from a distance what is happening out there. But I don't know how well Quakerism actually functions out there today.

Can Quakerism survive today, when dealing squarely with sufferings in the world? The pondering of this question is one of the reasons it's so exciting to be here with FLGC, because this group—which has grown enormously over the years—this group is itself almost a committee on sufferings of many kinds. I think it will be a critical group to helping Quakerism discover how to survive, how to retain meaning, how to facilitate its continued growth in this world and not its continued stagnation. Now, that's a big topic: How to help Quakerism survive.

So let us focus it down a little bit back to bias-related violence. What should be Quakerism's response to bias-related violence? Before we break into small groups to discuss this question, I want to tell you one more story. I had an extremely powerful and disturbing experience recently. I'm sure we've all thought about the Quaker peace testimony, about pacifism. You must all remember those old debates you had in high school or college late at night: You're being held hostage, and the person that is holding you hostage is distracted and you have a way of killing that person. Do you kill him?

I know I used to say stoically, "No, I'd rather die than take the life of my captor." But that has changed. Over time I've received several death threats at my office. There are a lot of crazy people out there. I routinely forward the threats to the police, and usually the police respond by telling me that it's a threat from a crackpot; it's not serious; don't worry about it. And I forget about it.

Not too long ago, I received a rather lengthy threatening letter, and I forwarded it to the police. They called back and said, "This one's serious." I said, "Oh. What should I do about it?" They said, "Do you want some protection?" I said, "No, don't be ridiculous; I don't want the police to follow me every step I take, that's absurd." They said, "Well, we asked. *[Laughter]* We tried."

And a couple of days after that I was flipping through newspapers (I read a number of newspapers every day; I love reading newspapers) on the subway ride home to Brooklyn, and I caught myself reading a gun ad. I caught myself reading one of those ads that's in the back of the paper that says, "We will help you to get a license to carry a firearm."

Well, this really shocked me. I realized suddenly that I had changed my answer to that old college conundrum: that if I were in that imaginary hostage situation I'd blow my captor's head off. No hesitation. I wondered what that meant about my relationship to the peace testimony. I know that going out and getting a gun is not the answer. At least I still *want* to believe that. End of story. The question remains: What should be the Quaker response to bias-related violence? It has to be more than something that is just contemplative. It has to be something that is more than that smug detachment: "Well, we think it's a very bad thing, thank you."

What can friends do, actively, about bias-related violence of all kinds? I'd like us to split up into six groups to discuss that and then come back together and share with each other how each group decided to tackle that question.

So that we can share a common ground for this discussion, I offer a definition of bias-related violence that comes from the California Commission on Bias-Related Violence:

> The Attorney General's Commission on racial, ethnic, religious, and minority violence considers an act of hate violence to be any act of intimidation, harassment, physical force, or threat of physical force, directed against any person or family or their property or advocate, motivated either in whole or in part by hostility to their real or perceived race, ethnic background, national origin, religious belief, sex, age, disability, or sexual orientation with the intention of causing fear or intimidation, or to deter the free exercise or enjoyment of any rights or privileges secured by the constitution or laws of the United States.

Now that's a very legal definition. Good luck in your deliberations.

[Break for discussion groups]

It's nice that it was so hard to break up those discussions—it sounds like a lot was going on. If this worked, we should have six clerks who are ready to report.

Clerk 6: Quakerism was originally founded on two aspects, the retreat into silence, worship and contemplativeness, complemented by the advance into the world with what we get from ourselves. We should not try to think and act globally, even as we remember global problems. Basically we talked about not allowing people to forget by not remaining silent. We ought to let people know about the violence that goes on, especially anti-gay violence that may or may not get glossed over in the mainstream media. Each of us should work individually to become, instead of a faceless faggot that needs to be bashed, a human being, flesh and spirit.

Clerk 5: We came up with a few points. One was that on a personal level, you can never be exactly sure how you're going to be responding until you're in

the situation. It also remains important to maintain a sense of contemplative silence and a haven to which you can return. But you can't just accept violence; resistance to violence is important. There is a difference between *pacifism* and *passivism*, and to resist violence in this world and to resist oppression you have to take an active stance. Martin Luther King, in his response to violence, did not just look the other way, or have people say, "We're not going to deal with it, we're going to be peaceful." People went out and sat on buses, sat at lunch counters, and they got beaten. Similarly, Gandhi said, "I am not going to file these registration papers you make me carry around." He got hit over the head several times. You have to actively take a stance against things. How you take that stance may be peaceful, but you have to take a stance actively to say, I am a person, I am not going to put up with this.

Another point that came out of our discussion was that Quaker meeting should be a place where you can get some support. If you've been a victim of violence or been in a situation where you've had to be violent, you shouldn't have to hide that from your meeting. Meeting should be a place where we address the anger and the pain, because it is a part of our real lives. Saying to someone who has been mugged or raped, "Well, well, you shouldn't be angry," or "You shouldn't have hit that person back" is not appropriate. We have to deal in a more *realistic* and *supportive* way with the violence in our own lives.

Certainly the smug contemplative silence of many contemporary Friends is fraught with denial. Denial is one of Quakerism's best weapons.

Clerk 4: We talked a lot from our experiences with violence, and the common theme seemed to be that it was important to respond from a position of power, or a self-perceived position of power. For some people in the group, that position of power meant what one woman called weapons of faith, strong faith and strong trust in the Lord to see you through. For some people that meant the ability to know that they could in fact respond violently, and respond effectively. For other people it meant a kind of tactical nonviolence, knowing they had nonviolent things that they could do. But the general consensus was that the important thing was to react personally from a place of power instead of a place of weakness. The first step is to cut through the denial of our own capacity for violence and about the kinds of violence we experience every day, whether it be physical violence, urban violence, or what one person called the violence of silence.

Clerk 3: We had a heated discussion on what it was we were dealing with. There was a great deal of discussion whether there was One Quaker Response, or different responses, and it pretty much came to some disorder. We felt there were many ways to respond to violence. One Friend felt that there were three

ways to deal with violence: to avoid violence, to diffuse violence, or to recognize violence. Another felt we must consider Quaker history, associating with or showing solidarity with the disempowered or disenfranchised. A third point concerned the power of the meeting to back up those who are suffering as a result of violence. Another Friend noted the indifference to violence: We see violence; we don't want to look at it. Sometimes it is ignored. There was an instance brought up where if someone is feeling violent sometimes the meeting does not approach that person and does not communicate with him or her. That itself might possibly be a way of inflicting violence. Another Friend felt that it was very important to try to stop someone committing an act of violence out of love for that person. A person shouldn't have the opportunity to do violence for their own good, for the lack of peace they're going to have with themselves. This is violence from another angle. There was a consensus that there are many kinds of violence and that there are many different ways of responding to it. Our discussion was only a very small beginning into a very deep and serious subject.

Clerk 2: I think that the consensus of our group was also that all of us must work on empowering each other, and that we need more direction from Friends, for alternatives to violence. Perhaps the peace testimony may need some reworking to enable it to respond to the modern stratified society in which we live. The denial that comes out of silence doesn't work any more, for women, and gays and lesbians, anyone who has been a victim of violence. Quakers in general need to take a more active stance on the value of violence. We must start locally; global issues seemed almost too much to think about in our group. An interesting perspective was that each individual needs to take what a violent person says seriously, but not personally. Some persons feel personally disempowered themselves, and that's why they are violent toward us.

Clerk 1: We ranged very widely. One Friend recognized a difference between a reactive response to violence, once it happens, and what should be an ongoing response, such as educating people about the value of diversity. That could happen in a variety of ways: being out and not trying to pass as straight; letting people know that violence exists and that people are there pressing to have it addressed; having meetings on the point, raising the issues. Recognizing that our society is very violent and that *we* are the root of that violence. Finding ways to be visible, to march in the streets, to say we are not going to take it. Our discussion of how we deal personally with violence generated considerable tension. On the one hand it's important to be out and to make a statement; on the other, one knows that being out may very well bring violence upon oneself. There was a lot of discussion about that area. When do you sidestep? Is it important to sidestep? Is it important to be street-smart? Is it important to take on an attitude of confidence, of knowing what you are about as you walk down the street, so that you're less likely to be a victim, all the while recognizing that having to do

so may itself be a sign of a violent society. What's a good strategy for dealing personally with violence?

D. W.: Thank you. Those were six remarkably different reports. Yet they had a lot in common with each other. They were very, very rich on the subject. I thank you all for this discussion.

❦

David Wertheimer is a Seattle–based psychotherapist and principal with Kelly Point Partners (KP2), a Washington state–based human services consulting organization he founded in 2000. He has worked in a variety of capacities in the mental health field for more than two decades, developing and managing mental health services for persons with chronic and severe mental illnesses, persons with substance use disorders, and the homeless. As a clinician, Mr. Wertheimer has developed subspecialties in working with sexual minorities and counseling persons experiencing post-traumatic stress. As an agency administrator, he served as executive director of the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project (AVP) from 1985 to 1990, establishing the first clinical services on the East Coast for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender survivors of bias-related violence, sexual assault, and domestic abuse. A graduate of Friends Seminary, New York City, and of Haverford College, he holds a master of divinity degree from the Yale Divinity School and a master of social work from the University of Connecticut. He lives in Seattle and Guemes Island, Washington, with Paul Beaudet, his lover of 11 years.

David Wertheimer