

# 2016 DC Interfaith Leadership Summit

Presented by the InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington



## EVENT SUMMARY

On February 7, 2016, the InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington (IFC) convened its fourth annual DC Interfaith Leadership Summit. This gathering brought together **over 200 emerging leaders** (ages 18-39) from communities throughout the Washington DC area.

Hosted at Howard University's School of Divinity, the Summit attracted a broad diversity of representation from dozens of communities, organizations, and institutions, including **Bahá'ís, Buddhists, Catholics, Hindus, Humanists, Jews, Latter-day Saints, Muslims, Protestants, and Sikhs**, as well as participants with no specific religious affiliation or multiple affiliations.

At the Summit, the young leaders (clergy, activists, program directors, ministry coordinators, 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.

The Summit also featured a resource fair with over two dozen participating organizations. During the resource fair, summit attendees had an opportunity to learn in more depth about local opportunities for service, follow up with questions about particular traditions, and collect information about potential interfaith collaborators.



By holding this Summit, the organizers sought to **raise up our nation's capital as a national and international model of interfaith cooperation**, inspiring the next generation of leaders to work across divisions of faith and tradition.

Recognizing that change-makers like our Summit attendees already have many responsibilities and commitments to their own communities, the coordinating group planned this event to be a unique occasion for focused dialogue on subjects that related directly to their work and interests. The workshop sessions offered at the Summit encouraged participants to reflect on how moral/religious motivations can inspire social action and how we can build further interfaith bridges, specifically in the Washington D.C. area.

## ATTENDANCE

Over the four consecutive years of the Summit, participation has steadily increased. This year, there were **over 200 registered summit attendees, a 25% increase from 2015.**

As mentioned above, these participants came from a variety of distinct faith traditions and represented numerous faith-based organizations, institutions, and local religious communities. Of those who stated their religious background, about a third were Christian from over a dozen different denominations. **The most well-represented groups were Muslims, Latter-day Saints, Catholics, and Jews.** There was also a significant portion of attendees who identified as non-religious.

The majority of participants continue to be women. This year also succeeded in bringing in a higher percentage of African American participants and people of color in general.

Most of the participants were young professionals, either working directly for religious institutions or in a secular work environment with their religious community work being primarily on a volunteer basis. There was also representation from college students studying at Georgetown University, The University of Maryland, American University, Wesley Theological Seminary, and of course Howard University. Our partnership with HUSD provided an opportunity to attract strong participation by both current and former Howard divinity students.



## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

One of the principle successes of the Summit has been the consistent support from a broad range of partners. We coordinated support from **over 20 co-sponsoring organizations** representing a broad range of traditions and communities.

The growth of the Summit demanded a larger venue this year, and we were happy to find a home at **Howard University's School of Divinity**. Volunteers from The **Guru Gobind Singh** Sikh community again provided a vegetarian Indian meal for all attendees, while **Tikkun Leil Shabbat**, a local Jewish group, graciously provided eco-friendly, reusable dishes. The **Office of Campus Ministry at Georgetown University** covered our printing and paper supplies for the fourth year in a row. We also enjoyed a collaboration with **The Sanctuaries** to have their musicians lead our opening and closing with song.

It is worth noting that the DC chapter of the **Center for Inquiry**, a secular humanist organization, provided the single largest financial contribution to the Summit.

Further financial assistance was generously provided by:

- All Dulles Area Muslim Society
- Am Kolel Jewish Renewal Community
- American Association for the Advancement of Science – Dialogue on Science, Ethics, & Religion
- Association of United Hindu-Jain Temples of Metropolitan Washington D.C.
- Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
- The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Dar Al-Hijrah Muslim Community
- El-Hibri Foundation
- Habitat for Humanity
- Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington
- The Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Washington D.C.
- Shambhala Meditation Center of Washington DC
- Soka Gakkai International – USA



## PRE-EVENTS

A new feature to this year's summit was the inclusion of a **series of pre-events throughout the weekend** leading up to the Summit. Participants were encouraged to build their religious literacy by meeting up with other young leaders at community centers and houses of worship across the city.

Activities included:

- Interfaith discussion at Busboys & Poets restaurant
- Meditation at Shambhala Meditation Center
- Jumma prayer at Masjid Muhammad
- Shabbat service at Temple Micah
- Baha'i fireside discussion at a private home
- Shabbat service at the DC Jewish Community Center
- Tour of America's Islamic Heritage Museum
- Langar at the DC Sikh Gurdwara
- Worship service at Union Temple Baptist
- Worship service at Foundry United Methodist
- Worship service at the Chevy Chase LDS Church
- Devotional / Discussion at the DC Bahá'í Center

These pre-events provided the opportunity to **educate our participants about traditions, perspectives, and local history** they may have not been familiar with previously. In addition, the extended program allowed for more participants to join in the Summit activities even if they were unable to attend the main program on Sunday.

Moving from a one-day event to almost four full days of activity truly embraced the celebration of **World Interfaith Harmony Week!**



## PROGRAM

Our main program began with a **resource fair that included over two dozen local and national organizations**, ranging from the Religious Freedom Center of the Newseum Institute to the DC Office of Human Rights to the American Humanist Association.



During two discussion sessions, our participants chose from **14 workshop groups**.

Topics included:

- How to Greet our Neighbors: Faith Lessons to Thrive in a Changing City
- Silence & Mindfulness for Social Activists
- Understanding the “Spiritual But Not Religious” Phenomenon
- Creating a Work/Life Balance When You Work Where You Pray
- Creatively Crafting Interfaith Messages for Activism
- Proving Contraries in Our Faith
- Lecciones en Cooperación Interreligiosa para Hispanos (En Español)
- Acting on Climate Across Lines of Difference
- Welcoming Non-Religious People into Interfaith Work
- Using Interfaith Coalitions to Advocate for Religious Liberty for All
- The Power of Interfaith Organizing for Racial Justice
- Faith-Based Advocacy in the District for Paid Family and Medical Leave
- How Do We Approach Prayer in Our Respective Traditions?
- Keeping it Real: Challenges, Successes, and Strategies for Living an Authentic Spiritual Life



## FEEDBACK & NEXT STEPS

At the end of the DC Interfaith Leadership 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 annual event like this, and would like to see satellite events throughout the year. Many commented that they would like the Summit to be longer and that they enjoyed the pre-events.

All attendees also received a resource list of contact information for all participants. Many of the participants joined our **Facebook group** immediately after the event to keep in touch and share information about upcoming events and opportunities. The IFC has already engaged a handful of participants in the upcoming dinner dialogues program scheduled for the spring.

It was clear from the response to the Summit that this annual gathering continues to provide an excellent opportunity for interfaith leaders in the DC area to establish new friendships that can be deepened and sustained throughout the year. The IFC is committed to planning another DC Interfaith Leadership Summit in 2017.

**By empowering the next generation of community leaders in DC, we can ensure that our nation's capital sets a strong example for the global interfaith movement.**

## MORE INFORMATION

[ifcmw.org/summit](http://ifcmw.org/summit)

Jack Gordon, Lead Summit Organizer

[jack@faithinactiondc.com](mailto:jack@faithinactiondc.com)

908.477.7534

