

Rachel Davis DuBois *speaks*

Throughout much of the 20th century Rachel Davis DuBois (1892-) has been a social and educational pioneer, primarily in the intergroup or intercultural movement, pursuing her goals with enormous energy, imaginative insights, a wide range of skills, and love for the total range of human beings.

She has constantly affirmed the importance of combining intuitive insights with intellectual efforts, and stressed the need for face-to-face contacts in small, sharing groups to help people to respect their own heritage and to make creative use of differences. In such groups she developed the art of "group conversation," a method she used in conjunction with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr.; in post-World War II Germany, at the behest of the U. S. Department of State; and in hundreds of schools, colleges, and church groups, as well as Quaker Meetings in the U. S. A.

Born in Woodstown, N. J. and raised in a Quaker home and Meeting, she has drawn much of her spiritual sustenance from that faith. Her educational degrees have been from Bucknell University (A.B.), Teachers College-Columbia University (M.A.), and New York University (Ed.D.).

Among her many publications are *Get Together Americans*, *Build Together Americans*, *Neighbors in Action*, *The Art of Group Conversation*, *Reducing Social Tensions and Conflict*, and *Deepening Quaker Faith and Practice Through the Use of Quaker Dialogue*.

Listen with her as she speaks:

ON CREATING A RICHER AMERICAN CULTURE...

"If men can first be helped to regard one another as persons, despite differences of race, color, or creed, perhaps even to appreciate and enjoy some of those differences as legitimate in this infinitely varied universe, perhaps they can live more harmoniously together. This principle obtains on every level, whether people are regarded in families, communities, or nations."

"For most people, emotionally satisfying personal relationships, out of which grow appreciations rather than prejudices, can be built in no other way than by face-to-face contact. And these attitudes of appreciation can be developed among adults. But they cannot be developed by magic; nor can their development be left to chance...."

"We all acknowledge that we should do something to stop the outward expression of hatreds, but few of us realize that we can use our cultural heterogeneity to unite us. Nor do we realize that in the process of attempting to build together a richer American culture we may acquire the wisdom to help develop more harmonious relations... among all the peoples of the world."

"Yes, we need a guiding principle that will move us to work together—teachers and students, parents and school-board members, social workers: a vision of what American culture— heir to the cultures of the world—might be."

"If these groups can increase their mutual respect... and implement methods of co-operation, then America can be teacher to the world."

"Our American culture—rock pile or cathedral?"

ON SOME OBSTACLES TO CULTURAL ENRICHMENT...

“Perhaps the basic reason for this ravishing of our cultural resources, this lack of appreciation of all the various groups in our midst, is that we have so little objective knowledge concerning the contributions of each culture group to American life.”

“Another cause of the lack of sympathetic understanding is that the average citizen has not had an opportunity—in school or out—to learn what the science of cultural anthropology has to offer.”

“Cultural democracy is a term whose sound we like. But do we Americans like the reality it signifies? Do we like it, not on a global scale, but in our home town, in our church, in our neighborhood school? Do we like it ever nearer? Certainly it means giving up our conviction of our own superiority, our isolationism, our insistence that we be kept sound and secure exactly as we are. Cultural democracy demands that we die in order that we may be reborn; it demands that we renounce and surrender much we have selfishly considered to be necessary for our peace and private enjoyment. Peace is not a boon our ancestors bought and paid for once and for all. It must be purchased on the installment plan, and each generation has to pay its quota of the price. And those who are rich in pride and complacency must pay the most in taxes to support it. Cultural democracy also demands that we look back in order to discover what not to surrender, ‘to renew faith in the purposes and traditions which are part of us.’ ”

“It is time we accepted a truth of modern psychology that people do not act according to what they *know*, but according to how they *feel* about what they know.”

ON DEMOCRACY...

“The essence of democracy is recognition of the importance of the individual personality and his participation in decisions which affect him.”

ON CULTURAL DEMOCRACY...

“Political democracy... we have inherited. Economic democracy... we are beginning to envisage and to plan for more courageously. But cultural democracy... we have scarcely dreamed of. Much less have we devised social techniques for creating it.”

“The welfare of the group... whether it be the family, school, community, nation, or the world itself, is based on the development of healthy, integrated personalities able to transcend their egocentric selves and to merge in a creative way into the whole. This means finding ways to share unique values and differences. It does not involve annihilation of one another; it does not imply compromise—your way one time and mine the next; not voluntary submission to secure a mood of peace that is found in the end to be sterile. What it means is a creative use of differences.”

“Cultural democracy means to me having Swift Eagle leading us in a Buffalo Dance, feeling with him our kinship with animals. It is sharing with him our Quaker way of silent meditation and knowing that it fits him, too. It is singing with one of my American Black friends, Vereda Pearson, ‘We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder,’ using our bodies to move with her. It is allowing the warm, tender voice of Karl Harrington to fill us with sorrow as he sings the spiritual ‘There Is A Balm In Gilead.’ and singing with ‘B. J.’ Johnson on a Freedom March ‘I Ain’t Goin’ Let Nobody Turn Me Around.’”

ON "GROUP CONVERSATION" . . .

"When a small group of persons—from 10 to at most 30—take an hour in which to exchange memories of experiences of joy and sorrow in a group experience based on spontaneity, a warmth and closeness develop quietly and quickly."

"Group conversation is a way of helping members of a group to experience a sense of our common humanity by first reaching back into our past for memorable experiences to be shared around a topic of universal moment. The method is designed to facilitate the social climate which fosters mutual regard and confidence."

"Sharing earlier experiences of having been made to feel strange or different or queer, or of being rejected or of rejecting, may . . . bring important facets and depth to the exploration, for example, of some aspect of the fair employment or school integration issues."

"Group Conversation is not group discussion but moves into it when relevant. Group Conversation purposefully uses a minimum of structuring so that discussion of problems is not invited at the outset of a meeting. The controversial aspects of an issue are intentionally postponed until a mood of acceptance has been developed so that the members of the group are able to enter the discussion phase when they are ready to do so constructively and with a sense of trust, openness, and directness."

"If we assume that a group goes from discussion to problem solving and decision, thence to commitment and action, then Group Conversation may be seen as a prior step to that progression."

ON THE SUPREMACY OF THE CULTURAL...

"The material aspects of civilization depend ultimately on the spiritual. Free trade is permanently possible only among free men, and men are not rendered free by systems of international currency, by political mandates, by Atlantic Charters. Men are made free by their art and their religion, by their funds of wisdom and philosophy, by the truth they possess and share as a common treasure. Thus, to put economics ahead of culture is to put the cart before the horse. The penalty for neglecting things of the spirit is to forfeit the things of the body as well."

ON SOME UNIQUE APPROACHES OF QUAKERS...

"The Quaker group... offers an especially interesting example of a cultural particularism that has remained unimpaired over many generations.... One of its traits is especially significant for the present searching inquiry among thoughtful Americans into the nature of democracy. The Friends, among themselves, have always lived democratically and their tradition-sanctioned procedures include a respect for minority rights which, if widely adopted, would go far in remedying the shortcomings of our political democracy. This respect takes the form of arriving at conclusions by consent rather than by taking a vote through which those in larger numbers are empowered to override the views of the lesser number."

"Less widely known but equally important for democratic procedures is the Quakers' use of silence as a valuable ingredient in a discussion where high tension might lead to words afterwards regretted, or simply to invite a thought deeper than that kindled by the rapid give-and-take of an animated exchange of views."

ON CLAIMING AND RENEWING OUR QUAKER INHERITANCE...

“George Fox, out of his own experience, said, ‘If you have a problem, look all around the problem to get the facts and then go into the silence and wait for openings.’ He felt sure the answers in the form of ‘leadings’ or ‘openings’ came from The Holy Spirit, The Inner Light, The Christ Within. Because early Friends adhered to that practice, they felt they were guided not only in their individual worship and concerns but also as groups.... They received what seems to us amazing answers to many kinds of problems...and they received guidance in devising new ways of doing things which fitted into the needs of their day.”

“Is it possible that the cause of the decline of Quakerism today... is that we do not really believe the Holy Spirit will answer our seeking and give us guidance in solving our problems?”

“By using the power of mature, redemptive love we can show each individual that we need his or her uniqueness to make us whole. We will then see that we have something to give others and that others have something to give us.”

“Traditionally Friends have shied away from talking to each other about methods of achieving...calmness, believing that if one is under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, it is sufficient. Today, however, many find such sharing helpful.”

“My sunrise meditation means more to me than ever. At dawn it is easier to feel that the universe is one organic whole, held together by that Radiating Power of Love which flows through everything—including me and thee.”

ON THE CREATION OF A WORLD CULTURE...

•“The fact so many of our theorists in politics are ignoring is that psychic unity of some sort must precede and form the basis of any economic and political unity. Leagues of nations, world federations, by whatever name they are known, will not unite and pacify a world whose individual nations do not sense or feel their kinship. No world congress has a chance of success unless it can assume at least the beginnings of a growth toward world culture. And this world culture has scant chance of being created by a world congress itself.... to aid in creating the kind of feeling tone on the part of great masses of people in all countries which will enable their national spokesmen to transcend hostilities, ways must be found to develop cultural understanding on an international scale.”

“A united world must be fed by a world culture to which every group is forever making its peculiar contribution and in which each shares in its peculiar way.”

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