

“The Pluralism Project at 25: Challenge and Promise” Exhibit Opening at Andover Harvard Theological Library

Since its inception in 1991, [The Pluralism Project](http://www.pluralism.org) at Harvard University has served as a trusted resource for educators, religious communities, and civic leaders in exploring the challenges and opportunities presented by the changing religious landscape of the United States. At its core, the Pluralism Project is a hub for collaboration, a place for the training and education of emerging leaders, a provider of quality educational resources, and a facilitator of cross-disciplinary conversations. Founded and directed by Dr. Diana Eck, the Pluralism Project at Harvard University, throughout its history, has engaged over 300 students and academic affiliates in the process of research and resource creation.¹

To mark its 25th year, the Pluralism Project has developed a series of celebratory events, the first of which was an opening for an exhibit that traces the Project’s multifaceted work and reach. The exhibit, “The Pluralism Project at Twenty Five,” frames our commitment to fostering research, dialogue, networks and resources. We were compelled, given the Project’s legacy of documenting and resourcing the interfaith movement, to host this exhibit opening during World Interfaith Harmony Week 2016.

During the opening event, participants were invited to explore the exhibit and listen to remarks from the Pluralism Project’s founder, Dr. Diana Eck, as well as from Andover Librarian Douglas Llyod Gragg and the exhibit’s curators, Maggie Krueger, a student at Harvard Divinity School, and Whitney Barth, the Pluralism Project’s assistant director. Gragg opened his remarks by acknowledging that this exhibit was initiated at a fitting time, given Harvard Divinity School’s upcoming bicentennial celebration, a nod to the growing diversity of a theological school once founded solely to educate Christian ministers. Twenty five people attended the opening event, including Harvard Divinity School faculty, staff, and students, as well as members of the wider public and interfaith activists from Greater Boston.

The public exhibit begins on the first floor of the Andover Harvard Theological Library of Harvard Divinity School. A condensed timeline greets visitors with a history of the Project’s work and relationships over the last 25 years and beyond. The timeline marks the diverse advents of such research as *World Religions in Greater Boston: A Guide to Communities and Resources*, presenting portraits of local faith communities, and such gatherings as the Project’s summer seminar on world religions for schoolteachers (2000). *A .pdf version of the timeline is included as part of the supplementary material to this report.*

The exhibit, which will run through September 2016, continues on the main floor of Andover Harvard Theological Library. In her 2006 definition of “[pluralism](http://www.pluralism.org),” Dr. Diana Eck explains that pluralism is rooted in diversity, actively seeking across difference, and is an encounter with

¹ Although based at Harvard University, the Pluralism Project has, for 25 years, been sustained largely by the generous philanthropic support of foundations and individuals.

deeply held commitments. Pluralism is, fundamentally, an approach based in dialogue. In this vein, the exhibit provides an array of artifacts that speak to the Pluralism Project's engagement in public discourse, including newspaper clips from local and national publications and fliers from local and national events including lectures, film screenings and case study workshops that seek to provide exposure to the United States' diverse religious and interfaith landscape. A large map pinpoints a select number of the Pluralism Project's affiliate researchers and alumni, demonstrating the breadth and diversity of the Project's networks and legacy. The exhibit also includes a reinstallation of a 2000 photography exhibit the Pluralism Project held in collaboration with the International Institute of Boston, called "Faithful Boston: The Religions of Boston Immigrants," which displays the work of local photographers capturing scenes from diverse religious communities throughout the Boston area.

In addition to these features, the Pluralism Project at Twenty Five exhibit provides photographs, agendas, and other tangible representations of the Project's major initiatives over the course of its development. This includes the convening of cross-disciplinary conferences on religious discrimination and accommodation, consultations and seminars on women's religious and interfaith leadership. Each gathering brought together leading activists, religious leaders and political stakeholders to discuss the comprehensive implications of America's growing religious diversity. Moreover, the display of the Pluralism Project's major initiatives also foregrounds the Project's comprehensive resources, specifically, [*On Common Ground: World Religions in America*](#), [*America's Interfaith Infrastructure: An Emerging Landscape*](#), and [*the Case Study Initiative*](#). These resources exemplify the Pluralism Project's commitment to recording the religious diversity, interfaith efforts and difficult engagement of religious and public discourse both domestically and internationally. Moreover, at the heart of the Project's work, these resources translate our research into educational tools that can help everyday citizens engaged in a more informed civic conversation.

The Pluralism Project was honored to mark World Interfaith Harmony Week by kicking off the celebration of our 25th anniversary. This opening demonstrates the breadth of scholars, educators, leaders and students that have made our work possible over the years. These are very people—both in the United States and around the world—that we seek to serve. As we continue to imagine what is on the horizon for public life in multireligious societies, we are excited to find new ways of fostering collaboration in neighborhoods near and far.