



FAITH IN ACTION DC

2013 World Interfaith Harmony Week Prize Report

Event: 2013 DC Young Adult Faith Leaders Summit

Organizer: Faith in Action DC

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Event Summary:

On February 9, 2013, a diverse group of nearly 100 emerging leaders (ages 18-35) from religious communities throughout the Washington DC area gathered for the first-ever DC Young Adult Faith Leaders Summit.

Representatives from dozens of communities, organizations, and institutions attended the DCYAFLS, including Bahá'í, Buddhist, Catholic, Hindu, Humanist, Jewish, Latter-Day Saints, Muslim, Protestant, Sikh, Zoroastrian, as well as participants with no specific religious affiliation or multiple affiliations.

At the Summit, the young leaders (clergy, activists, program directors, etc) dialogued about their faith traditions, shared experiences mobilizing their peers for service and social justice, and strategized about how they could more effectively work together across faith lines.

Recognizing the urgent importance of interfaith cooperation and the role of young people in its leadership, Washington D.C.'s Mayor Vincent Gray personally addressed the gathering. A keynote address was also given by Rev. Brenda Girton-Mitchell of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Goals of the Summit:

By holding this summit, the organizers sought to raise up Washington D.C., our nation's capital, as a national and international model of interfaith cooperation, inspiring the next generation of leaders to work across faith lines.

Recognizing that change-makers like our Summit attendees already have many responsibilities and commitments to their own communities, the coordinating group planned this one-day event to be a unique occasion for focused dialogue on subjects that related directly to their work and interests: specifically, how moral/religious motivations can inspire social action. The program was organized around small-group discussions that provided an intimate setting for our diverse participants to truly get to know one another. These groups were arranged by neighborhood to increase the likelihood of ongoing communication between participants beyond the summit.

Outcomes:

Community Support

The Summit had tremendous buy-in from a broad range of partners: the Latter-Day Saints DC 2nd Young Adult Ward hosted the event at their chapel; volunteers from The Guru Gobind Singh Sikh community provided a vegetarian Indian lunch, while Tikkun Leil Shabbat, a local Jewish group, provided eco-friendly, reusable dishes; Georgetown University, a Jesuit Catholic institution, took care of the photocopying and paper needs; further financial assistance was generously provided by the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Washington D.C., the Soka Gakkai International-USA Buddhist Community, and WORDE/The International Cultural Center, a Muslim-inspired organization.

Attendance

Over 110 individuals eagerly inquired and registered for the summit. The number of attendees on the day of the event was between 70-80. Along with those physically present, a robust online dialogue occurred in parallel to the day's sessions, allowing for an even larger group of participants (both locally and nationally) to join the conversations. These participants represented more than a dozen distinct faith traditions and over 70 organizations, institutions, and local religious communities.

Special Guest Speakers

Washington D.C.'s Mayor Vincent Gray enthusiastically agreed to address our gathering. In his speech, Mayor Gray spoke of the rapidly changing demographics of the city and how it is vital to embrace increasing, inevitable multiculturalism. At the same time, the mayor urged the assembled emerging leaders to ensure their communities continue providing a complement of direct services and sustainable poverty-reduction programs for vulnerable populations that are being pushed to the margins.

Later in the program, Rev. Brenda Girton-Mitchell and her colleague Rev. Ken Bedell, of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, addressed the summit. Rev. Girton-Mitchell lauded the goals of the gathering, even noting that calling it a "summit" -- as opposed to a "retreat" -- spoke to the focus on community engagement and moving forward. She advised our young participants that the best qualities of a leader are self-reflection and the ability to continually involve more people, particularly when it comes to service.

Additionally, Joelle Novey of Interfaith Power & Light led a discussion of the intersection of religious values and environmental stewardship; and Rev. Dr. Clark Lobenstine, Executive Director of the InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, invited all attendees to join with this veteran organization in the future.

Social Media

Acknowledging the value of social media in reaching the next generation of interfaith champions, the DCYAFLS organizers made sure opportunities were also available online to converse about the Summit. On Thursday, February 7th, two days before the summit, organizers facilitated a one-hour Twitter chat with the assistance of The

Interfaith Alliance focused on engaging youth in interfaith work. The chat built enthusiasm for the Summit and included participants from all over the United States. During the summit itself, a dedicated social media team posted updates regularly throughout the day, encouraging conversation with supporters beyond the actual event. Tweets from throughout the day were then compiled into a succinct overview of lessons learned from the Summit, via the online platform Storify.

Inclusion of the Arts

After the conclusion of the DCYAFLS, a celebration was held at the community arts venue Bloombars in Washington D.C. The party was open to the public and provided an opportunity for Summit participants to invite their friends to meet one another and share their artistic talents. An open mic featured artists from numerous faith backgrounds who shared music, poetry, and comedy. Additionally, an exhibition from the Faith in Action DC multimedia project was held in the Bloombars gallery, displaying photographs of local diverse people of faith serving their communities. This exhibition preview will be part of a larger exhibition that will tour the Washington D.C. area later this year.

Media Coverage

National Public Radio affiliate WAMU 88.5FM featured a profile of the DC Young Adult Faith Leaders Summit including interviews with organizers Jack Gordon and Gretchen Rydin. The program aired on Monday, February 11th, during the morning news, a peak time for listeners, and was heard throughout the DC metropolitan area.

DCYAFLS lead organizer Jack Gordon wrote an article for The Huffington Post detailing the background and motivations of the Summit, which was published on Tuesday, February 19th.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints also featured an article about the Summit in its national Church publication on Saturday, February 23rd.

Participant Feedback & Next Steps

At the end of the DC Young Adult Faith Leaders Summit, all participants were given the opportunity to submit their comments evaluating the event. Nearly all who submitted an evaluation stated that they would want to attend another event like this, with the desired frequency being either once or twice a year. Many participants had recommendations of colleagues they would like to invite in the future, and also suggested having more conversations focused on topics such as Human Rights, the Environment, and Religious Freedom.

All attendees went home with a resource list of contact information for all participants as well as Summit sponsors. A Facebook group was started immediately after the event to allow our young faith leaders to keep in touch and share information about upcoming events and opportunities.

It was clear from the response to the Summit that this type of interfaith gathering, focused on the next generation of community leaders, is sorely needed in order to ensure the success of interfaith work at the local, national, and international levels.

Event Co-Sponsors/Collaborators:

Benevolent Media	Bloombars
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, DC 2nd Ward	DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities
Georgetown University's Office of Campus Ministry	Greater Washington Interfaith Power & Light
Guru Gobind Singh Foundation	Interfaith Alliance
InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington	Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Washington DC
Mayor Vincent Gray's Office of Religious Affairs	Soka Gakkai International - USA Buddhist Community
Tikkun Leil Shabbat	The White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships
WORDE / International Cultural Center	

Coordination of & Participation at The 2013 DC Young Adult Faith Leaders Summit included representatives affiliated with the following organizations/ communities:

All Dulles Area Muslim Society	American University Muslim Student Association
Archdiocese of Washington Young Adult Ministry	Ashoka
AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps	Baha'is of the United States, Office of Public Affairs
Becket Fund for Religious Liberty	Bhumi Project
Bread for the World	Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington
Center for Community Change	Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, DC 2nd Ward	Church of the Advent DC
Columbia Heights Halaqa	Dar Al Hijrah Islamic Center
Defeat Poverty DC	Dharma Punx/IMCW
Dumbarton United Methodist Church	Eco Sikh
Faith For Change	Faith in Action DC
First Christian Church, Alexandria	Freedom House
Friends Meeting of Washington	George Mason University
Georgetown University Office of Campus Ministry	Guru Nanak Foundation of America
Hindu American Foundation	Howard Universtiy Law School Muslim Students Association
Hunter Memorial AME Church	Interfaith Alliance
InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington	Interfaith Power & Light MD, DC, NoVA

Interfaith Works

International Institute for Sustained
Dialogue

Jews United for Justice

Masjid Muhammad

Montgomery United Methodist Church

Muslims for Progressive Values

New Hope C.M.E Church

Project REACH

Shoulder-to-Shoulder Campaign

Soka Gakkai International-USA Buddhist
Association

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church

St. Martin of Tours Roman Catholic Church

Tahirih Justice Center

Tikkun Leil Shabbat

Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist
Church

Unity Productions Foundation

Washington DC Jewish Community Center

Washington Interfaith Network

Wesley Theological Seminary

WORDE / International Cultural Center

International Center for Religion &
Diplomacy

JAM DC

Luther Place Memorial Church

Mesorah DC

Mt Sinai Baptist Church

New Bethel Baptist Church

Operation Understanding DC

Search for Common Ground

Sixth and I Historic Synagogue

St. Augustine Catholic Parish

St. Joseph's Catholic Church

St. Mary Orthodox Church

The Sanctuaries Church

Unitarian Universalist Community of
Arlington

Unity of Fairfax Church

Washington DC Bahá'í Community

Washington Ethical Society

Washington National Cathedral

Woodstock Theological Center

Zoroastrian Community of Metropolitan
Washington Area