

1ST ANNUAL HOUSTON

UNWORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK

2025

**FEBRUARY 1-10
2025**

Convened by



In partnership with

**THE GREATER HOUSTON
COMMUNITY OF FAITH &
GOODWILL**

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WALKING, TALKING AND WORKING TOGETHER

The Houston Chapter of the American Leadership Forum (ALF) proudly launched its first participation as the local convener of the 2025 United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week (UN WIHW), a week-long series of events from February 1 to February 10, 2025, guided by the theme “Walking, Talking, and Working Together.” Supported by 25 community partners, this initiative included events that were open to the public and aimed to foster dialogue, collaboration, and understanding among Houston’s diverse cultural and faith communities.

United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week highlights the importance of building bridges between communities to address global challenges and foster peace. This year for Interfaith Harmony Week, ALF is mobilizing local organizations and communities to build bridges for connection, dialogue, and celebrating Houston.

As one of the most diverse cities in the world, Houston has the opportunity to shine as a beacon for interfaith unity and inclusion. The city’s vibrant mix of cultures, beliefs, and traditions makes it an ideal host for this global initiative, which was established by the United Nations in 2010 to promote harmony across different faiths and cultures.



Houston is a microcosm of the world. The broad spectrum of languages, foods, faiths and cultures is one reason that Rice University sociologist, Prof. Stephen Kline, describes Houston as the city that other American cities will imitate by the year 2050. This year’s UN WIHW theme, ‘Walking, Talking, and Working Together,’ captures the spirit of our region and underscores the importance of taking meaningful steps to build connections across differences.

We are proud of the presence of active clergy and laity from all faiths whose passion is interfaith work and who devote their time, energy, and resources to enhancing the quality of life for all Houstonians.



HOUSTON | UNITED NATIONS

World Interfaith Harmony Week

Walking, Talking & Working Together

FEBRUARY 1-10, 2025





A WEEK OF INSPIRING PROGRAMS AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

The Houston UN World Interfaith Harmony Week was designed to offer dialogue, educational, cultural and social justice opportunities to all participants based upon the teaching that the world stands on sacred wisdom, a spiritual bond to God, and service to humanity. We lived each aspect of the theme, “Walking (Harmony Walk), Talking (Clergy Breakfast, Ismaili luncheon), and Working Together (Houston Food Bank).” The programs were spearheaded by the American Leadership Forum with the co-sponsorship of notable faith and social service organizations such as the Ismaili Council of the Southwestern U.S., Galveston-Houston Catholic Archdiocese, Houston Rabbinical Association, Minaret Foundation, Houston Food Bank, Eternal Gandhi Museum, Contemporary Arts Museum, Fit Houston, River Oaks Chamber Orchestra, Asian American Foundation, and others.

We are proud to share with you the summary of our 11 events during the Houston UN WIHW...



HOUSTON | UNITED NATIONS World Interfaith Harmony Week

Walking, Talking & Working Together

FEBRUARY 1-10, 2025

An
INITIATIVE
by the



Scan or tap for
more info or to
register:



FEB
01

Saturday | 2:00pm CST | Contemporary Arts Museum Houston
OPENING PROGRAM & PANEL DISCUSSION

Inspired by the exhibition Vincent Valdez: Just a Dream... alongside the Children's Museum Houston's exhibition Faithful Friends, panelists will discuss the importance of creating space to learn about and discuss our similarities and our differences.

FEB
02

Sunday | 1:00pm CST | Houston Food Bank
STRONG COMMUNITIES: Community Conversation & Volunteering

Join in a "Community Conversation & Volunteer Shift" to explore, learn and work collaboratively toward a shared vision of a stronger community through conversation and volunteering.

FEB
04

Tuesday | 9:00am CST | The Fountain of Praise
MULTI-FAITH DIALOGUE: Where are we? Where do we go from here?

Join faith leaders and community members for an enriching morning of presentations and conversations aimed at fostering understanding and collaboration across faiths. Together, we will explore the topic, "Where Are We? Where Do We Go From Here?"

FEB
04

Tuesday | 6:00pm CST | Baha'i Faith Center of Houston
FILM & FIRESIDE CHAT: Together We Heal...Together We Rise

The evening will feature the film premiere of "Houston Rising," a docushort on collective efforts toward community safety followed by a Fireside Chat on the themes of hope and healing, concluding with powerful poetry recitations on resilience and strength.

FEB
05

Wednesday | 7:00pm CST | Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart
NOSTRA AETATE: Reaffirming Interfaith Harmony

Celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Nostra Aetate, the breakthrough in Catholic-Jewish and World Religions relations. Cardinal Daniel DiNardo will comment on the impact of the Declaration and how all religions can continue to work together for a better world.

FEB
06

Thursday | 8:00am CST | Burnett Bayland Park
HARMONY WALK with Fit Houston

We warmly invite you to join Fit Houston and the American Leadership Forum for a Harmony Walk at Burnett Bayland Park. This is a wonderful opportunity to walk in harmony with inspiring individuals from diverse backgrounds.

FEB
06

Thursday | 5:30pm CST | A.D. Bruce Religion Center - University of Houston
KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR NIGHT

Campus faith organizations will join for an interfaith dinner on the theme, "Know Your Neighbor Night." Students will gather for an interfaith dinner & conversation exploring shared & divergent values & perspectives about their faith traditions.

FEB
07

Friday | 11:30am CST | Catholic Charities Building
WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER: Charity & Community Service

Catholic Charities USA will host a lunch to highlight interfaith collaborations and work for social justice.

FEB
08

Saturday | 5:00pm CST | The Church of the St. John the Divine
ROCO IN CONCERT - "Courage"

ROCO Chamber Orchestra, featuring the Houston Youth Symphony, and the Texas premier of Clarice Assad's "Evolution of Artificial Intelligence" and "Total Eclipse". Followed by Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 7. A off-site conversation with the orchestra will follow the performance.

FEB
09

Sunday | 2:00pm CST | Eternal Gandhi Museum Houston
EXPERIMENTS IN TRUTH: Gandhi and Images of Nonviolence

Special event at Eternal Gandhi Museum Houston featuring author Joseph Newland, who will discuss his insightful book "Gandhi And Images of Nonviolence", published by The Menil Collection. Followed by a guided tour of the museum.

FEB
10

Monday | 12:30pm CST | Ismaili Jamatkhana and Center
CLOSING PROGRAM & LUNCH: Pursuing Harmony in 2025 & Beyond

Join us for lunch & conversation devoted to the topic, "How Do We Further Harmony in 2025 and Beyond?" Intended to identify ways that the experiences and lessons learned from this week's activities can serve as a platform for future interfaith collaboration.



UNITED NATIONS World Interfaith Harmony Week

OPENING PROGRAM & PANEL DISCUSSION

📅 Saturday, February 1, 2025
2:00pm - 3:15 pm
📍 Contemporary Arts Museum
5216 Montrose Blvd, Houston, 77006

Contemporary
Arts Museum
Houston

THEjungCENTER

ACLU
Texas

Children's
Museum
Houston



Our WIHW was launched at the Contemporary Arts Museum with the exhibition of artist Vincent Valdez' work "Dream, Baby, Dream" which features 12 interfaith leaders who attended Muhammad Ali's funeral in 2016 and who shared a history of involvement in social justice issues.



A panel addressed the WIHW theme, "Walking, Talking, Working Together" with a special focus on how faith and art can alleviate the issues of racism, prejudice, and violence. Oni Blair, executive director of American Civil Liberties Union Texas moderated the panel consisting of Sean Fitzpatrick (Jung Center), Rayanne Darensbourg (Children's Museum), Rev. Gregory Han, and Rabbi Shaul Osadchey. Following the panel, guests were invited to participate in a discussion with Mr. Valdez about his artwork.



WATCH VIDEO



ATTENDANCE: 75



UNITED NATIONS World Interfaith Harmony Week

STRONG COMMUNITIES COMMUNITY CONVERSATION & VOLUNTEER SHIFT

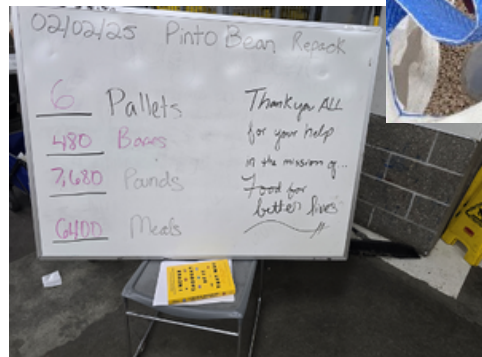
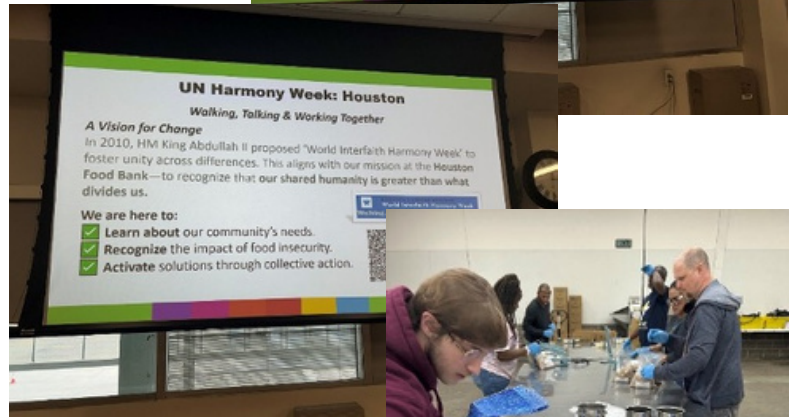
📅 Sunday, February 2, 2025
1:00pm - 4:00 pm
📍 Houston Food Bank
535 Portwall St, Community Room A, Houston, 77029



A multi-generational gathering of Houstonians from diverse backgrounds came together to explore, learn and work collaboratively toward a shared vision of a stronger community through conversation and volunteering at the Houston Food Bank.

“Working Together,” over 100 in attendance packed 6,400 meals for needy Houstonians before meeting in the conference room for a presentation by the Houston Food Bank executive director on the issue of food insecurity and its impact on societal harmony.

ATTENDANCE: 110

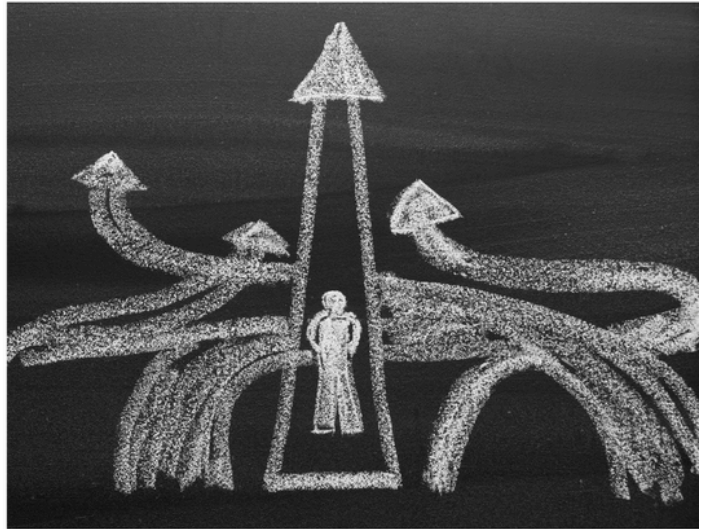




UNITED NATIONS World Interfaith Harmony Week

MULTI-FAITH DIALOGUE BREAKFAST WHERE ARE WE? WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

📅 Tuesday, February 4, 2025
9:00am - 11:00 am
📍 The Fountain of Praise
14083 Main St, Fountain Life Center, Houston, 77035



Religious leaders, community members, and advocates for social justice joined in an enriching morning of presentations and conversations aimed at fostering understanding and collaboration across faiths. Together they explored the questions:

- What does interfaith dialogue mean to you?
- How do we break barriers to interfaith dialogue?

The conversation was preceded by a panel presentation by Imam Muhammad N. Haq (Imam at the American Society for Islamic Awareness and Adjunct Professor, University of Houston), Rev. Tiffany Tarrant (Senior Minister at St. John's Downtown), and Rabbi Shaul Osadchey (Faith Leader-in-Residence, American Leadership Forum).

Recommendations for future interfaith initiatives were solicited and will be considered for future collaborations.

ATTENDANCE: 40





UNITED NATIONS World Interfaith Harmony Week

TOGETHER WE HEAL... TOGETHER WE RISE FILM PREMIERE, FIRESIDE CHAT & POETRY

Tuesday, February 4, 2025
6:00pm - 9:00 pm

Baha'i Faith Center of Houston
2419 Fannin, Houston, 77002



The Houston Baha'i Community



Premier of “Houston Rising” by a partnership of the Tahiri Justice Center Houston, Daya Houston, Boat People SOS Houston, and the South Asian American Foundation.

Held at the Baha'i Center, the evening featured the film premiere of “Houston Rising,” a docushort on collective efforts toward community safety and the reduction of domestic violence as a means to promote family and civic harmony. Following the film there was a Fireside Chat on the topic “Exploring Hope, Healing, and the Power of Community Support” along with poetry recitations entitled, “Voices of Resilience and Strength.” Attendees were invited to continue the conversation over light snacks and coffee/tea service.



(L-R) Rabbi Shaul Osadchey, American Leadership Forum, Swati Narayan, Daya Houston, Jannette Diep, ED at BPSOS Houston, Katharina Dechert, Policy and Advocate Manager at Tahirih Justice Center Houston, Baonam Giang, Regional Anti-Hate Manager, South Asian American Foundation

ATTENDANCE: 98



UNITED NATIONS World Interfaith Harmony Week

NOSTRA AETATE REAFFIRMING INTERFAITH HARMONY ON THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF NOSTRA AETATE

📅 Wednesday, February 5, 2025
7:00pm - 9:00 pm
📍 Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart
1111 St. Joseph Parkway, Houston, 77002

Houston Rabbinical
Association



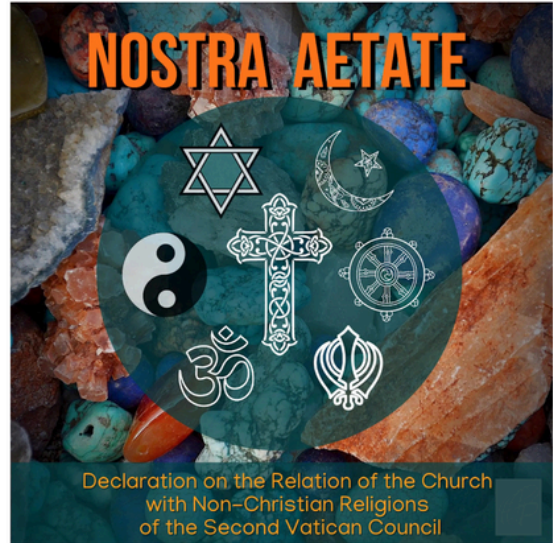
THE ARCHDIOCESE OF
GALVESTON-HOUSTON

MINARET
FOUNDATION

60th Anniversary Commemoration of Nostra Aetate hosted by Cardinal Daniel DiNardo at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.

Religious leaders from the major world religions celebrated the 60th Anniversary of “Nostra Aetate: A Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions” proclaimed by Pope Paul VI in 1965. Cardinal Daniel DiNardo joined a distinguished panel of local religious leaders including Rabbi David Lyon (Congregation Beth Israel), Shariq Ghani (Minaret Foundation), Rev. Dr. Jennifer Hope-Tringale (Christ the King Lutheran Church), and Geetha Ravula (Ashirwad A Blessing Temple) to address the impact of the Declaration and how all religions can continue to work together for a better world.

A “Letter of Mutual Re-Affirmation” was signed by the religious leaders and all present to promise to eradicate prejudice and religious bias, to work together to achieve better understanding and respect, and to collaborate for the common good of all citizens in the Greater Houston region.



Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions of the Second Vatican Council



WATCH VIDEO



9 ATTENDANCE: 70





UNITED NATIONS World Interfaith Harmony Week

HARMONY WALK BRING YOUR HEART AND YOUR CURIOSITY FOR A JOURNEY OF PEACE, UNITY & CONNECTION!

📅 Thursday, February 6, 2025
8:00 am - 9:30 am

📍 Burnett Bayland Park
6026 Chimney Rock Rd, Houston, 77081



The Harmony Walk at Burnett Bayland Park was a collaborative walk between Fit Houston and the American Leadership Forum as part of the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week.

Fit Houston organizes regular community walks at Burnett Bayland Park every Thursday at 8am. The goal of the “Harmony Walk” was to bring together local leaders and residents from diverse communities to participate in a guided walk promoting the importance of physical activity for overall well-being.

Burnett Bayland Park is located in the Gulfton area of metropolitan Houston. The Gulfton area has been a beacon of how community members joined together in harmony to reclaim their neighborhood from crime. The theme “Gulfton Pride” has become the rallying call of this neighborhood as embodied in the artistic mural (see above) commissioned through Haitian-born, internationally acclaimed artist Mathieu JN Baptiste. This project was specifically requested to create a cultural-themed mural image that would include the national flag of the United States, Mexico and Latin countries south of Mexico. The request was also to incorporate those flags into the words, “GULFTON PRIDE”.

Burnett Bayland Park was the perfect location for this Harmony Week event that focused on physical activity, nature, overall wellbeing and community pride.

ATTENDANCE: 25





UNITED NATIONS World Interfaith Harmony Week

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR NIGHT CAMPUS INTERFAITH DINNER

📅 Thursday, February 6, 2025
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm

📍 University of Houston - A.D. Bruce Religion Center
3841 Cullen Blvd, Houston, 77204

Houston Hillel | **All Kinds of Jewish**



Sponsored by the Faces of African Muslims, Lutheran Campus Ministry, Hillel Foundation, and the Baha'i Student Association, students sat with those from different faiths and backgrounds in a safe space to share something meaningful about their personal religious practice.

In light of the current tensions on campus regarding the Middle East conflict, this gathering of students exuded the hope that understanding and bridge building across religious differences is achievable. Other faith-based conversation starters were at each table to stimulate conversation during the dinner. Students left with a commitment to continue the conversations at future dinner meetings and to seek ways to collaborate on issues of mutual concern.



ATTENDANCE: 30



UNITED NATIONS World Interfaith Harmony Week

WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER INTERFAITH COLLABORATION IN CHARITY & COMMUNITY SERVICE

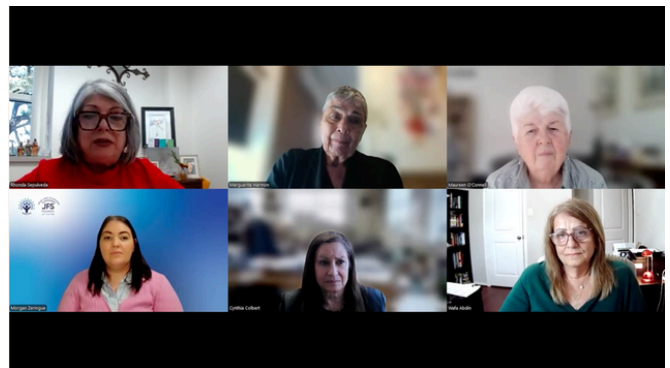
📅 Friday, February 7, 2025
11:30 am - 1:30 pm
📍 Catholic Charities
Virtual Event



Catholic Charities hosted a virtual session with Wafa Abdin (Muslim Immigration Attorney), Peg Harmon (Catholic Charities USA), Sr. Maureen O’Connell (Secretariat for Social Concerns, Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston), and Morgan Zeringue (Jewish Family Services) who shared their interfaith work in disaster response and other impactful charitable experiences that have brought hope and healing in challenging times.

The overall context for the session can be expressed thusly:

“The World Interfaith Harmony Week extends the Two Commandments by adding ‘Love of God, and Love of the Neighbor’. This formula includes all people of goodwill. It includes those of other faiths, and those with no faith. The World Interfaith Harmony Week provides a platform for dialogue and for groups to become aware of each other and to strengthen the relationships by building ties and avoiding duplicating each other’s efforts. The goal is to provide opportunities for people of goodwill to recognize that the common values they hold far outweigh the differences they have.”



12
ATTENDANCE: 25



ROCO IN CONCERT COURAGEOUS

📅 Saturday, February 8, 2025
5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

📍 The Church of the St. John the Divine
2450 River Oaks Blvd, Houston, 77019



Music, from the dawn of time, has evoked powerful emotions in people and shaped religions and cultures. It stirs the soul and moves individuals to connect with one another in deeply personal and emotional ways. The public performance of music in which instruments of all sizes and types play in synchronism is a metaphor for the pursuit of harmony in society.

The Houston UN WIHW was honored to feature a special ROCO concert, “Courageous,” showcasing two commissioned premieres by Brazilian composer and performer Clarice Assad with pianist Lara Downes. ROCO is a dynamic and innovative professional chamber orchestra that is known for shaping the future of classical music and has been called an “arts disruptor” and “trailblazer.” This aspect of ROCO was evident in the presentation of the “Evolution of AI” in which computer-generated music was integrated into the composition performed by the orchestra.

The concert was held at St. John the Divine Church, one of the most prominent Episcopalian congregations in the U.S. Following the performance, a reception was held so that attendees could meet Clarice Assad and Lara Downes and explore their insights into their compositions.





UNITED NATIONS World Interfaith Harmony Week

EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH GANDHI AND IMAGES OF NON-VIOLENCE

📅 Sunday, February 9, 2025
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm
📍 The Eternal Gandhi Museum
12379 Riceville School Rd, Houston, 77031



The way in which leadership is exercised and conflicts resolved bears significantly on the achievement of peace, stability, and harmony between nations and within societies. Mahatma Gandhi took his place among the prominent figures who fought for justice and human dignity in the 20th century. His activism and teaching remain a legacy of guidance and inspiration.

The Eternal Gandhi Museum Houston, the only museum in the U. S. devoted to the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, contributed to the Houston UN WIHW by hosting Joseph Newland, director of publishing at the Menil Collection, who is the co-editor of *Experiments with Truth: Gandhi and Images of Non-Violence*. A question-and-answer session followed the talk and then guests were invited for a guided tour of the museum.



ATTENDANCE: 55





UNITED NATIONS World Interfaith Harmony Week

CLOSING PROGRAM & LUNCH PURSUING HARMONY IN 2025 & BEYOND

Monday, February 10, 2025
12:30 pm - 2:00 pm
Ismaili Jamatkhana and Center
1700 First Colony Blvd, Sugar Land, 77479

ISMAILI COUNCIL FOR
THE SOUTHWESTERN USA



The death of the Aga Khan preceded the Houston UN WIHW concluding luncheon, thus prompting the Ismaili Council of the Southwestern U.S. to cancel all of its planned activities. However, the Ismaili leadership made an exception for this closing luncheon of the WIHW, noting that the gathering reflected the life-long passion of the Aga Khan to create world harmony. The concluding program did indeed honor the legacy of the Aga Khan through a conversation intended to identify ways that the experiences and lessons learned from the first Houston UN WIHW program can serve as a platform for future interfaith collaboration. A panel of religious leaders including Nadim Pabani (National Education Officer for College and Young Adult Programs), Pastor John Strader (Senior Pastor, Horizon Baptist Church) and Rabbi Shaul Osadchey (American Leadership Forum) addressed the topic, "Pursuing Harmony in 2025 and Beyond." Those in attendance shared their views at the lunch table and all suggestions and proposals were recorded and will be considered by the participating organizations for future action.



15 ATTENDANCE: 50



HOUSTON HARMONY WEEK SUMMARY

This was the first celebration of this kind in Houston, the fourth largest and most diverse major city in the U.S. Houston is the energy capital of the U.S. and is also home to the Johnson Space Center. It boasts 7.5 million residents in the metro area who speak over 140 languages and celebrate virtually every culture and faith tradition in the world.

The 25 partnering organizations devoted hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars to organize and fund the events because they shared a common conviction that the antidote to the prejudice, intolerance, and ignorance that has emerged from the darkest corners of society is interfaith collaboration. This event captured the hope and hearts of Houstonians who have come to value diversity and respect for one another as one of the city's greatest assets.

It is our intention to hold this event next year featuring new events and with even greater participation. We extend our appreciation to the UN World Interfaith Harmony organization for providing encouragement and resources to enable us to demonstrate the strength of interfaith cooperation.

998

Houstonians impacted by this inaugural week of events



11

Harmony Week Events hosted in Greater Houston



CONTACT US



AMERICAN
LEADERSHIP
FORUM
HOUSTON/GULF COAST

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