
Focus Group Research on
Race Relations Issues
in the Seventh-day
Adventist Church in
North America



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Introduction

The research reported in this document was commissioned by the Planning Committee for a Summit on Racism which will be held next year by the Office of Human Relations, North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The purpose of this study is to discover the range of attitudes and opinions that exist among Seventh-day Adventist Church members about issues related to race and ethnicity. From these group interviews will surface specific questions and wording to use in the second phase of this project: a telephone survey of church members to be conducted later this fall. The study is being conducted by the Center for Creative Ministry under contract with the NAD Office of Human Relations and the NAD Office of Information and Research.

This first phase of the study uses a technique called focus group research. It is important to remember that the focus group is a qualitative approach to research and cannot yield quantifiable findings. A focus group is essentially an in-depth interview conducted with a small group of individuals selected according to frame specifications and their willingness to participate. A focus group is *not* a random sample, and it is too small to provide reliable statistical results.

Focus groups provides the rich texture of opinion among subjects, and helps to identify specific issues about which survey questions should be asked, as well as the terminology that subjects use to address the topics. Because a group of subjects is interviewed at the same time, focus groups also provide some insight to the dynamics of opinion on topics by observations about disagreements and the influence of one subject's expressed views on those of other subjects.

A total of three focus groups were conducted in this study. In each case a professional market research facility was used as the location for the group interview, and the market research firm recruited the participants from lists provided by the Center for Creative Ministry from local conference directories. All of the subjects are active leaders in local congregations. None are current employees of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

On June 22 and 23 two focus groups were conducted in Chicago. One group consisted entirely of White church members (including one Hispanic) and the other entirely of Black church members. The moderator in each case was of the same ethnicity as the group. Because of low attendance and a lack of responsiveness, it was felt by the research team that the Black focus group was not valid, and a third focus group was conducted in Los Angeles in July. The same moderator and field supervisor conducted both focus groups. All of those involved are experienced researchers.

The group interviews were tape-recorded by the market research facilities used and transcribed by staff at the Center for Creative Ministry. Subjects were fully informed of the recording and transcription procedures. The handling of the transcripts is designed to protect the anonymity of the subjects in order to encourage their candor during the interviews.

Included in this report is a summary of key themes and selected quotes from the transcripts of the two focus groups included in the study: the June group interview with White church members in Chicago and the July group interview with Black church members in Los Angeles. Appendices

include the Moderator's Guide used by the interviewers and the complete transcripts of the two focus groups.

Monte Sahlin was still serving as director of the NAD Office of Information and Research when this project began and played a key role in the design of the study. He continues to be the primary consultant to the study. Paul Richardson is project coordinator. Dan Savino served as field supervisor for the group interviews. The moderators/interviewers were Willie Oliver and Norma Sahlin. Kandra Luke is the administrative assistant for the project.

Based on the findings contained in this report, a draft survey instrument is being submitted to Rosa Banks, director of OHR, and Kermit Netteburg, director of OIR, for approval. A random sample of church members will be interviewed by telephone once the survey instrument is finalized and approved.

Paul Richardson
October 1998

Executive Summary

Two focus groups were conducted during the summer of 1998, both in major metropolitan areas of the United States. The purpose of the study is to discover the range of attitudes and opinions that exist among Seventh-day Adventist Church members about issues related to race and ethnicity. From these group interviews will surface specific questions and wording to use in a telephone survey of church members to be conducted later in the year. The study is being conducted by the Center for Creative Ministry under contract with the NAD Office of Human Relations and the NAD Office of Information and Research and in preparation for the NAD Summit on Racism.

One group was made up entirely of White church members (with one Hispanic), and the other entirely of Black church members. The subjects were recruited from conference directories and include active leaders in local congregations; none were current employees of the Adventist denomination. The interviewers in each case were of the same ethnicity as the group. The group interviews were conducted under the supervision of experienced focus group research personnel in commercial market research facilities.

Throughout this report "White" refers to church members of European or Hispanic backgrounds who identify themselves as part of the ethnic majority in America. "Black" refers to African Americans, immigrants from the Caribbean and others who identify themselves as part of the largest ethnic minority group in America.

Church members do not seem to have a very realistic view of the ethnic diversity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. Asked to estimate the percentage of church members in major ethnic groups, almost none of the subjects provided estimates anywhere near the real figures. Both Black and White members tend to over estimate the percentage of ethnic minorities in the church.

White members do not feel that the topic of race should be explored by the Church. Some of their harshest comments convey the idea that this study is a waste of time and money. "Quit barking up the wrong tree! If we are addressing the issue of racism within the church, I just don't see it," said one White subject. "I think we started on the wrong track all together. I think if the survey is going to be on race, I think its a waste of time and money because I never experienced [racism] in the church," another subject said emphatically. Others in the group chorused in response, "Yes! Not within the church." "Not within this church." And then a subject said, "any survey of this nature is going to be a big waste of money."

Black members are convinced that church structure and decision-making processes, outside the Regional Conferences, are unfair toward ethnic minorities. They cited examples such as an unwillingness on the part of largely White congregations to share in the financial sponsorship of day academies with predominantly minority enrollment, the fact that White conference officers serve multiple terms and are not replaced with a rotation of Black personnel, and the perception that the physical plant at White churches is of significantly better quality than the physical plant at Black churches. "It seems to me that the leadership and the administration of the church is expected to be operated by the Whites," said one Black subject. At the same time,

almost all of the Black subjects stated that they have not personally experienced racial discrimination within the Adventist Church.

White church members do not feel there is tension or conflict within the church on issues related to race. Even when interviewers asked again and again, the White subjects reported almost no instances of conflict or unfairness related to race that they could think of. “As my memory searches back, other than Houston eight or nine years ago, I seem to recall ... some people suggesting that there might have been some division with respect to race,” one White subject attempted to recall something along the lines of racial conflict, but was unsuccessful. This was true not only of their local churches, including multicultural congregations, but also true for conference committee activities and constituency meetings, and even true of their perception of the Union Conference and relationships between “White conferences” and Regional Conferences.

Black church members do report issues of tension or conflict within the church related to race. Several subjects mentioned conflicts related to music and worship style. One Black subject described a conflict in the church board of an African American congregation that also had a Spanish-language group under its umbrella. “Intermarriage has caused conflict outside and in the local church as well,” reported a Black member of a multicultural congregation. “I know members ... that actually moved out of the area simply to avoid the kind of situation ... of having their daughters or son intermarrying.” Another Black subject said, “the Blacks sometimes feel that we don’t get the same attention from the conference that the Whites get. We don’t get the same monetary gifts as the Whites get. We don’t get the same [staff] appointments and that kind of thing.” Yet another Black subject said, “Blacks see the Whites getting more money and more attention, and so they don’t like that.” Another agreed, “there’s disunity.” Yet another said, “I believe most African Americans feel that there is not equality” within the Adventist Church. These feelings have given rise to the idea that a Regional Conference should be formed in a western state which has never had a Regional Conference in the past.

Black church members see many White church members participating in segregated patterns of housing and schools. Black subjects noted that although Adventist schools publish notices of nondiscrimination in enrollment, they see White church members move to largely White neighborhoods and establish church schools in those neighborhoods at such distance from Black communities that it makes an integrated student body unrealistic simply in terms of logistics. This is attributed to fear of inter-racial friendships and dating.

White church members feel that they live with a great deal of ethnic diversity in the Adventist Church. They see the Adventist denomination as significantly more diverse than the norm in America, and express the perception that people of many different races and ethnic backgrounds are fully accepted as members of the congregations where they belong. And, the White subjects expressed a favorable opinion about the diversity they see in the church. “What I took from looking at the numbers on the board over there [referring to accurate data on the ethnic profile of the NAD membership provided by the interviewer], it tells me that the church is actually doing very well.”

Black members see less diversity in the churches they attend. One Black subject expressed it as “not being used to being involved with ... different cultural backgrounds.... When you are involved in a church that is basically just one type of culture ... all of us [of one race] ... it is a lot easier.”

White subjects say they are “very comfortable” with diversity in the Church. They find it is “easy to talk” to other Adventists of any ethnic background, “that it really doesn’t make any difference any more; in fact, it’s kind of exciting.” “We just really ... enjoy each other’s company because ... we are here for the same purpose.” There is a sense that race issues have largely been “put behind us” in the church. “I think we are doing much better than we were doing twenty years ago,” said one White subject. “We are all God’s children regardless of color,” said another, “at least most people [in the church] I know of [feel that way].”

Even in multicultural congregations, ethnic groups tend to spend a lot of time in largely segregated settings. It was noted that at social events and fellowship dinners in congregations with a level of diversity, members of the same ethnic background usually sit together and not in mixed groups. Although there is a level of friendliness with church members of a different race, some of the most relaxed and personal activities happen largely within self-segregated (informal) groups. A White subject from a multicultural congregation observed, “The Blacks or Asians or Whites, they usually sit together.... I think that is fine if they are comfortable, because when we do mingle ... when we talk, we always say ‘Amen’ at the same time. We always agree about the same things, so I really do not think it matters. I think it is just they feel comfortable sitting where they’re sitting.”

Blacks and Whites recognize a problem with church growth in White congregations and a lack of responsiveness to evangelism in the White population. Black church members tend to believe that White churches could work harder at outreach and evangelism, and may be ignoring the opportunities among younger generations of Whites. Both Black and White subjects expressed the opinion that “it is more about money than race.” Because Whites in general are more affluent, it is felt that this engenders a materialistic outlook in the White community that is resistant to faith and evangelism. Blacks are seen as historically having less affluence and therefore greater suffering and more “need” for faith and religion.

White church members have a sense of lethargy in their congregations, while Black church members have a more positive feeling about their congregations. “We’ve gone to the same church for thirty years and the same people sit with the same people. And getting them to move is almost impossible,” said one White subject. No one in the group disagreed. Blacks “feel that they have more zeal” said a Black subject, “they are more responsive.” Another Black subject said, “our style of worship is different [than White churches] and it seems to be attracting the younger generation and that’s going to be the future.”

There is a difference of opinion among both Blacks and Whites as to whether or not it should be an intentional goal of Adventist congregations to win new members of different ethnic and social backgrounds than the dominate group in the congregation. “Yes, we should work harder [to bring in people who aren’t like us]. We should be talking about

diversity,” said one White subject. “It’s easy to say ‘yes,’” said a Black subject, “The reality is to bring in people who are different to us would mean change....” Another White said, “I think we are kind of afraid.... Unfortunately the outside world is not as racially and ethnically tolerant as the church, so that is one of the biggest problems that we have.” Another White subject said, “No!” to this question, while yet another said, “Only if they are in the neighborhood.... But, I don’t think we should do a bussing program.” Another Black subject said, “There are really no easy solutions.”

There is a wide divergence of opinion about whether or not the leadership of the denomination includes a proper ethnic balance. Some of the negative response on this topic is related to the view that the denomination has institutionalized segregation. “We are not mixed,” said a White subject in the Midwest. They see diversity in the leadership of Union Conferences and the NAD. A number of Black subjects said, “No, there’s not a proper balance in the races and ethnic groups simply because it’s based on the percentages.” In other words, there is a feeling that if the percentage of leaders of various ethnic backgrounds in a denominational organization is the same as the percentage of members in those ethnic groups, minorities will always have the smaller number of leaders. Black subjects expressed the feeling that perhaps minorities ought to have greater representation among denominational leadership than a percentage equal to the percentage of members, while White subjects feel that such a level of leadership is an example of equity and fairness.

[Do the opinions in the paragraph above give us a deeper insight into the real tensions deep, beneath the surface in the Adventist Church? Do Black members feel that they cannot have fair treatment in the denomination until their representatives have a majority on key decision-making bodies and in key administrative offices? Do White members feel that it is unfair for the ethnic majority group to be denied a majority on decision-making bodies and among the key administrative posts? If so, these viewpoints will be difficult to reconcile. To what degree are they widely held among church members? To what degree would asking survey questions to clarify these opinions actually impact the formation of opinion?]

Both Black and White church members feel it is proper to “target” evangelism to particular ethnic groups. They see the need for outreach ministries to focus on the unique needs of given ethnic and cultural segments. “The type of evangelistic program that you launch to reach out to Whites would have to differ from the type of program going toward the Blacks and some other ethnics,” said a Black subject. Another subject said, “I think there has to be a generational change in outreach, in how they reach the people ...”

Blacks feel that the denomination should address the issues related to race. “The Church should address the issue by way of training seminars, teaching and maybe foster a type of social event to bring people closer,” said on Black subject. “Definitely, something needs to be done,” others in the group agreed. They would like for the denomination to plan activities in which Black and White church members can join together in meaningful participation and, almost as a byproduct of the activity, get to know one another and build up levels of personal trust. “Bring them together and let them know these people bleed red [too],” said one participant. These

activities make take the form of community action projects which bring together both inner city and suburban church volunteers in significant, visible activities.

Blacks feel strongly that the denomination must exhibit greater fairness and social justice in its processes and programs. “The Church cannot legislate love,” said one subject, “but there needs to be something done about racism. What I feel the denomination can do is to be plain fair and practical equality.”

The Adventist Church may not be adequately communicating some of the steps that it has already taken to ensure equality and fairness within its operations. For example, one Black subject said, “there are certain committees that they keep a certain percentage of the minorities off of so they can out vote them and push over on the rest of the members their [White majority] rules and their laws...” Yet, there are NAD Working Policies that ensure equity of representation on all denominational bodies and procedures for handing complaints about situations that may be out of policy. The church members in these focus groups did not seem to be aware of these policies and procedures. Perhaps that indicates a need for more communication and education.

Appendix A
Moderator's Guide

Moderator's Guide

Focus Group Research on Race Issues

Purpose

The purpose of this focus group research is to discover the range of attitudes and opinions that exist among Seventh-day Adventist Church members about issues related to race and ethnicity. From these group interviews will surface specific questions and wording to use in the survey of the membership to be conducted later this summer for the Planning Committee of the NAD Summit on Racism.

Specific Questions to be Explored

1. Does it make you somewhat uncomfortable to talk about issues related to race and ethnicity in the church? Why?

2. What percentage of the Seventh-day Adventist Church members in North America do you believe identify with each of the major ethnic groups—Asian, black, Hispanic and white?

3. After a period of time during which all of the group members are asked to give their guess and the percentages are written up on a flipchart or chalk board, give the actual percentages from the 1996 census conducted by the NAD Office of Human Relations—3% Asian, 30% black, 10% Hispanic, 55% white, and 2% other. *Ask:* What do you think this means for the church?

4. Have you observed any tensions or conflicts between ethnic groups within your local church?

Follow-up: Urge those who answer, “Yes,” to concisely describe specific examples. Once the first person had described an example, ask, “Have any of the rest of your seen a similar situation?” and take a quick hand-raising count and announce it for the tape. Then ask, “Can anyone describe a different example?”)

5. Have you observed any tensions or conflicts between ethnic groups within the Adventist Church outside your local church?

Same kind of follow-up as in Question 4.

6. Have you personally experienced a time when you were treated unfairly because of your race or ethnic category by someone within the Adventist Church?

Same kind of follow-up as in Question 4.

7. How do you think most people [of your ethnic category] in the Adventist Church really feel about [other major ethnic category]?

Follow-up question: Are there some Adventists with more negative or extreme feelings?

8. In England, the Adventist Church faces a situation where the majority of the British population is white, but the majority of church members are black. The situation is the same in some conferences in the U.S. What does this mean for evangelism? [*Be sure to make it clear that this question is **not** about Regional Conferences; it is about conferences which have the entire population or the majority population as their target audience for outreach.*]

Follow-up question: What changes should be made in our evangelistic strategy because of this situation? Any at all?

9. What should the church organization do about these issues of race and ethnicity?

Follow-up questions: What should be done to educate church members on these issues? What should be done to train leaders to deal with these issues? Should any changes be made in church organizational structure?

10. What is the teaching of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on this topic as stated in the 27 Fundamental Beliefs?

11. Are there questions that I did not ask, that I should have asked? (If so, what are those questions?)

If there is time: 12. Do you have any other comments or observations?

Additional Possibility

If discussion of the existence of Regional Conferences comes up in the group, you may want to ask: Why do you think Regional Conferences were created in the 1940s? (Don't offer opinions or do any educating; that is not your role in this context. Just get their knowledge and ideas on the record so we can see to what extent people are or are not correctly informed.

Appendix B
Transcript of Focus Group A

TRANSCRIPT OF FOCUS GROUP ON RACE ISSUES

JULY 20, 1998

GROUP: BLACK

MODERATOR: WILLIE OLIVER

MODERATOR: The Center for Creative Ministry is conducting this focus group for the Seventh-day Adventist Church of the North American. The research is in preparation for a Summit on Race Relations that is being organized by Dr. Rosa Banks, director of the NAD Office of Human Relations. The information that we will get from your input is important. It will help us develop a survey questionnaire to get input from a larger sample of church members.

MODERATOR: A little bit of house keeping before we get started. Number one, there is a microphone that is taping our session so I need you to speak up so we can have a clear audio tape. Number two, your comments will be confidential. No one will know who you are. By that I mean don't be afraid to give your name, it will be edited out of the transcripts. Your name is just for the person who transcribes the tape. But, if you are a little apprehensive about that you can just give any name. We only need a first name. I need you to speak up so that the audio will catch you and record correctly what you are saying.

MODERATOR: I also need to tell you that this is a two-way glass and there might be one or two individuals behind there who are part of the research team. From time to time if necessary someone will send me a note that says "hurry it up" or "move on" or something like that.

MODERATOR: My role is to be something like a traffic cop in this discussion, just to keep things rolling. I need for all of you to participate. When I ask a question, jump in and respond. If someone else says something that triggers a response, go ahead and speak. But, I'd like you to speak one at a time so that your voices don't cover each other up and the audio doesn't get garbled.

MODERATOR: OK? Let's get started. I'd like each one to tell your name, what church you attend, the size of your church, the church office you hold or have held in the past, and what you do for a living.

I'm [Person A] from the [Church A]. I'm head deaconess and Primary Sabbath School teacher there, and I'm retired. It is about 250 members.

I'm [Person B]. I'm an elder and teacher of Bible studies at [Church A] also.

I'm [Person C], a member of [Church B]. I have been one of the receptionists. The size of our church is between 300 and 400 in regular attendance.

My name is [Person D]. I belong to [Church C] and I'm the organist and have been for many years. We have 792 members on paper.

I'm [Person E]. I'm the church clerk. I'm the education secretary, and I'm a deaconess. [Also a member of Church C.]

I'm [Person F] and I go to [Church D]. I'm the church videographer. It's about 350 in attendance. It's more than that on paper.

I'm [Person G] from [Church A]. I am the Personal Ministries coordinator, one of the deaconesses and we have about 250 members.

I'm [Person H] from the [Church E], a church that is basically multiethnic and multicultural with a membership of about 350. I'm the personal ministries director.

MODERATOR: Does it make you somewhat uncomfortable to talk about issues related to race and ethnicity in the church?

I don't think so.

I don't think we've covered a lot of it, but I don't think I feel uncomfortable about it.

No, it [does] not make me uncomfortable.

No it does not make me uncomfortable because I know that there are different races on earth and there will also be in heaven, and we are supposed to be prepared to go there, so we should prepare to live together here in order to inhabit heaven together.

No. I am not uncomfortable at all.

No, no its not uncomfortable; not at all.

Well, I thought I wouldn't be uncomfortable, but I realized that ... that until you get into a real situation where you [inaudible] ... a different perception ... and cultural sensitivity, then you realize that based on all the different attitudes that you may be uncomfortable and that's one of the road blocks that we have to break down.

MODERATOR: And why were you uncomfortable? What made you uncomfortable?

Well it was simply not being used to being involved with different members, different cultural backgrounds and all that. When you are involved in a church that is basically just one type of culture ... all of us [of one race] ... it is a lot easier. You are a lot more comfortable. You link to each other better, and its almost natural the way you relate to each other. But when you're involved in a church where there's so much variety of cultures and races, it intensifies the way of ... A lot of perception is totally different and the reasons [for doing things]. For instance, we have a member who simply greeted another by embracing him and that was very ... I mean very, very offensive to that other person. That person had to [inaudible] ... to the pastor's office and the next thing you know this issue came up at a board meeting and it happened several times. And the person was simply being kind and welcoming that other person. So, you are suggesting that there is a misunderstanding and I thought I would be very comfortable at first until I realized that it will take a lot of [inaudible] to really know how to relate to [other races].

MODERATOR: What percentage of the Seventh-day Adventist Church members in North America do you believe identify with each of the major ethnic groups—Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White? What I would like you to do is take a few moments, you have paper and pencil, so just write down Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White and right off the top of your head We're talking about all the membership in the Adventist Church in North America. In your own estimation, just because of what you think about the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, what are the percentage of these major groups? OK, I'm going to go up to the easel here and take down your estimates.

This is to equal to a 100%?

MODERATOR: That's right

Do you want a percentage for each?

MODERATOR: Yes, the percentage of each of these. This is a guess. What do you think the percentages might be? Perhaps you have seen pictures in the Adventist Review in the Pacific Union Recorder or just by your perceptions let's begin. Let's start on the other side; Joe tell me what your perceptions are. What do you think the percentage of [inaudible] we have in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.

I put down Asians 15%, Blacks 25%, Hispanic 25%, White about 40%.

[I wrote] 10% for Asians, 15% for Blacks, 20% for Hispanic, 30% White, and 25% other.

I have 12% for Asians, 15% Hispanic, 25% Black, 35% White, I think 45% for other.

Whites 30%, Blacks 20%, Hispanic 25%, Asian 15%, and other 10%.

I have Asian 10%, Black 15%, Hispanic 20%, White 45%. I have Other 3%, and I know I need some more for other.

MODERATOR: OK. Would you like to give it a shot?

Not really.

MODERATOR: All right ... So we have different, varying kinds of responses to the ethnic percentages of our membership in North America. Let me show you what the percentages really are: Asian 3%, Black 30%, Hispanic 10%, White 55%, and Other 2%. You know here in California there are many Hispanics, but keep in mind we're talking about the entire division.

MODERATOR: Do you have any idea what the percentages are in the general population in North America? Any idea for the number of people in those major ethnic groups in the population?

I say about 45% White.

MODERATOR: No, actually the White population in North America is about 75% or 80%.

Really?

MODERATOR: Yes, that's why we call the other groups "minorities," because it means they're in the minority. The reason that I say that is all minorities together are only about 25% of the population of the United States: Hispanics 10%, Blacks 15%, Asians 3% or 4%. What do you think that says for the church based on that information? What do you think that says for the church in evangelism?

Well, according to the percentages it's.... But, you can go to some churches and you'll see one Black or you can go to some churches and you can see five out of 600. So it is essentially—when you talk about evangelism—mostly White.

I say that the evangelism dollar is going to go for the majority of what the people are. That if they are not going to pick a [named a Black, inner city neighborhood] meeting, public evangelism, as much as they think they need it in [named a White, upper-class suburb]. [Because] the majority of people are White.

It seems to me that the leadership and the administration of the church is expected to be operated by the Whites.

Also the worship style would probably be conservative and most likely not appeal to the ethnic groups.

When you look at these numbers—a lot of it has been said—here in [named Conference] the evangelistic [inaudible] has been stated as the need for the Euro-American more than the other ethnic groups.

MODERATOR: OK, is that what's happening?

I'm on the executive committee, [so] I'd rather not say.

MODERATOR: That's all right. [Another person by name] any opinion on this?

I'm just wondering in talking about this, if this means in the conference office or whatever because there are more Whites if they feel it should be a White person as a higher up in the conference. That it effects that.

I wanted to say something as far as the ratio is concerned; if there are 30% Black Adventists compared to the 12% or 16% in population, that is saying that someone's busy!

MODERATOR: Have you observed any tension or conflicts between ethnic groups within your local church? Have observed any racial conflicts within your local church?

Yes. We have three major ethnic groups in our church. Some of our groups would want to worship in certain ways and not in the same way that the other groups would [prefer] and as a result we have a conflict. It's a problem that drives the board to meet to deal with this issue all the time.

No, because we only have mostly Blacks and a few Whites in our church so far. And we all worship the same way.

Yes, I have seen some conflicts ... nothing I care to describe.

We don't have the ethnic diversity that some of the other churches have. We do have a Hispanic family or Mexican family, whatever you want to call them.

Like [Person E] said, there's conflict but it's not [related to] race.

There's a majority of Blacks in my church and only about three Whites, and there's no conflict to my knowledge.

We have not observed any conflict between ethnic groups, and I'd like to invite you to my church where there is no conflict just joy and love.

MODERATOR: Another question along the same line; have you observed any tensions or conflicts between ethnic groups within the Adventist Church but outside your local church?

Yes, from a musical standpoint ... a conservative [viewpoint seems to predominate] and there are complaints that some are too spiritual because most people are used to conservative music. What do I mean by that? You don't sway and you don't clap and there's very little "Amen"ing and that kind of thing. We have had lot of conflict on that; there is a conflict between Whites and Blacks and the Blacks sometimes feel that we don't get the same attention from the conference that the Whites get. We don't get the same monetary gifts as the Whites get. We don't get the same staff appointments and that kind of thing.

One [conflict] in particular, I think, is the more we have inter-[racial] marriage, it has caused conflict in and outside the local church, and I know members that actually moved out of the area simply to avoid that kind of situation. The kind of situation of having their daughters or son inter-marrying. They were Whites, and they were afraid that being in a multicultural congregation would bring the [intermarriage] situation. In fact, I was in a board meeting where a member actually voiced the concern that they were moving because they didn't want their daughter marrying Well, they expressed the idea that they didn't like the demographic change that was coming into the area and eventually that member moved and many believe that was one of the reasons for it.

It's my observation that our school, the Black schools are not supported as they should be by Whites or other ethnic groups. And there have been times when the Black students were in majority, and the Whites took their children out and moved them to other areas where there is a majority of Whites. The issue is focused on church subsidies, financial assistance to the school by White churches.

I'm saying yes, I'm in complete agreement to what she is saying as far as educational subsidies are concerned. I don't feel the Black schools are being supported by the conference as it should.

My grandchildren are in a Black Adventist school and I don't feel they are getting what they should have as compared to what the schools in [the White suburbs] [are getting]. I just don't feel like [Church School A in the black community] is getting the support that they need. We have excellent teachers out here. I'm thankful for Christian Education but I'd be more thankful if the conference was more supportive of Christian Education in the Black area.

I don't know if I'd call it tension or conflict, but in talking about education I can remember when my grandchildren were younger and they were attending an Adventist School. At first it was kind of mixed; there weren't that many Blacks. Then pretty soon it got to be where it was mostly Blacks, and before I knew it that school was closed.

It's not that the conference necessarily is not supporting our schools. Our schools here are based on a subsidy by the [local] church. Its the churches ... many of the White churches, because they have no students in our school, refuse to pay the subsidy, so the school does not have what it needs because the budget is built on subsidy and tuition.

Many of these churches—I'm on the school board—they will say, "We're not going to pay [a subsidy, because] we have no students there."

In support of what she said, we had a situation where [Academy A].... Our church supported [Academy A]. Then, many times it was said we were not sending any students to [Academy A], but sending our students to [inaudible]. Now, at one point in time the board voted to decrease the subsidy to [Academy A], and eventually no subsidy is going to [Academy A].

I have not really noticed any tension, conflict between members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

I haven't observed anywhere else; I'm mostly involved at [Church C], but I don't know of any conflict or tension.

MODERATOR: Have you personally experienced a time when you were treated unfairly because of your race or ethnic category by someone in the Adventist Church? Have you ever experienced any racial prejudice in the Adventist Church?

I haven't myself. No.

No. I haven't put myself in that situation directly. But

No. I haven't.

No.

No. I haven't.

Yes, I have. Two years ago we were up at [conference camp facility] for a Women's Retreat, and there were six of us in a room; two Blacks and four Whites. Two of the ladies made it very difficult for us to sleep, and when we asked about it, they created a [inaudible] and it got back to a certain lady at the meeting. She called me up, and it was quite a problem. We were sleeping in the upper room and they were sleeping in the lower room, and they would talk loud and stay up late. They were the first to get there because they were get close to the bathroom; we had to go down the stairs to get to the bathroom, and they would complain. When I asked, "Could you please keep quite so I can sleep," one of the ladies remarked, "Well, we all have to sleep." I said, "But what I'm asking you is to keep your voices down. I'm not asking you to stop talking, I'm just asking you to keep your voices down." Instead of doing that they started flushing the toilet, running the water, and talking louder. There was defiant tension in the room.

I have had no experience like that.

MODERATOR: How do you think most African American Adventists really feel about the other major ethnic groups in the church? What is your opinion? How do you think other African American Adventists feel about the other groups in the church?

Many are very comfortable for the simple reason they have attempted to adopt their lifestyle.

We are Afro Americans but there are many in our group that want to forget our past, our history and they have adopted European lifestyles as conservatives.

The ones that I have talked to would rather be interacting more with other groups but we don't get that in return. Most of them that I've talked to that feel we have our own style of worship and other people, the other races don't feel comfortable with our style of worship. Some of them have a tendency to feel as though we should stay to ourselves, while others feel that we should continue to attempt to interact with other groups in the church.

Our church is predominantly Black, so normally we don't have that type of problem. For me, I know what I am African American, but I have no different feelings toward any body else.

Well, some of them don't seem to think much of some others. You take the Asians; there is no intermingling [with other ethnic groups] or things like that. The Hispanics; many of our churches have Hispanic groups in them that are comfortable because there are a lot of Blacks who speak Spanish. As was stated before, some [Blacks] would love a Black conference because that

affords more opportunities for them because all the officers would be Blacks, because we don't have that get that opportunity. The Whites have the most opportunities.

MODERATOR: OK, [name deleted] how do you think most African American Adventist really feel about other ethnic groups in the church?

I have seen some tension and I don't know if I kind of turn it off because I'm not like that and it bothers me to see it. I don't know. I guess it's pretty obvious I try to get away from it.

There's disunity. Well, I mean they (pause) ... it's like these folks are saying the Blacks see the Whites getting more moneys and more attention and so it's like they don't like that. That's putting it in a nut shell.

I believe most African Americans feel that there is not equality. What do I mean by that? If you would go to an ethnic church and compare it with [named a major White church] and take the bathroom for example there is no comparison. Ours is very small and stopped up at all times and we have three commodes for 300 women. Theirs is very elaborate. It has [something] like a hotel lounge, and there are at least six stalls. Everything is, beautiful. It's totally different and yet we serve the same God and love each other as sisters and brothers, but there is no comparison.... That's just one [item].

MODERATOR: But, who makes the decision about how many bathrooms you have in your church?

I don't know. I really don't know. It just really bothers me that it's that way. I would really like to know myself who makes that decision.

MODERATOR: Let me restate my question. How do you think most African American Adventists feel about other ethnic groups in the church?

I feel that most African Americans maybe feel that they are a little bit more zealous than most other ethnic groups and they feel that they more easily blend into the general operations than others. If you go and visit a lot of churches, you would see that the Blacks may be a lot more comfortable than other groups, more so than in the White churches and Asian churches.... Well, I think that it's basically what I was saying; they feel that they have more zeal.

MODERATOR: In England the Adventist church faces a situation where the majority of the British population is White, but the majority of church members are Black. The situation is the same in some conferences in the United States. What does this mean for evangelism? What does this say to you? Let's go back to the board and look at the percentages. What do you think that says for evangelism?

[It means] that evangelism is going out towards the Blacks because if you have more Black members even though you have a larger majority of Whites then its obviously going out perfected towards Blacks because that's who's coming in.

To me it means that Blacks are responding more, not necessarily that evangelism is geared toward them, but they are more responsive.

I think that the Blacks are evangelizing more because there have been some meetings at some halls for others, but most of the tent efforts that I have experienced over the years in the Los Angeles area have been [conducted] by Blacks. Now you've mentioned England; that's the reason probably why you have a larger majority of Black members in England than Whites. I don't see much evangelism among Whites. I don't know.... I'm sure, maybe that's happening in England too.

There needs to be more outreach for the Whites. Since the Blacks are all ready flourishing maybe [the Whites] need to get out and witness a little bit more. Maybe they need to go to the streets, pitch some tents somewhere, and invite the young.

I also think also the manner or the type of evangelistic program that you launch to reach out to Whites would have to differ from the type of programs going towards the Blacks and some of the other ethnics. Simply because, in my opinion, the Whites are (pause) ... you find the majority of the Whites add more to your position. Usually, I think—again it's my opinion—that those who are alone socially tend to respond more to evangelism. The Whites; you would probably find them more into computers, cellular telephones, beepers and a bunch of the electronic gadgets and so you would have to use those kinds of media to reach them. If you set up a tent out there you're not going to find Whites attending that, but if you send out programs on the Internet and such, you would probably reach a lot more Whites in that kind of setting. I'm speaking about what that means as far as evangelism in White culture.

It's going to have to start with love and the love has to start with an individual in your group reaching the people around you. If someone has something on the Internet, it doesn't matter what you have, you have to reach that person with love before you can even interest them [in evangelism].

I don't know. I think maybe reaching out to the youngest generation because I know in our church our style of worship is different and it seems to be attracting the younger generation and that's going to be the future.

MODERATOR: When you say "the younger generation" do you mean the younger of Whites, of Blacks, of what?

That would be any ethnic group appeal.

MODERATOR: OK [name deleted] do you have a response to the question? What changes should be made in our evangelistic strategy because of this situation? Any at all?

Oh, yes it should be something. If the Whites are not responding to evangelism like the Blacks are I don't know whether it is because they have had, maybe, a better opportunity otherwise and they are really not interested, but what [the church] should do, I really can't say.

Well, you've got to try something new. I was trying to think of an article I read [inaudible] ... you know just a different style. I think NET 96 and NET 98 is one way. I have a video that is about NET 98, Dwight Nelson at Andrews. The approach of what Adventism is about, the basics, the commandments and the Spirit of Prophecy—if it hasn't worked, you got to try something new, something different. They have reasons why they are not responding. You know to the poor man religion is his salvation. If you're not poor that's why it says the chances of the rich man getting into heaven aren't too good. The opportunity is there, but

Well, it's pretty obvious that there has to be some kind of change. As far as any ideas, I don't know what kind of changes we need. I think there has to be a generational change in outreach, in how they reach people, and I say that because at General Conference I had an opportunity to be in a prayer room. It was the young men and women who came in that showed me something, that there needs to be a way they could pray together. I'm talking about the Whites and the Blacks. So I believe there needs to be a change in the outreach program because they are going to be the church of tomorrow if not the church of today.

MODERATOR: What should the church organization do about these issues of race and ethnicity? What do you think the church should do about the issues of race and ethnicity that we are facing?

Church can't do nothing about it.

MODERATOR: Do you think we have a problem of race and ethnicity?

Well, yeah, definitely.

MODERATOR: If we do, what do you think the church should do?

Well, I think the churches should address that issue by way of training seminars, teaching and maybe to foster types of different activities to bring people closer, closer proximity so that they can relate to each other in a way. I think that the more you know somebody, the better you can relate and understand that person. So I think basically this is an issue that churches do not even, may not be aware that this is a critical issue, but I think education and activities are very much needed.

MODERATOR: OK, [name deleted] what do you think the church needs to do about the issues of race?

I am not sure what I would say on the issue on race, but I think, definitely something needs to be done. The church defiantly needs to do something but I think one of the things that would help are local convocations where ethnic groups come together; a Black congregation, a Hispanic congregation, a White congregation, and I don't know, but I'm saying bring them together and let them know these people bleed red. Love is a key. That is what Jesus used and He was an innovator. He broke away from the norm but as soon as we break away from the norm then there's something wrong. We must be willing for a change.

Your question is kind of a general question. I'm going to respond [in a way] somewhat [more] specific. The church cannot legislate love. There needs to be something done about the racism, but what I feel the denomination can do is to be plain old fair and practice equality. There are certain groups, there are certain committees that they keep a certain percentage of the minorities off of so they can out vote them and push over on the rest of the members their rules, their feelings and their laws and whatever they want, the direction they want the church to go. They purposely and on the basis of plain old prejudice towards certain ethnic groups.... That's what they can do, that's what the church can do instead of trying to legislate love. They can't do that. It's an individual thing. They need to practice more equality and the person that's in charge or the people in charge have to have love for others. There's quite a bit of selfishness, so far as ethnic groups are concerned, being practiced in the church.

One thing I think would be a good idea is for different churches, different ethnic groups to occasionally send a number of them to attend a different worship service. For instances a White church would send a delegation to a Black church from time to time, an Asian church to a [inaudible] ... those worship services or activities within a church, so that it would foster an exposure that would allow them to relate to each other in a different way. I think that would be very healthy.

Number one, I think the first thing we need to do is evaluate self. A lot of us in our churches don't realize we're prejudice, yet many of us have a lot prejudice. I didn't realize until just a little bit ago that I had prejudices against some of the other people. I think the first thing we need to do is evaluate self and see how much of this we can get rid of, and then we need to love ourselves for being prejudice and giving it up. Then, learn how to love the other people and after we learn how to do that, we need to learn how to fellowship with one another. I believe if we could do just those three things just as the basic beginning, the church would be helped a lot.

Wouldn't you say the church is really ... you're really talking about people. I don't that the church it's self can do anything about it.

MODERATOR: I'm talking about the structure of the church, the leadership of the church. What can it do educate membership?

That's what I know your question means, and I'm wondering how they can. Like the church schools; they publish "we're open, we except all races," and individuals who work there work for the denomination.

MODERATOR: What about them?

They don't practice what they preach. It's not that many of us or many of them don't know. Prejudice has been taught. It's an instilled fear. I really don't know how you're going to educate them, because you see education is supposed to bring about a change and that's what's needed. Now how you go about bringing about this change? I really don't know. And [inaudible] dear little ones in both groups.

MODERATOR: When you say “both groups,” what groups are you talking about?

The Afro group and the White. You know, prejudice is both ways. There are some Afro Americans that hate [Whites] more than they hate us. “Your my brother,” as long as you stay in your place. I’m OK with you [when you stay in your place] it’s when there is intermingling that there is a problem.

MODERATOR: What do you mean when you say, “as long as you stay in your place”?

Well as long as you are at your church and I’m at my church, and you’re at your school and I’m at my school ... I remember when I was in Florida in 1971 we did the AY program and they said, “when we get to heaven we’re going to come over to your side.” I said to myself, Lord help them change because they’re never going to get to heaven; there’s not going to be any “sides” in heaven. We’re all going to the same place.

MODERATOR: [Name deleted] what do you think the church should do to educate?

Heaven only knows. I really don’t know what their going to do because like she said was it. [Name deleted] was talking about a convocation. Now there’s been times that we’ve had them with the ethnic groups together. Then we decided we couldn’t and the convocations had to be separate because some were not asked to do certain things ... figured they needed to have a chance to get up on the platform and there just wasn’t enough room for everybody, yet everybody wants to be up doing something. And I don’t know how their going to, I really don’t know.

MODERATOR: What do you think the church teaches on the issue of race?

I always say what the church says is that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. That’s what I think we would say.

I feel like [name deleted] does. I feel like it should be like we’re all the same, but I know it doesn’t look that way. For myself I’d like to see more multicultural churches. I’ve only been to a few like that and it’s been quit some time ago. It was in Oregon that I went to one and it was quite comfortable. But I haven’t to been to one within the past ten years.

That we are all brothers, we are all one. But some of us don’t practice it. I believe we had a Sabbath School lesson quarterly on that. It was beautifully taught and somewhere you forget about it and forget to practice it. Sometimes it’s purposely and sometimes it’s not purposely, but the church teaches what the Bible does. That we all are brothers. And I remember that particular statement in one of the Sabbath School quarterlies that they had on racism.

Well, that all of us our descendants from Adam and Eve, and so if we are descendants from Adam and Eve, we would all have to brothers and sisters. And that should take care of the race issue, but they forget about it.

I've read that but I can't remember exactly what it says. I've got that book at home. But the Bible says we're sons and daughters of Christ. We're Abraham's seed. So if your from the same father and the same mother. Why is there a difference?

MODERATOR: Should we work harder on bringing those who are not like us into our local church?

Yes.

Yes.

Oh, Yes.

Ummm.

Yes.

Yes.

I meant to say earlier, because when you talk about evangelizing the Whites, evangelizing the Hispanics and the Blacks, remember God gave the commission to us all. He didn't say that I'm supposed to only bring in Blacks. Some of us have neighbors that are of other ethnic groups and things like that, and we don't say anything to them but, "How you doing?" We're good neighbors, but we don't evangelize to them.

MODERATOR: So, should we work harder on bringing up people who aren't like us?

Yes.

Yes.

Ummmm.

I think we should, if we all spoke the same language. But you are going to have a problem, a language barrier, if you go to other races who do not speak and understand English, unless you have a translator. And if you have a variety of languages, it's going to be very difficult. I think we should plant the seed and that whosoever will should come.

I think that we should, but it's easy to say, "Yes." The reality is to bring in other people who are different from us would mean to change almost everything. For instance, if you bring in a certain group of [poor] people, you may have to have a food bank. Or you may have to change the worship style to accommodate them, and there are so many different things that you have to do or otherwise they will leave. So, yes, but in reality the things that you have to do to be sure that the person is comfortable and growing may not meet our needs. There are really no easy solutions.

We should work harder, but I don't see a problem if our heart is in it. I have no problem asking my White sister to come to church with me. I have no problem in preparing a meal to take to her home with me. I have no problem of picking her up and taking her back to church, to and fro from church. So we do have to work hard at it, but if we're going to change let's work hard at it.

MODERATOR: Do you feel in general that the White church is neither growing or keeping pace with the White population?

I feel as though it is not keeping pace with the White population. But it goes back to loving and reaching out.

Well, I feel that the White church is actually the church of the majority. It is very cold. They are not really into evangelism or outreach, to tell, speak out, invite. And in the [White] worship service really needs to be upgraded.

MODERATOR: What do you mean when you say "upgraded"?

Well, in a sense, when you go to a White worship, you feel people so conservative that some of them, if there is a prayer, you could hardly get an "Amen" in the congregation. And some of the music as well. Maybe to put a little essence in it. And so, I think, yes there are quite a bit of change needed in that area.

MODERATOR: Do you feel that in general the White church is neither growing or keeping pace with the White population?

Statistics show that it's not growing and it's not keeping up. You read that in reports.

MODERATOR: From your perspective, is there a proper balance in the ethnic mix in the leadership of the Conference, the Union, and the General Conference?

No. Let me use as an example the Treasurer in the conference. There has been the same person there for five or ten years. And it doesn't seem to me that there is any way to move that person because of the number of people on the committee is unbalanced and when the voting comes around it's unbalanced.

MODERATOR: When you say "the number of people is unbalanced," what do you mean?

Well, let's say if there are nine people on the committee, and it's voting time and you are trying to vote out [delete name] and [delete name] is Black and there are seven Blacks on that committee who are more or less my friends and two of other races, now how in the world are those two whatever's going to make a difference? If seven of us are Black and five of them are my personal friends

MODERATOR: So you are suggesting that people are voting according to their ethnicity?

Yes, voting according to ethnicity and voting according to friendship, instead of voting according to what is best for us.

MODERATOR: Any body else want to respond in your perspective is there a proper balance in the ethnic mix among leaders at the Conference, Union, Division, and General Conference?

No.

No, there is not a balance, but there is constitution that says each ethnic group has a major office and the constituents vote them in and out. Each committee has several ethnic portions and unless two ethnic groups get together they cannot move anything. Unless you get some voting together, if the Hispanics vote for their own, and the Blacks vote for their own, and the Whites vote the same, you got a tie, not a majority. But in other conferences, you don't have that same thing.

MODERATOR: .What about balance at the Union?

No.

No, no, no only at that top.

The constitution says for the top leaders—the president, vice president, secretary—have to be from different ethnic groups. One ethnic group cannot hold all three positions, but when you go into the office staff or other departments, then there is no constitution that directs equality there.

MODERATOR: Do you find a balance at the Division or General Conference in your perception?

No.

No.

No, there's not a proper balance in the races of the ethnic groups simply because it's based on percentage. Like someone mentioned, the positions of the administration of the Conference are based on the percentage of ethnic membership of the whole Conference. The larger majority of members in the Conference will have the most leaders, because they had more representative members in the Conference.

MODERATOR: Let me see if I hear you right. So if there's 20% Black members, do you have 20% representation in the leadership of the conference?

No, you don't.

MODERATOR: . OK, so that's the balance I'm talking about if you have 10% Hispanics do you have 10% Hispanics in the leadership of the Conference?

No.

No.

MODERATOR: Our time is almost up. Are there questions that I did not ask that I should have asked?

Well, I'd like to make a comment on perhaps a point that we may have covered, but I failed to add that suggestion. It's the idea where a church declines in membership to the point that it's Pastor would have to be moved, and then that church would have to share a pastor with another church, I often wish that our Conference would change the formula on which they make that decision. Rather than removing a pastor from a dying church, I would say maybe if they provide more support to that church it might revive itself. For instance, God created our body in the same way, if there is a part that is hurting, the body generates a lot more energy toward that hurting part. I think if the church the conference were operating that way, we would see a lot more churches staying and growing rather than closing doors.

MODERATOR: Anybody else have a last comment to make?

I'm saying if a church is doing well in tithe, membership, and otherwise, then I think they should allow that church to continue to grow. They are doing something right, they are continuing to grow. So this moving a pastor because he's been there for three years, if the church is growing, why are you going to mess with success?

MODERATOR: The rest of you who are going to make comments, I want you to make them directly to the issue that we are talking about. And that is the issue of race. If there is something I left out on the issue of race relations in the Seventh-day Adventist Church that you think we need to speak to, I'll give you ten seconds to make a last comment.

Well, one thing I do want to mention. There is a desire of one conference in the Pacific Union that wants to organize a Black Conference, a Regional Conference is what they are calling it. And they are getting strong objections. At first they got strong objections from their local conference and even stronger from the Union Conference and stronger objections from the General Conference in that the top leader said that there would be no more Regional Conferences. I feel like that's legislating and putting us under them and we don't have the ability to lead ourselves. I'm not sure if that's the feeling, or if one group starts breaking off into their conference, then other ethnic groups may break off into a conference. Someone has said the funds will be limited if an ethnic group breaks off into it's own conference and the local conference would not be able to take advantage of the tithe that goes to the local conference. Instead it will go to their conference, and the Union, and the General. I think the reason is not so much their concerned about brotherhood as their concern about the issue of money. And I feel like if a group wants, if they have reasons why they want to break off into an ethnic group, if it's been comfortable all the time and it's still comfortable why leave?

MODERATOR: All right. I'm going to take two more statements a quick one from [name deleted] and then an even quicker one from [name deleted].

You know, I was born and raised in the Virgin Islands. And when I [immigrated to the U.S.] and they started telling me about the Black Conference and the White Conference, to me it was a shocker. I mean it was really weird! It was like, where's the unity here? How in the world are we going to go to Heaven with a White Conference and a Black Conference? I couldn't understand that. I don't know why it is. The leadership of the church I really don't look at that kind of thing. I'm really more into my own church as far as that. But the leaders up on top and General Conference I guess I'm still young you know compared to all of these ladies who that have been you know for a really long time. So you know that kind of thing I never really looked at that. But the Black Conference and the White Conference that bothered me.

I think that since race has a lot to do with attitudes and perception I think really help our churches if the Conference and our leaders would change their terminology and not refer to groups as Whites, Blacks and what have you. Using those common terms reinforces the attitude and perception of certain people.

MODERATOR: So what do you suggest they use?

Well, use other terminology that does not pin point somebody to specific color. For instance the African American in this Country realize wait a minute people have been calling us from by our skin now why not refer it to us as maybe your Nation or Continent or whatever like most of the people. But when you start referring to someone specifically by the color of the skin you don't I feel you may win force somebody's perception.

MODERATOR: Thank you for your participation. It has been very helpful.

Appendix C
Transcript of Focus Group B

TRANSCRIPT OF FOCUS GROUP ON RACE ISSUES

JUNE 22, 1998

GROUP: WHITE

MODERATOR: NORMA SAHLIN

MODERATOR: You are performing a very valuable service. And we very much appreciate that. Now I'd like to take care of a few procedural details before we get going. You are welcome to take notes you know that get triggered in your mind go ahead and jot them down. We are recording this audio recording not visual your names will not be used in any final written report so please be as frank as you can. At the same time keep in mind that the purpose of our group is to service attitudes and we are not meaning to convince each other so we must respect what someone says and yet we need to be as honest as we can be. Now there are some people observing the project director who will be writing the report is watching and you'll learn more about his function later. You have your name tags and I appreciate you turning them so I can see them clearly and I will also serve a function as a traffic cop. I need for you to speak up and if I think that maybe your not speaking up well enough to be heard on the audio tape you'll see me kind of going like this or if I need to move you along or stop you or something like that I will be directing you. Periodically note will come in -- perhaps something that they want a new question asked or some variation on what I'm doing -- so don't get worried. Now what I'd like to do is get acquainted and I'd like for you to give us your first name, your occupation, and tell us what church you come from, and church offices or areas in the church in which you are active. Are there any process questions before we get started? If you do find it necessary to leave the room, please be as brief as you can be.

MODERATOR: Let's start with your name, the local church you belong to and what role you have in your congregation. And your occupation, if you would like.

I'm [Person A], and I come from [Church 1] and I'm the Sabbath School Teacher there and I work with Adventist Community Services. I'm retired.

I'm [Person B]. I come from the [Suburban Church #1] and I'm Community Service Director as well as a Deaconess and Sabbath School worker and I'm a [inaudible].

I'm [Person C]. I'm from the [Church 2]. I'm a homemaker, and in the church I'm a Junior leader and a Sabbath School Teacher. I'm a deaconess. I'm also tell a child's story now and then, and I'm Assistant Secretary there.

[Person D] retired from the Postal Service. I'm Community Services leader, and a deaconess at [Urban Church #1].

My name is [Person E] I work in Field Service electronics. I'm the Head Elder at the [Urban Church #2] and I also teach an adult class.

My name is [Person F]. I'm the Head Deacon at [Church 3] and my position is now [inaudible].

I'm [Person G]. I'm with the [Suburban Church #2]. I'm the Elder. I'm retired from the Air Force.

My name is [Person H]. I'm from [Church 4]. I just transferred my membership [inaudible]. I'm Personnel Coordinator for a marketing [inaudible].

MODERATOR: Thank you. The first question that I'd like to put out on the table is this: Does it make you some what uncomfortable to talk about issues related to race and ethnicity in the Church?

No.

No.

No.

It might have been years ago, but it doesn't. I'm very comfortable with it.

MODERATOR: OK, why?

Because I think I just think it's so easy to talk to other Adventist people about and I feel as though they understand it very well most of them.

The same today we are so involved with the public that it really doesn't make any difference any more; in fact, its kind of exciting. Most people really travel we talk about traveling and when your traveling you meet different people and those different people are important because they have given you new ideas that enrich your own life.

[Urban Church #2] is a very diverse church and you have people from different backgrounds. So ethnic [inaudible] so we got to [inaudible] ethnicity. It's not very difficult, you know, as a matter of fact. The Pastor usually [inaudible] ... but I am comfortable.

Oh it does not make that much difference to me, but I think probably today it is we travel so much we may come into people and through my life and my career in the Air Force we had all different nationality group Asian or Black whatever to make a same office so it does not make any difference.

The same thing with me. I meet every day with all different kinds of people in all [inaudible] I'm from Europe, you know. [inaudible] but everybody is the same. You know people are people. I look different [inaudible]

I feel the same way. I do not think it is as much as a problem as it use to be. I think now we as a church as made some progress in that area, but just the people in general, in the secular world, also have made some progress. We still have a long way to go, but I think that we are doing much better than we were doing twenty years ago.

MODERATOR: This next question I want you to be thinking about might want to make some notes. When you think about the church membership in North America, what would you guess would be the percentage of memberships for these ethnic groups?

Now do we answer that according to the church that we belong to?

I couldn't answer for the [denomination, only] according to the church I belong to.

I don't think we have any Asian at all.

This is strictly the United States?

MODERATOR: And Canada and Bermuda; the North Americana Division. What percentage of the total membership would you say is Asian? What percentage would you say is Black? What percentage would you say is Hispanic? White, or other?

And this is to equal a hundred percent?

MODERATOR: Yes, approximately. I'd like to put your guesses up here so when somebody gets to a point where they can give me some percentages just let me know. This isn't precise. Don't spend too much time; just share whatever your instincts are.

I think Asian 10%, Black 30%, Hispanic 20%, White 30% and other 10%.

I say 15% for Asians. From what I have seen lately for the Blacks I would say 45%. Hispanics, I will say 55%. The Whites, I don't know. I put 80%. I am not going to equal 100% at all, I mean when I add up but about 80%. I would say for others 10%.

I have got Asian 7%, Black 21%, Hispanic 17%, White 51% and other 3%.

Asian 5%, Black 15%, Hispanic 15%, White 60% and other 5%.

I have for Asian 15%, Black 15%, Hispanic 24%, White 45%, and other 1%.

Asian 10%, 15% Black, 50% Hispanic, 35% White, and other 1%.

I have 30% Black, 5% Asian, then 35% White. Hispanic I have 30% and the other is 10%

I have here Asian 10%, Blacks 20%, Hispanic about 28%, White 20% and others about 2%

MODERATOR: What do you think of these percentages? ... this profile?

Look at the Hispanics. I though there was a lot more than that.

I did too.

I really did.

I see so many of that.

The thought is we live in an area [where there are a lot more Hispanics than average].

Well, yeah we do.

We have many Hispanics.

Asian really surprises me at 3%.

Me too. Because we have good number of Asians.

I put 15% for the Asians because we have some coming in ... quite a few.

I had 15% for that, too.

MODERATOR: [Person I] what were you observing?

The Black I thought there was a lot than 30%. But of course I mean like I've seen like going to Camp meeting like last week it seemed to be an awful lot of Blacks there. Their coming from all over the Illinois Conference ... it seemed like a lot.

Yeah but most of the United States is none.

Mostly its White, because I know at the Post Office they say I was [inaudible]. Sometimes I would be the only White, but they would say blacks are majority because it takes the whole United States there are more Whites than others.

MODERATOR: . When you look at these figures what do you think this means for the church?

What it means?

It means there a lot of Whites.

It's the diversity church.

MODERATOR: The "diversity church"? The local church some of you have talked about what it's like in your local church. How closely do these figures play out in your local church?

There is a lot more than 10% Hispanic in my church.

Whites ... yes I would say ...

We are 50% to 55% and you're in the [inaudible], you're not far away from us.

Yeah but we have [inaudible].

But you have a lot of Spanish in [inaudible].

No. We have not so many Spanish; we've got Black and White more.

Oh, have you?

Yeah we don't have any Asian at all.

MODERATOR: [Person B] how does this ... ?

Oh, it does not stand as far as [Suburban Church #1] is concerned. [Suburban Church #1] would be 98% White. And very we do have two Black families and several Asian families.

MODERATOR: And then what about Conference wide.

Conference wide that makes a difference. I think that there are many Hispanics, as well as the Blacks and Whites, out their way.

Right near us we have a Korean church and they come sometimes over by us visit us. But they have their own church right there.

[Inaudible; many people talking at the same time.]

MODERATOR: Gentlemen?

... Filipino. I remember that. There's a lot of them a lot, but their considered Asian aren't they?

Non of these match the Asian, White statistics either. Our church is in a community that's probably White and that makes up the majority of our congregation. We have a little everything, but no where near the percentages. But like these ladies where saying not that far from us like I live in [inaudible] Indiana and go to the church in [inaudible] which is the next town over south of me. But the next town north of me which has a larger Black population, has a church where I'm sure that their percentage of Black members is like the White percentage for the nation.

I think the Black membership is growing faster.

[inaudible]

MODERATOR: Let me hear from [Person J] and [Person B] and [Person I] before we move into another question.

I have been a church member for twelve years there. I've been the Head Deacon for many years. I know a lot of people there. I see them every Sabbath. You know I deal with it I take care of the parking lot on the East side. But in our church it not too much different between Black and White, but the White pretend that [inaudible] more than the Blacks the Asians and all the [inaudible]. Whites [inaudible] than other people.

Now the Russian, the Polish, and all, they go very [inaudible]. I have read the news [inaudible] The regional they are very tough to keep the Sabbath you know to keep straight you know the church there full. Sometimes people they sit outside because they do not care inside. They are very happy for their faith. And they know what [inaudible]. I went to the Bavarian church there. They went to church two times a week.

MODERATOR: Let's talk about North America.

OK. I [am] tell[ing] about the Whites here whoever comes from there [inaudible]

MODERATOR: OK [Person B] and [Person I] what do you think these figures mean for the Church locally and then a wider the Conference to the Division?

No, I do not think they mean anything really. I suppose if you took a year from now ... they would be shuffled a little bit more. But in our case in the [Church 3] it probably is the Black and the Hispanic [percentages] reversed. I think we have more Hispanic than we have Black. We only have a half dozen Blacks. Oh, wait a minute [inaudible] maybe about 10 Blacks but maybe three different families in there. Two or three families. As to Hispanics, we probably have 25. But the rest of the members; we have a lot of Romanians, but I don't think the figures surprise me it doesn't mean anything to me at all really. It does not tell me anything at all really. It does not tell me anything at all.

MODERATOR: Let us hear how you feel.

What I took from looking at that numbers on the board over there, it tells me that the church is actually doing very well. In my church we have about 50% White, about 30% Hispanic, 15% to 20% Hispanic. What we might have more than 2% Asian ... about 5%.

Well, the question that you asked, "what does it mean to the church in North America?" It causes me to ask a question. I would like to know how these percentages stack up to the population of North America because like [Person I] feels we are doing pretty good in some areas, but I am wondering if North America has a 30% population of Black then I would say we are doing pretty good, but if the North American population is more like 50% Black then we are not doing so good we have some work to do. So I would like to how it stacks up against the Nations figures.

MODERATOR: Have any of you observed any tension or conflicts between ethnic groups within you local church? Think of your local church: Have you observed any tensions or conflicts between ethnic groups?

No.

Never.

No

No.

Well, not [inaudible], but there is [inaudible]

MODERATOR: What about any point at another church where you attended? You said you just moved here.

Yeah, well when we got to the church I attend [inaudible] it was like 98% Black it was dominator Black church. It was like 2% White but there was not any tension as far as I thought.

MODERATOR: What about looking a little border within Conferences where you've been a member have you observed any tensions or conflicts?

No

MODERATOR: Nothing at a constituency meeting?

No

No

No

No

MODERATOR: Have you personally experienced a time when you were treated unfairly because of your race or ethnic category by someone within the Adventist Church?

No

No

No

No

MODERATOR: How do you think most people of your ethnic background in the Adventist Church really feel about other ethnic background such as what we have written up here on the board?

What do you mean by that?

MODERATOR: How do you think most people, in your case Caucasians; how do you think most Caucasians in the Adventist Church really feel about Asians, Blacks, Hispanics?

Most of them just think this is fine.

We just really [inaudible] we enjoy each others company because we are the same and we are here for the same purpose.

I feel the same way I think we have always been too conditioned to understand and we are all God's children regardless of color at least most people I know of (dot understand)

[Inaudible] people are not different [inaudible] one family next together who worships in God like brother and sister. I don't care about if he is Black or if he is Asian or he is different. We are all the same. For God [inaudible].

I do not know if I can answer this question because I do not know what others think or feel. And it might be unfairly answered for them I dot think I could do that myself.

Well I share view with majority here that [inaudible] on the issue as far as I am concerned. Some people may have that [inaudible], but they have not verbalized that to me.

MODERATOR: Let me ask another question to follow up on this. Do you feel there are some Adventists with more negative or extreme feelings?

With regard to race?

MODERATOR: With regard to race.

[inaudible]

MODERATOR: One at a time. Well start over here.

Well I think it is all up to the person, and sometimes when you are conversing with people, you can feel there might be some tension or they just don't push themselves forward and maybe go to another church. Maybe they don't like something. Sometimes race does come up a little bit. I have met people that say, "I don't like _____ church because there is a different ethnic group there." But our church is very mixed and we are all very happy with each other.

MODERATOR: Are you saying that you have met these people recently or sometimes in the past?"

I would say in the past. Because the church I go to is very small and we just stick together. If somebody moves it is just because they are moving to a different State or something like that.

Well, um ... I think I [inaudible] abundantly a Black church because on many occasions the Whites are there [inaudible], they never did feel very comfortable. So I really cannot explain how why they prefer to an all-black church as opposed to a mixed church.

MODERATOR: Are there some Adventists somewhere with more negative or extreme feelings?

I know as my memory searches back, other than Houston eight or nine years ago, I seem to recall -- though I never had the experience at the church I attended -- I seem to recall there being some people suggesting that there might have been some division with respect to race. But I personally never did experience in it in that church.

MODERATOR: Do you know what the issue might have been? Was it solely race or was there another issue that was maybe being intermixed with race?

It would be difficult for me to answer. Because number one it was so long ago. And number two because I never really experienced it myself I just remember there being there and it being suggested [there was] a division in the church based on race.

I think possibly one percent.

MODERATOR: Possibly one percent?

Yeah. Then being 500 members, maybe three or four.

I would like to deal with this as an issue of comfort. And I think that when it comes to come prejudice it's always prejudice but its comfort and wherever you are comfortable regardless that is where your going to be. And I do that within our Conference there are three divisions you know there is the Caucasian, the Black, and there is the Hispanic. We defiantly are different but that difference is only in the issue of understanding of where we are from and where we have come from. And so there for I think it's a comfort issue in a church that is all Black or all Hispanic, or all White. There is nothing wrong with that; they are there because they are comfortable.

I was going to say something like that but I thought I better not because I didn't know how it would come out. In my church lot of times I will be I will do communion I will do the [inaudible] to do the plate or lift the deal, and I notice that most of the people that are different of a different race, the Blacks, the Asians, the Philippines, the whoever; they usually sit together and when I come in and get my envelope -- I come a little early -- I always say 'Good Morning ... Good Morning ... Good Morning ... How are you?' And I'm always seeing everyone that comes in that knows each other; the Blacks or Asians or Whites they always sit together. [Inaudible] They will sit at a group and I said to myself the other day, I think that is fine if they are comfortable I do not see because when we do mingle in our potlucks and when we talk we always say "Amen" at the same time. We always agree about the same things so I really do not think it matters I think it is just they feel comfortable sitting where they're sitting.

It is just like when you are with our friends we have certain friends that we like and when other people are there and you like them too. Nevertheless, it is just not the closer friend.

I think it is more of a personality thing then it would be an ethnic thing or race thing.

Some people have different personalities they are quick-tempered or ...

I had I taught my class about prejudice last week, as a matter of fact. It was really ironic that you are having this.

I think age is the big problem in the Church. I don't experience problems with race. It is usually age differences that cause the problems.

Old people sit together.

Or young people do not like the way the older people want the service to be conducted or vice versa.

Well I think what [Person B] said is very true. I know recently, here about three weeks ago, we had an international potluck; the Hispanics ate Hispanic food, the Blacks ate Black food, and the Whites ate White food. A sample of this; a sample of that.

That is the way it went. The Blacks sat at their table here, ... Well there were exceptions of course. And most of the Hispanics [sat there] ...

They feel comfortable ... You talk; you can go up to talk to them, [and say] 'Hi, Good Morning, How are you.' [Inaudible] and you don't make an issue of it because if they show better we still sit and talk like ten minutes or something ... Happy Sabbath and Good bye. That is about it But it is an initial.

Well for me I like I did mention earlier I'm relatively new to this church I haven't really aligned myself with anyone yet but whoever comes to great me or whatever you know or sitting there next to me we talk and stuff like that but it has nothing to do with race or whatever it has to do with about taking it nicely.

Common interest.

MODERATOR: In England the Adventist Church faces a situation where the majority of the British population is White but the majority of church members are Black. The situation is the same in some Conferences in the North American Division. What does this mean for evangelism?

Well, I don't know if this answers it enough, but I know in England once we were over there in London. I went to the phone book and jotted down about four addresses of the Adventist Church and then I went down to the front desk and inquired which one was the closest and [when] I got

there, sure enough it was an all-Black church. My wife and I were the only two Whites in the entire church. [It was a] wonderful sermon I think, but the answer to the question why this [is this way] in England [is] because [in] England the Church of England and did not have the Black population that they had today prior to World War II. I just think that some people ... Maybe it is best described this way; some people are Catholics today because they were born and raised Catholic. In the Church of England its the same way; they just do not leave the Church of England.

MODERATOR: So in evangelism in the North American Division in areas where the church membership is primarily one ethnic group but the general population is a different ethnic group, how can evangelism take place?

Well, I think the primary reason for this because of the time in which we live. Black people have historically been poor people. And they have felt a need for God and today our population is living so well, the Whites are living so well they've got three cars in every house, they are out every night, they have no need for a God at all. The Black people still feel the need. In Germany, a couple of years ago after they lifted the wall over there, at a church [I visited] in West Germany a young man from [the eastern part of] Germany was there and we were talking [about] how is it now that the Russians have released all the [inaudible] ... the wall was down, so how's the church? The church was going down! Before, when they were under [government] control, they had little or nothing, and the church was full with people. Once they got their freedom, the attendance at church was sliding off.

Maybe they [inaudible]

Yeah, it's a tension. We've got it so good in this country; that's the reason the Whites [don't attend church or respond to evangelism]. My sister has three sons. They were born and raised Catholic. They went to Catholic grade school and High School. None of them are in the church today. They don't go to any church.

MODERATOR: OK, but lets look at evangelism. When you have an ethnically different make-up of the local church, the local Seventh-day Adventist Church in a community that is of a different ethnic make-up how is evangelism going to take place?

I think it is going to be very difficult.

It's going to be very difficult. England consists of a great deal of Spiritualism, and a dynamic Black congregation will be able to overcome that. I find it very difficult that their going to be able to do it out of their own without having strong Caucasian backing from the United States church.

Are you saying that one race is going to try to speak of an opposite race? Is that what your saying?

MODERATOR: In other words, how will witnessing take place?

It would be like a Korean church is plunked down in the middle of a White neighborhood; how are they going to get White people to come into that church?

MODERATOR: New York City is a vast collection of ethnically-defined neighborhoods. There is one neighborhood where there are a hundred and sixty thousand Russians. There are thousands and thousands of Asians; there are thousands and thousands of Hispanics. How does a congregation that is in a neighborhood traditionally of one ethnic make-up reach the people in that neighborhood and bring them into the Adventist faith?

You've got to bring someone in that can relate to them.

MODERATOR: But the congregation is meeting here, but the demographics around that congregation's building have changed.

Still, the congregation has to agree to bring someone in who can reach that particular ethnic group that their targeting.

Well I don't think this is going to be the answer if you have a White population over here, and you have this church that is 98% Black situated in an all-White community. Is that how I understand the question?

I would suggest it would probably be best for that Black church to move into a community that is Black because they are going to have no success and in evangelizing.

MODERATOR: Why do you think they would have little or no success?

Because people, as I said before, if we didn't have a common interest ... I never saw [Person I] before in my life, but I bet you like different friends than what I like, and maybe have tastes ... things like that. It's just they just group together. We've gone to the same church for thirty years and the same people sit with the same people. And getting them to move is almost impossible yet they all are friends they get all long wonderful together and talk together and it's just like groups that you had in High School or any place else, people just flock together.

It devastating that the missionary, you know, can go over there and do the job and be successful in it, but here at home ... I really feel when you mention that it has to be from the same ethnic group, it has to be the White Caucasian that comes into that Black church to nurture the Black church and then really go out. He has to be dynamic and work hard, but it has been done. It has been done in the Philippines. It has been done all over the South Pacific. It's been done in South America where they have brought [in missionaries who] have helped them cross that particular barrier [and get into an] area in which they have not been able to get into. It's very very difficult. England is very very difficult, very very difficult. I don't know of any Adventist Church that is all White [in England]; it is almost all Black because we've been there and investigated that. We have a fine College.

I do not know if my statement came across acutely. I am not suggesting that if a Black church is trying to reach the White community that they bring in a White Evangelist. I am suggesting that they bring in a professional evangelist because the people in that church do not have the training and the background to be able to reach the needs of the people that they are trying to bring into their church. I don't necessarily think that it has to be a White person but it should be someone who has the skill and the training and the ability to reach them.

You are right.

MODERATOR: OK, back to our example of New York City. There are, of course, vast numbers of White people you have the different ethnic neighborhoods, but over all in the millions of people that live there. There we look at the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the work in New York City there are a majority of White church members. The majority are various ethnic backgrounds. And for instance there is a church on the upper east side and that is a very ethnically diverse population but they're in a neighborhood that is upper middle class and primarily White. What would you say has to go into consideration with Evangelism by an ethnically diverse a group of Adventists in a secularized, White neighborhood? That is the issue I'd like you to think about and try to express.

Is this an upper class neighborhood?

MODERATOR: Yes, but that is the challenge that I'd like for you to address.

Well, you know, we are going to have NET 98 site in our church. I don't know that the [inaudible] showing of it is world wide; it's going to be in every State in the United States and several countries. I think radio and television has a lot to do with that because I do think that It Is Written, Discovery, and Amazing Facts and all of the stuff that comes in and I've got thousands of people that are sending they sent us the cards and stuff for our area and there's just all different kinds of people -- Black, White Asian, Assyrian, Arabian, everything -- watching these programs. I think they are very important. And speaking about a Black preacher or a White preacher, I love Charles Brooks. I don't know if you have you ever seen him? He's a Black preacher; he's retiring now, but he is the most marvelous Black preacher and he preaches to Whites and Blacks, and when he preaches he zeroes right in on your soul. For me.

I do not think that is what she wants to hear.

[Inaudible.] I think if I'm understanding your question ...

We're getting evangelism by radio and TV ...

One of the things I would suggest is when you decide that you are going to have an evangelistic series, you should use a neutral site. Do not use your church. Use a neutral site [inaudible]. Yes, definitely.

Yes.

MODERATOR: What else would you recommend as a major change in evangelistic strategy? For instance ... Are you familiar with how evangelistic meetings are held in your area and would you recommend a change in that?

We haven't had a whole lot of success in our area. We have really been trying hard. We've been doing all different kinds of advertising, and we are not dealing with any ethnic differences [between the community and the congregation]. We are dealing with community that is similar to what is in our church, and we are struggling to get people to come into our doors to listen to what our speakers or programs have to offer.

MODERATOR: So you are saying at this point ethnic background is not the issue?

I don't think that's what is keeping people from coming into our doors.

MODERATOR: Remember, what we need to do is surface some attitudes and possible areas that need to be included in a survey of the membership across North America. So we do not want to try to fix the subject today that is not what we can do today. Let propose this question I'd like to get your responses to: Should we work harder to bring people who aren't like us -- however we define that -- who aren't like the majority ethnic group of the church into our local church? Should we work harder at bringing people who aren't like us -- whatever the majority group of the church -- into our local church?

Who's not like us? Explain that to me.

My answer is; Yes.

MODERATOR: Looking at it from ethnically.

My answer is; Yes, we should work harder at it; we are just as guilty as everyone else. I do not think the issue is over race or ethnic background I think the problem is more of where you come from in from a religious background. I think the reason that we are struggling if that is what we are trying to pull out of this conversation. The reason we are struggling with evangelism in America because people race I think we should be talking about diversity in religions.

I would think that it would be good if they could get the Seventh-day Adventist people themselves to work in to do some evangelistic work so that a preacher could come in and do some preaching. Like in our church; I know our church is dying, but nobody goes out to pass out literature. [The members] don't even know what kind of literature to pass out.

MODERATOR: .Regardless of their ethnic background?

Regardless ... No! Right. I think its [inaudible].

Yeah, I think if we'd even donate one day in the month and go pass literature around and then the following month follow up with [some event], maybe it would help. I don't know, but we haven't tried anything.

I think we are kind of afraid I'm talking for myself. I've tried to bring ... I have my son there now. I certainly got my daughter there. I don't want to overdo it. As far as my neighbors [go], they do ask sometimes about the Sabbath. They say, 'Are you kidding? You go on Saturday?' They are just so set on that Sunday thing, so they think I'm different, but they like me as a person, so I try to stick with that. I try to be as nice as I can, and do a few little things. But as far as getting people [into the church], yes, I do think we could work harder ... My neighbors are ethnically different from my congregation: Hispanic, and a lot of Whites are still there, but the Hispanics are coming in really fast. So, yes, if you want to know what we say we believe a little bit of what yes of what I say it kind of helps it he is Spanish and I cannot talk to some of my Spanish neighbors. Nevertheless, I don't know just having him as one of the Hispanics, I don't know if that helps, but I think a lot of that is the person doing thing for people.

Yes we ought to. We need to do a very good job of bringing people into the church who are not like us. Unfortunately the outside world is not as racially and ethnically tolerant as the church so that is one of the biggest hurting problems that we have. But what we can do however is allowing ourselves or some members of the church that can relate to that group to create some [inaudible]

You see my feeling is that we are supposed to work hard every day, not only one day a week or once a month. Every day we have to be witnesses to other people. [Inaudible] other people must be watching how we live. I can't believe in somebody else if I don't even know their name I support to be. When Jesus entered our [inaudible] Hispanic or White or to anybody I'm support to witness to anybody every day wherever we meet on the street, in the [inaudible]. Wherever I go, I have to witness, You know, that's what my job is supposed to be. Jesus wants for me [inaudible]. It's too late now. So what a help team can do for Jesus is to be witness to say something for Jesus and then the Holy Spirit is all ready to change the people. If you think about it, the demons don't understand.

MODERATOR: We don't have to solve the problem. Does anybody else want to comment?

I think ... no.

MODERATOR: You mean, No we should not work harder at bringing in people who are different from ourselves?

Only if they are in the neighborhood. Then, they all should be welcomed in our church. But, I don't think we should do a bussing program. Where we go three miles or ten miles away to try to get people to come to this church when we have plenty to evangelize around the church. I think that we could go ten miles away and try to build a nucleus in that neighborhood where they all would be comfortable because they live with that group in that area.

Well, I'm going to agree with [previous speaker]. I don't think we should want any different groups [inaudible] it doesn't make any difference if we are Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, whatever Indian. Evangelize to just to all the ones [inaudible]. I wouldn't try any harder for this group than I would for that group.

MODERATOR: ... Let's look at a different question: From your perspective, is there a proper ethnic balance in the leadership positions in your Conference, Union, or the Division and General Conference?

Yes.

No.

I think so.

I do too.

In the Black conference you have all Black leaders and they do a good job. And in the White, the Illinois Conference, I think we have practically all White leaders.

No [I don't think we have a proper balance, because] we are not mixed.

No.

In the Black conference, you should have more Black leaders; in the majority White [conference], you should have majority White [leadership].

I think there is a diversity of positions.

When I get my magazines [from the denomination], I notice that there are Hispanics and Blacks on the Union Conference.

MODERATOR: The [non-Regional] Conference staff?

[If] you go to the [non-Regional] Conference office you are not going to see many Hispanics or Blacks [working there].

The [non-Regional] Conference is Whites, while the [Regional Conference] is the other way around, but the leadership [there] is all Black.

MODERATOR: ... Now look at the [delete name] Union Conference. Does the leadership in the Union reflect the membership?

Without knowing the population, I couldn't answer that. What's the profile in the [name deleted] Union?

Never paid any attention to that.

I think Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin; that's the Lake Union and those conferences are White, and so that they [union leaders] should reflect [that].

MODERATOR: ... How many of you are saying you have growing Hispanic membership in your churches? Are there Hispanic officers any where?

Yes. They are equal in the church, but so many of the Hispanics rarely go to [anything other than] Hispanic churches.

You don't see that kind of leadership at the Conference level.

In our church we don't have the minorities, but we have two elders who are German, and by that I mean born in Germany and raised in Germany. [Inaudible] when we used to have churches that were 'German' churches. It used to be the Italian church, [inaudible] now we have two of the elders on the board are also Italians: two Italians and two Germans. They are not minorities, but....

MODERATOR: Do you feel in general that the White Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America is growing or keeping pace with the White population in North America?

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

MODERATOR: ... Would you elaborate?

I think I answered that before because the White population is doing so well off [inaudible] in our society and that's the reason. The Blacks still don't have the economic strength that the Whites do, generally speaking. For Black people also their history, their life has been built around the church and they are very close to the church; it means so much to the Black people. And you can go to I've only been to a few Black [worship] services and you can see it is not necessary to go to [any extra work to generate] more enthusiasm. They are really into it! I think for that reason, that's one of the reasons if not the reason that [the Black church is growing]. Primarily because of the [affluence] of [White] society and Whites; [that] is the reason [the White church is] not growing as much.

I would just like to say though that the Filipino people that I've met, many of them are not real poor, [yet] they stay very close to the church. I think they do I feel like they are good witnesses and they may be poor or they may be rich, but they stay real close to the church and they are, I think they are really very good people.

Are you noticing that [it is] the Filipino people that came from the Philippine Islands [immigrants born overseas] are the ones who are very close to God and stay in the Adventist Church?

Yeah, but when they came here ... I don't know if they came here.

Were they evangelized there or here?

They had [been] evangelized there, yes.

They had a lot of persecution over there.

Yes, but once they were here, even though they have a good life, it didn't draw them away from the church.

No they were pretty much saved.

It would be pretty much difficult to draw them away from the church.

Yes, yes.

My reason for saying all of this [is] based just on the effort we made in our local area. We've tried every year now for the past several to put a lot of effort into the full evangelistic project in coordination with the Net 90-whatever-year, and we've had very little success at all. Our area and our church is mostly White. And to try and answer your question, I think that we are not keeping pace because for whatever reasons -- maybe like what [Person B] said people aren't so well off or things are so good that their just have no interest in God or whatever -- but we are not having hardly any success at all.

Excuse me; I think another reason [is], like [Person F] said, when they have their own religion, they just won't cross [the line to a new religion]. They don't have the [motivation] to seek righteousness and truth.

MODERATOR: Other people said, "No, the White Seventh-day Adventist Church growth is not keeping pace with the White population." Are there some other points that you want to make along those lines?

I'm kind of stumped on that one. I'm not I don't know I think that the White people are Well, in my church we have very, very We have a lot of Whites.

Yes, but they are not growing with new White people [joining the church in large numbers]. That's the point.

That's what we are talking about.

The population is growing so fast the church is not growing so fast.

We are not talking about the people in the church; we are talking about the [general population].

But, there is no White [evangelistic outreach in our area].

Then it has to be the people that are in the church who [reach out] to these people.

Well, that's what I mentioned; like you [inaudible], I wouldn't mind passing out fliers or something, but I wouldn't even know what to pass out.

I am never afraid to work in the neighborhood where we are at, but

I figure [inaudible].

MODERATOR: I just want to go back to the purpose we are here for today. What we want to do is surface specific questions and wording to use in the survey of the membership to be conducted later this summer for the planning committee of the North American Division Summit on Racism. What are the questions that I did not ask that you think I should have asked to clarify some points that should be included in this survey?

If there is racism, it is not here in [this] metropolitan area.

I buy that!

Quit barking up the wrong tree! If we are addressing the issue of racism within the church, I just don't see it. I have never experienced [any].

I think that within the church, if people have money or don't have money [may be more of a problem than race]. I'll just say I was working at [a suburban Adventist] Hospital in 1965 and this woman who was not a Seventh-day Adventist, she said to me, "The other hospitals are not like this hospital. The Janitor or the person who sweeps the floor has lots of respect." I think in the church that's the way it is; we all kind of respect each other.

I think we [inaudible] started on the wrong track all together. I think if the survey is going to be on race, I think its a waste of time and money because I never experienced [racism] in the church.

Yes! Not within the church.

Not within this church.

Any hostility within the church ... and any survey of this nature is going to be a big waste of money.

[inaudible] there may be prejudice, maybe not here in this area, in some Adventist churches.

All I know is when I go to church on Sabbath I hardly [inaudible] everybody I know and they are Black and they are Filipino, and they are White. I just say hello the best I can and they ... [say] just the same to me. I don't think anything other than that about them. That's me. I don't ever see it, and I've never seen it. I don't know if it is thought of. No one has ever said [anything about] it. No one has ever said it to me.

I am always traveling, like [Person H]. On Sabbath, you want to know where's a church, and I've gone to Black churches and White churches, and I think I was welcome [both places].

MODERATOR: Let me ask one more question. When evangelism strategy is being planned should race or ethnic issues be considered? When evangelism strategy is being planned is there a place for consideration for race and ethnic considerations?

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes. I wouldn't send a Caucasian into a Spanish neighborhood. He couldn't speak a word of Spanish. I would not think it would be best.

You go with someone who is White or Black as an evangelist, and you probably want him going to evangelize the Blacks or Whites [inaudible]. Other than that, 'No,' I wouldn't think any difference [should be taken into consideration] at all.

Its a very narrow and direct question.

MODERATOR: It is. When evangelism strategy is being constructed should race or ethnic consideration be considered? When shaping that evangelistic strategy?

I think so.

I agree.

Because we are all very different. I mean, when you talk about Caucasian, Blacks, and Hispanics you get a picture. You know you get a picture of their food for instance, the way their customs, their culture All of those things, I think, must absolutely be a part of [evangelistic planning]. For example, when the missionaries went to Hawaii or any of the South Pacific and insisted that the way the Western world approaches Christianity is the way the South Pacific natives should, it

almost destroyed them. It destroyed their culture. We now look at it very differently, and I think that's very important to recognize.

When we have our NET 98 in October, Pastor [name deleted] from the [name deleted] Church is going to lead out and he is going to be helped by Pastor [name deleted]. There will be all these people in there and he's going to be talking in English; he's going to be talking to the Blacks, the Asians, the White, and the Syrians. He's going to be doing the best that he can and the screen is going to present Dwight Nelson from Andrews University, so I don't know how their going to work that out, but I'm telling everybody in my family and in my neighborhood. We are sending out brochures and everything, and I'm telling everyone to come to the church and I'm not saying who's going to speak. I'm going to say its about Jesus coming back.

Here's an experience that I've had with an ethnic thing. I work with the Post Office with a goodly number of Black people. Quite a few are my friends, and to evangelize [them] at some time [in the past] I signed them up for Sign of the Times. They loved that magazine, but when they [later could] get Message magazine, they loved that magazine twice as much. Its Black, and they could relate to that real good. They liked it very much.

I think that is incredible that cultural [inaudible] should be [inaudible] coming up with evangelistic strategy. I mean, for instance, if you want to evangelize within the Black community [inaudible] you understand how it is there, then you can come out with a creative approach. You have to [inaudible] ... all our life there's going to be resistance [inaudible].

That is how the politicians do; go out and give an entirely different speech to the farmers than they give to the city folks.

MODERATOR: Thank you. This closes our interview. I would like to invite our observers in and you can meet them and the project director will tell you more about the project.