



Did you feel prepared for the day?  
What could have helped better prepare you?

Was there anything you would have liked to do but didn't?

Was there anything you did but wish you hadn't?

What surprised you most from the event?

How could we make *Open Homes* better next year?

Would you like to receive *Breakthroughs*, the newsletter of Initiatives of Change?

Yes  No

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# *International Day of Open Homes,*



# *Listening Hearts™*

*Every day we see news of conflicts and war. Hate and fear dominate the headlines. Around the world during the first weekend in June, people will be joining to counter the violence and injustice. But this is not a global protest against something; it is a united action for something: building community.*

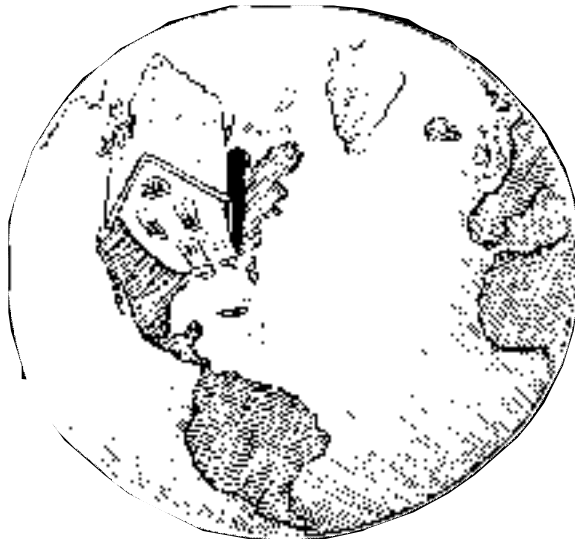
2004 Handbook





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***Open your home to the world  
June 4-6, 2004!***

*All material ©2004 Initiatives of Change  
Photographs are from recent Initiatives of Change events  
Handbook compiled by Brian Cathcart, Will Jenkins, and Lauren O'Brien*



## Feedback Report

*(also available at [www.openhomeslisteninghearts.org](http://www.openhomeslisteninghearts.org))*

*We need your help to make next year's Open Homes, Listening Hearts even better! Please answer these questions and send it to the address on the back. Remember to mark your calendar for the first weekend in June next year!*

*Please include a photo of your event for the Open Homes website and brochure!*

Name:
Address (optional):
City, State:
Email:
Phone (optional):
Host(s) cultures:
Guest(s) culture(s):
Activities:
How did you hear about <i>Open Homes</i> ?
Did you think this was a worthwhile activity? Why?



## ***Open Homes Community Online***

Be sure to log on to the *Open Homes* community website ([www.openhomeslisteninghearts.org](http://www.openhomeslisteninghearts.org)) where you'll find ideas and resources. You can share what you are planning with others and learn from their experiences. We have helpful links to other organizations and websites on community building and dialogue. After your *Open Homes* event, please send us your stories, which we'll post to inspire others with what's happening.

### ***Promoting Open Homes in Your Community***

In addition to notifying *Initiatives of Change* of your participation in *Open Homes*, we encourage you to contact your local media with information about the weekend. On our website, you can find helpful tips on contacting local media outlets, as well as a sample press release. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Contact your local newspapers, radio stations, and television stations. Speak to the editor about sending a press release before and after the *Open Homes* weekend.
- Letters to the Editor are also an effective way of communicating information.
- Make and distribute *Open Homes* posters in your local shopping centers. Ask shop owners to put a poster in their window or you can place posters on notice boards in libraries.

### ***About Initiatives of Change***

*Initiatives of Change* is an 80-year-old network of individuals of all faiths and cultures working to change the world by first seeking change in their own lives. Personal transformations have resulted in various programs in over 40 countries, including *Agenda for Reconciliation*, *Hope in the Cities*, *Caux Initiatives for Business*, the *Caux Scholars Program* and the *International Communications Forum*. A free newsletter, *Breakthroughs*, reports stories of change in the US and the world. ([www.us.initiativesofchange.org](http://www.us.initiativesofchange.org))

*Hope in the Cities* is a global initiative fostering honest conversations on race, reconciliation and responsibility with a focus on healing the wounds of history and building community partnerships. "A Call to Community" was launched at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, in 1996 with the support of a diverse network of over 200 prominent individuals, national organizations and government departments. (804-358-1764 or [www.hopeinthecities.org](http://www.hopeinthecities.org))

***Open your home to the world  
June 4-6, 2004!***



## ***Why We Should Open Our Homes***

On the street, in the news, at the gym. Every day we see people who are very different from us—people whom we don't understand. Maybe we are afraid of them, maybe we are angry at them, maybe we wish they'd go away. But they aren't going away. Today, the whole world is represented in the people of America. And if this great American experiment is to succeed, we each have to learn to live better with "those" people. *Open Homes, Listening Hearts* is an opportunity to break through some of the confusion and misunderstanding through hospitality and storytelling.

This task is not the responsibility of any one group. All have a part: liberals and conservatives, young and old, immigrant and native. By connecting the rich resources of our many cultures, we can make America a place of hope, creativity, and opportunity for everyone. And, hopefully, we will provide a model for a world torn apart by racial, religious and ethnic hatred and fear.

### ***What Is Open Homes, Listening Hearts?***

In 2002, *Initiatives of Change* (see description on page 10) established June 1 as a day when individuals around the world could reach out to people with whom they wouldn't normally interact—usually of a different race, ethnicity or religion—and include those people in occasions in their homes or community. This year, *Open Homes* will take place during the first weekend in June.

On the first *Open Homes* day, people from America to Australia shared hospitality and storytelling. The events involved hosts and guests from Afghanistan, Albania, Australia, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Brazil, Britain, Canada, China, Croatia, the Republic of Georgia, India, Iran, Iraq, Korea, Kosovo, Mexico, Turkey, the US and Venezuela; among them were Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and people of no particular faith.

The goal is for people in our often-disconnected communities to truly hear and be heard without judgment or blame. Deeply held beliefs and attitudes are usually formed by specific personal experiences. So the focus of *Open Homes* is to discover these experiences through ***personal storytelling***. Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa once told members of Congress that the most effective way to heal the divisions and wounds of history in the US is to provide opportunities for Americans of all backgrounds to tell their stories.



This annual, international event provides a practical way of building bridges and creating new friendships across cultures, religions and traditions. Although many people already do this sort of thing individually, *Open Homes, Listening Hearts* is a unique opportunity for united action involving a worldwide community.



## Hospitality and Storytelling

The basic format of *Open Homes, Listening Hearts* is a shared meal and conversation. It is important for this to be adapted to your own situation so that your guests can learn about you and your culture while you learn about theirs.

The goal is not to argue over differences or point out faults. Nor is it to plan a project for solving community problems. That can come later, if the people involved feel it is a good idea.

Instead, the focus is *personal storytelling*. Each person will be given time to tell a story from his or her own personal experience. This is a great way to learn about others and to share your own view of life. And, as Bishop Tutu said earlier, storytelling can be a path to healing painful divisions in our country.



To begin, people could share a story of a time when they tried to tell someone something but felt they weren't being heard. This might be a humorous or a serious story. They could also explain why they felt that way. That would help everyone think about good listening skills and about personal or cultural expectations of the group.

Then, starting with the host, each person could tell a story about herself or himself related to one topic, or each person could choose or be given a different topic. There are also some storytelling board games you can use (see page 9). Storytelling topics could include:

- Describe a time you didn't feel properly recognized for something you accomplished
- Describe a time you felt respected by others of your culture or faith
- Describe a time you felt powerless to change a situation because of your culture or faith
- Describe a time you had a vision and made it happen
- Tell about your favorite cultural or religious celebration and why it is special to you
- Tell what your name means and why it was given to you
- Tell something that you feel people don't understand about your culture or faith
- Give a personal response to a challenging quote such as:

*"If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being."* (Alexander Solzhenitsyn)

### An Encounter of Faith

What happens when we reach out to people who are different from us? Here is the story of two American couples (left to right in photo): Malik and his wife Annette are Muslims; Virginia and her husband Ben are Christians.

*Virginia:* What happened on 9/11 made me see that we needed to know people whose faith is Islam. I immediately put in an application to join the Interfaith Council. Neither my husband nor I knew any Muslims personally, though we have met some and heard Muslim speakers, but we



## Other Event Ideas

*Open Homes, Listening Hearts* can be hosted in special, creative ways in different places. The basic concept is to share a meal in your home, but you could also have "potluck" dinners in community halls or plan international picnics with area faith congregations and community groups.

For example, in past years some friends in the Washington, DC, area held a potluck with guests from Bosnia, India, Croatia, Canada, the Republic of Georgia, and Bangladesh, as well as others from the community. In Montreal, Canada, a committee organized a multicultural, multi-faith gathering at a community center with people from 17 countries.

There are a number of board games designed to facilitate discussion in an enjoyable and creative way. The "Ungame" and "LifeStories," engage players with questions that invite personal storytelling. They are highly recommended by community and education leaders and are available in stores or online. Using games can make the storytelling time less awkward for many people. To learn more, visit the *Open Homes* website.

### Keep the Conversation Going

After this first meeting, you may decide to meet again. If at some point you and your new friends want to begin to take some action in your community, you may think about forming an organized team. To learn more about building teams to address racial and cultural divisions, contact Rob or Susan Corcoran with *Hope in the Cities* and ask them for the *Connecting Communities Handbook* (see page 10). There are more suggestions for follow up on the *Open Homes* website, too.



Here are some principles to keep in mind when seeking to heal divisions and build community:

- Listen** carefully and respectfully to each other and to the whole community.
- Bring** people together, not in confrontation but in trust, to tackle the most urgent needs of the community.
- Search** for solutions, focusing on what is right rather than who is right.
- Build** lasting relationships outside our comfort zone.
- Honor** each person, appealing to the best qualities in everyone, and refusing to stereotype the other group.
- Hold** ourselves, communities and institutions accountable in areas where change is needed.
- Recognize** that the energy for fundamental change requires a moral and spiritual transformation in the human spirit.

from *A Call to Community*  
(see page 10)



- say things to **reveal** your feelings instead of saying things to **accuse** others
- say things to **disclose** your own reality instead of saying things to **control** another person's reality
- say things that you really **believe** instead of saying what's **expected** or **stereotypical**
- say things in such a way that indicates an openness to **growth** and the **future** instead of speaking only to the **past**.

by Paige Chargois  
from the *Connecting Communities Handbook*



2. **Listening:** An honest conversation also means *listening*. It may seem obvious, but listening is a vital tool. Especially when you're with people who are different from you or with whom you disagree! Try to show you are hearing what's being said by your words and actions. Be aware of your own culture's values and ways of doing things, so you can avoid making unfair judgments or reactions about others. It's easy to think our way is always best, but it's more productive to try to see things from the other's perspective.

3. **Responding:** Again, this isn't a time to argue perspectives or decide what to do next. Just listen and encourage your guests to speak from their hearts. Sometimes it is helpful to stop and reflect back to the speaker what you hear them saying, so they know you understand. Don't be afraid of silence! It can be an important part of conversation.
4. **Time Sharing:** Be sure that everyone gets a chance to speak and that no one dominates the time. It may be helpful to state at the beginning how much time is available for each person to talk and to establish a respectful way of reminding people if they go over that time.

► **REMEMBER:** Different cultures have different ways of communicating! Unconscious gestures or phrases can have humorous (or embarrassing) results. There are some good resources on the *Open Homes* website about communicating across cultures that can help you "say what you mean."

### ***Involving Children***

It is important to find ways to engage any children who will be at an *Open Homes* event. Children (like many adults!) learn best through seeing and doing. Here are some ideas

1. Maps may help children visualize different countries and the geographic relations to the US.
2. Children could be asked to bring an item for "show and tell." Parents could help them choose something that represents their culture or religion in some way.
3. Children may also enjoy sharing and seeing family photos, especially of celebrations. These can be a less difficult way for them to explain some of their culture.



certainly did not know any from the Richmond area. I sat at the first event, a dinner, and prayed, "Lord, if you want us to get to know some Muslims, please arrange for us to have dinner with some." And in walked Malik and Annette.



*Malik:* Annette was in line to register for the dinner when Virginia who was standing nearby asked if she (Annette) was Muslim and if she could sit with us for dinner. Annette had a head covering which she uses for her hijab, which could have indicated she was a Muslim.

*Virginia:* We had a good conversation and during the meal I showed them a pamphlet entitled "Bridgebuilding between Christian and Muslim" by Harry Almond and Dr. Jamal Badawi. It turns out that Dr. Badawi was one of their good friends! From then on we kept talking and our hearts were open to each other.

*Malik:* We exchanged some ideas about the heinous crime that was committed on September 11, 2001. Both Annette and I tried to provide perspective from an American Muslim's point of view. We also tried to explain that Islam does not permit such atrocities against innocent people.

*Virginia:* It took some courage for me to act on my thought and go meet new people. In my talks with Muslims, I realize they too feel the need to reach out and come out of their seclusion. It has been a superb learning experience for us. We have made new friends. That is the jewel in itself.

*Malik:* The sincerity and the desire to bridge different cultures exhibited by Virginia and Ben give us a tremendous lift and hope.

From *Breakthroughs* (see page 10)

### ***Unexpected Results***

Ordinary acts of hospitality – like inviting a person of a different race or religion into your home – can have unexpected results. In 1980 Rob and Susan Corcoran, who are Caucasian, arrived in Richmond, Virginia, with an eleven month-old son. Rob recalls,

*"The very day that we moved into our home in a racially mixed neighborhood, the doorbell rang and there was an African American woman standing on the front step. She said, "My name is Audrey Burton and I have come to welcome you to the neighborhood." We talked. Audrey asked about my wife. I said she was upstairs bathing the baby. Without a moment's hesitation Audrey swept by me and went upstairs. It never occurred to Audrey to do anything else. It was the start of a great friendship that has led to a wave of unexpected partnership building across the city. We're still neighbors."*

That "partnership building" eventually created the organization "Hope in the Cities," which brings different sectors of a community together for honest conversations on race, responsibility and reconciliation (see page 10). In 1998, *Hope in the Cities* assisted the White House Initiative on Race in developing a public dialogue guide for use across the US



All this resulted from simple acts of reaching out to different kinds of people. Such actions are not always easy. In the book, *All Her Paths Are Peace* by Michael Henderson, Audrey says, "There was a buildup of pain, anxiety and frustration caused by racism and by the way I had been socialized and shaped by society. There was a need in myself to release a drowning spirit, to open up a well, so that I might go to the real spirit the Creator has for me."

Audrey and her husband, Collie, are risk-takers who had the courage to begin the change process in their own lives and have taken extraordinary initiatives to bring people together. They continue to use their home as a place for hospitality, to connect with the people around them.

### ***How Do I Get Started?***

Want to try it? We'd be happy to provide ideas and encouragement as you plan your *Open Homes* event. Our website ([www.openhomeslisteninghearts.org](http://www.openhomeslisteninghearts.org)) will share activities, resources and stories from people who have opened their homes. Please let us know you plan to participate by signing up on the website or by sending us your name and the best way to contact you (phone, email, or home address).

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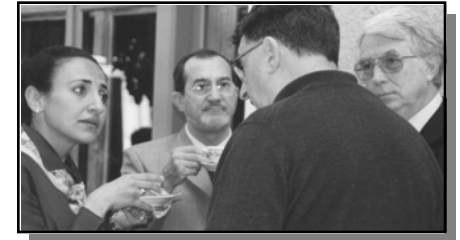
In the meantime, here are three questions to get you started:

#### 1. What will we do?

- a. Ask yourself:
  - (1). What conversations are not taking place in my community?
  - (2). Who needs to be at the table in order for those conversations to take place?
  - (3). What conversation do I need to have today? With whom?
- b. Set goals: I want to...
  - (1). Learn more about \_\_\_\_\_
  - (2). Get to know neighbors/colleagues
  - (3). Build new community partnerships
- c. Decide what kind of event will work best to meet your goals: a dinner in your home, a potluck, or even a community event

#### 2. How will we do it?

- a. Is there anyone you want to work with on this? Perhaps your family or roommates. Who will help host the event with you?
- b. Share your ideas with the team
- c. Assign responsibilities
  - (1) Invitations
  - (2) Food preparations
  - (3) Transportation
  - (4) Leading discussion
- d. Get in touch with *Open Homes, Listening Hearts* to get support and to share your story with others.
- e. Feel free to tell other people and community organizations about *Open Homes, Listening Hearts*. It's a great way to build new partnerships for building community.



#### 3. Who will come?

- a. From your program ideas, decide whom you want to invite. This may be a specific person or a person from a general cultural group (i.e. someone who is Muslim, someone who is White, or someone who is Hispanic).
- b. If you don't have a specific person(s) in mind, you can contact a local faith or community center in your area or the International Affairs Department of a nearby college. Tell them what you are doing and ask if they would connect you with someone. You can also contact *Initiatives of Change* and we will try to link you with one of our local teams or a partner organization.
- c. Send your guest(s) an invitation or invite them personally.
- d. Be sure to find out any cultural or dietary information that would affect your event. This is an important part of learning about other cultures!
- e. Include your guests in the preparations if they want to be involved.

### ***Guidelines for Great Discussions***

Great discussions don't just happen. They take work—especially when people are from different backgrounds and cultures! For some more resources check out the links on the *Open Homes* website.

1. **Talking:** You're having an honest conversation when you ...
  - say things you **need** to say instead of saying things you **want** to say