



# 1st International Conference on Religion, Conflict, and Peace:

**Walking The Talk Through Fear of the Unknown To Understanding And Harmony**

**March 13-15 , 2009 ~ Oakland University ~ Rochester, Michigan USA**

**An "Official Pre-Parliament Event" of the 2009 Parliament of World Religions**

**Organized By: Oakland University Islamic Studies Program and Common Bond Institute**

**Keynotes by: John Esposito, Pumla Gobodo Madikizela, Mohammad Abu-Nimer Special Evening Film: "Allah Made Me Funny"**

**Friday, March 13**

## **RCP CONFERENCE OPENING**

10:00 - 11:45 am

**Greeting, Conference Mission, Announcements, & Introductions**

**Keynote: John Esposito**

**Presentation: 2009 Parliament of World Religions**

**Lunch: 11:45 am - 1:00 am**

## **CONCURRENT SESSIONS A**

**Workshops and Roundtables 1:00 - 2:25 pm**

### **A 1: "The Two-Edge Sword: Religion As A Barrier To - And Catalyst For - Community"**

Religion is paradoxically both a help and a hindrance to community and inclusive spirituality. Almost every faith and wisdom tradition has inclusive compassion at its core. And, almost every one has an element of exclusivity: "my way is the only true way". In the past, on a less crowded planet, these exclusivist ideas could flourish unmolested. However, as we enter the 21st Century, we must, for our global survival, start to stress the other side of the two-edged sword - the side that heals and binds us together as a human family.

**Sharif Abdullah**

### **A 2: "Abrahamic Family Reunion"**

The Abrahamic Family Reunion (AFR) Project helps foster understanding and healing between and among followers of the 3 Abrahamic faiths. Unlike traditional interfaith dialogue programs, the focus of the AFR Project is on the historical roots of Jewish-Christian-Muslim animosities from psychological and spiritual perspectives. Using a variety of resources to stimulate discussion, participants are encouraged to share their feelings, beliefs, and preconceptions about the other two faith traditions based on a challenging history. Participants are then asked to discuss what they need to hear from the two other faiths to believe that the Abrahamic family reunion is possible.

**Joseph Montville**

### **A 3: "Ethical Leadership in Global Economic Crisis"**

**PANEL** Each country, with varying social, economic and religious philosophies address human suffering differently in crisis situations. However, the global economic crisis, resulting from highly interdependent world economies, has resulted in significant and disparate suffering among different countries. While it is easy to blame globalization for local suffering, inflated passions, and short-sighted actions, ethical leadership requires actions that are compatible with cultural and religious philosophies that guide each and every country.

**Nadeem Salem, Victor Naidu, Abdul Raheman Nakadar Moderator: Mohan Tanniru**

### **A 4: "Institutionalized Peace"**

**PANEL:** The attainment of peace is the common goal of all authentic religious expression and all great religions teach the ideal of human societies living in harmony with one another and the natural world. Yet, historically communal life has been characterized more by war than peace, and religions themselves have often been co-opted for service to war. Today we live in a world in which the human species itself is at risk for survival. This panel will explore the question: Why have religious traditions failed to bring about the peace for which they yearn, and are these same traditions being "called" into a new way of addressing war beyond simply "teaching" peace, but working for its "implementation" in human affairs through the establishment of peaceful institutions. The panel consists of a natural scientist, social scientist, engineer, and theologian who explore how their occupations can contribute to the "institutionalization of peace."

**Michael Sevilla, John Suggs, Elysa White, James Dow, Tristin Hassell Moderator: Charles Mabee,**

## **PLENARY PANEL B**

2:50 - 4:30 pm

### **"Cult and Extremism -Vs- Religion: The Distortion of Spiritual Path and Original Intent"**

Dichotomies and conflicts within spiritual traditions, including negative, extremist interpretations and interpolations of tenets and practice, are historical and present day dilemmas for many religions. Understanding how these elements and conditions arise, how they compromise, contradict, and threaten original spiritual intent, and how they create conflictual relationships between and within religious communities, as well as how to develop remedies, are even more essential in today's increasingly interconnected global community.

**Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Naomi Tutu, Reverend Joseph Summers, Rabbi Arnie Sleutelberg, Krishna Kumar**

**Moderator: Don Matthews**

## CONCURRENT SESSIONS C FACILITATED DIALOGUE GROUPS

(Conference-wide break-out groups)

**4:45 pm - 6:00 pm**

(All participants self-select one of several themed dialogue groups)

One of 3 opportunities during the conference for all participants to engage in open agenda dialogues to share learning, explore concepts and related issues, process experiences, network, and brainstorm practical applications and collaboration. In addition to facilitators, scribes in each group record content highlights. Information is compiled and posted to the conference website, allowing participants an evolving overview of what is brewing in the community to promote deeper dialogue as the conference progresses. The information is also provided to stimulate cooperation after the conference, included in conference proceedings and outcomes, and utilized for future planning.

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**Dinner: 6:00 - 7:30 pm** (Brief presentation: Cathy Cheal)

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**Keynote: 7:30 - 8:00 pm**  
Naomi Tutu

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**EVENING EVENTS: 8:15 - 9:45 pm**

- 1) "The Power of Forgiveness" Film Showing
  - 2) "Open Mic " Sharing Song, Music, and Poetry
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## Saturday, March 14

### CONCURRENT SESSIONS D

**Workshops and Roundtables: 10:00 - 11:20 am**

#### **D 1: "Voices From The Field - An interactive Workshop Using Just Vision's Online Portraits of Peacebuilders"**

Just Vision informs local and international audiences about under-documented Palestinian and Israeli joint civilian efforts to resolve the conflict nonviolently. This session will introduce a new, non-divisive way for facilitators and community leaders to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Our Online Portraits of Peacebuilders will be used as a catalyst for dialogue in this experiential workshop, which presents under-documented stories of Israelis and Palestinians who have been deeply touched by violence but who nonetheless struggle to stem hatred and promote reconciliation, understanding and nonviolence  
**Irene Nasser**

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#### **D 2: "Service of Healing and Transition"**

A highly inclusive service by the Rochester Area Ministers Association (RAMA) offering music, meditation/prayer, readings, and blessings from the various faiths by minister's from a variety of faith traditions. Program consists of: Welcome and call to Prayer, Reading: 'We Need One Another,' First Reading -'First Day' and brief reflection, Second Reading: Psalms 23-brief reflection, Third Reading 'When' and brief reflection, Responsive Prayer, Reflection on Wholeness and Healing, Guided Meditation  
**Sr. Mary VanGilder, Rev Leonetta, Imam Achmat Salie, Rev. Sue Camaio, Rev Latha Ravi, Fr. Stan Ulman, Julius Delpino**

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#### **D 3: "Extremism, Fear, Sensationalism, and Media Images of Islam"**

**PANEL:** How is Islam and the Muslim community portrayed in mainstream media, both overtly and covertly, and what is the power of these images in influencing American social consciousness and undermining the experience of Muslims in America? One example of these dynamics is the controversy surrounding being identified as a possible Muslim in the recent election campaign of Barack Obama.

**Osama Siblani, David Crumm, Mumtaz Haque, Daniel Tutt** Moderator: **Peter Bertocci**

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#### **D 4: "Legacy for a Better World"**

**PANEL:** It is a universal truth that our youth are our future. The experience of prejudice, scapegoating, and hate acts that impact children sets the frame for polarized relationships yet to come within society as a whole. The steps, interventions, and models we employ for understanding, responding to, and transforming the dynamics of bigotry, including within the school culture, are critical to creating a wider global culture of peace. In a contemporary world that increasingly brings us closer, and in more frequent, ever expanding ways in direct contact with our many diverse spiritual paths and cultures, what visions, principles, practical tools, and examples for the future can we instill in our youth to help them in engaging, appreciating, and coexisting in compassion and harmony with those we share the planet with?

**Padma Kuppa, Rick Joseph, Penny Zago, Falguni Shah** Moderator: **Jehan Olweean**

## CONCURRENT SESSIONS **E**

### Workshops and Panels

11:35 am - 12:55 pm

#### **E 1: "20,000 Dialogues"**

One of the great conversations of our time revolves around how mainstream Americans and the Muslim world come to understand each other in the next few years. The misunderstandings around this area are the basis for enormous challenges in our society, our foreign policy, our economy, our sense of security, our world. This session will present 20,000 Dialogues, a "bottom up" approach to interfaith dialogue. Participants will engage in group discussions, watch selected film clips, and leave with practical tools for dialogue in their living room, congregation, and community.

**Daniel Tutt**

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#### **E 2: "Changing Course: A New Direction for U.S. Relations with the Muslim World"**

In September 2008 the U.S.-Muslim Engagement project released the report of its eminent, bi-partisan, and interfaith Leadership Group: Changing Course: A New Direction for U.S. Relations with the Muslim World. The report highlights actions the U.S. can take, in partnership with Muslims committed to non-violent political and economic development, to reverse extremism, increase international security and improve relations. The central message is that the U.S. government, business, faith, education, and media leaders must work with Muslim counterparts to build a coalition that will turn the tide against extremism

**Paula Gutlove**

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#### **E 3: "Challenges of Interfaith Dialogue"**

*PANEL:* Exploring the process of opening to the other's spiritual experience to cross boundaries and build bridges of understanding, compassion, healing, and the sense of security in being familiar with the other's story and spiritual path. Members share personal stories, efforts, difficulties, successes, and lessons learned in cultivating interfaith dialogue.

**Ohad Bar Shalom, Imad Hamad, Brenda Rosenberg, Eide Alawan, Sarah Sayeed** Moderator: **Henri Gooren**

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#### **E 4: "Healing Domestic Abuse"**

*PANEL:* A common dilemma in many religious communities is the selective misuse by individuals of religion as justification for aberrant behavior. As one example, perpetrators of domestic abuse sometimes try to evade individual responsibility for violent and anti-social acts that clearly violate basic moral codes by wrongly injecting an assumption of certain religious "rights," and often attempt to place responsibility on the victim. This dialogue seeks to remove this cloak by raising awareness and sensitivity among religious communities and leaders about domestic abuse, increasing understanding of religious positions on conflict and abuse within families and relationships, and exploring effective methods for prevention and for building partnerships between religious leaders and human service professionals engaged in healing abuse.

**Joanna Ladki, Terri Heckman, Sonya Friedman** Moderator: **Steve Olweean**

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**Lunch: 12:55 - 1:55 pm**

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## PLENARY PANEL **F**

1:55 - 3:15 pm

#### **"Who Speaks For Islam?"**

This roundtable addresses the dilemma of individuals and groups around the world and country who engage in negative behavior and who present themselves as examples of Islamic beliefs, practices, attitudes, and history - and where an uninformed Western public may erroneously accept them as accurate. A dialogue among several respected imams who discuss the dilemma, clarify inaccurate and distorted impressions the public may have, and explore ways the Muslim community can take positive action to better inform the general non-Muslim public for a more accurate understanding of Islam and the Muslim community.

**Imam Hasan Qazwini, Imam Mohammed Elahi, Imam Mohammed Mardini,**

Moderator: **Imam Achmat Salie**

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## CONCURRENT SESSIONS **G**

### FACILITATED DIALOGUE GROUPS

(Conference-wide break-out groups)

3:30 - 4:30 pm

(All participants self-select one of several dialogue groups)

(\* See complete description in SESSION C)

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## PLENARY PANEL H

4:45 - 6:15 pm

### "The Implications of Inclusion and Exclusion / Us and Them in Religion"

The variety and scale of religions in human history give validity to the wide range of paths humanity takes along the journey to spiritual experience. How each of us chooses our own sometimes quite different path on this common journey can highlight an appreciation for the rich diversity of human sacred practice, while at the same time setting the stage for the potential hazards of elitism, competition, polarity, and even animosity that paradoxically negate the core message of unity, and hamper us on that journey  
Joseph Montville, Sharif Abdullah, Manveen Saluja, Sudarshan Sathe, Imam Achmat Salie Moderator: Steve Olweean

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**Dinner: 6:15 - 7:30 pm**

Brief Remarks by Guest Speaker: Naomi Tutu

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**Keynote: 7:30 - 8:00 pm**

Mohammed Abu-Nimer

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**EVENING EVENTS 8:15 - 9:45 pm** (concurrent options)

- 1) "Allah Made Me Funny" Film showing and dialogue - Daniel Tutt, Unity Productions
- 2) "Open Mic " Sharing Song, Music, and Poetry

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## Sunday, March 15

### CONCURRENT SESSIONS I

**MORNING PANELS: 10:00 - 11:30 am**

#### I 1: "Gender, Race, and Religion"

*PANEL:* Within each religion is the question of human difference and diversity, and it's place in putting spiritual principles into practice in daily relations with those we share the world with.

Naomi Tutu, Steve Spreitzer, Sharif Abdullah Moderator: Sharon (Shea) Howell

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#### I 2: "Simple Justice: Healing Through Equal Access to Human Rights, Dignity, and The Law"

*PANEL:* The presence of basic human rights and fundamental justice are essential to validating the underlying worth of those who are recipients of the law, those who administer and implement it, and society as a whole. Examining how demonizing, dehumanizing, and marginalizing entire groups remove a society and it's felt-sense of basic goodness from feeling the impact of and personal responsibility for unjust and inhumane treatment of others, and undermine the moral integrity of the individual and society itself.

Shereef Akeel, Nadia Fadel, Ihsan Alkhatib Moderator: Imad Hamad

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#### I 3: "Bioethics and Spiritual Beliefs: Advancing Humanity, Body and Soul"

*PANEL:* Exploring moral questions regarding science and medicine, religious beliefs, and how each effects the other. Contemporary life is rapidly offering many challenges for moral decisions that overlap our practical science in matters of bio-research, medical application, and the very definition of life and what a human being is. What are the deep, necessary questions that both religion and science confront as they increasingly intertwine into each other's sphere, and where are the paths to mutual support and harmony between the two in advancing the human condition?

Fatima Al-Hayaani, Saeed Khan, Krishna Kumar Moderator: Rasool Chaudry,

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### CONCURRENT SESSIONS J

**FINAL FACILITATED DIALOGUE GROUPS**

**11:45 am - 1:00 pm**

Focusing on brainstorming, networking, and collaboration beyond the conference

(\* See complete description in SESSION C)

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### CONFERENCE CLOSING

**1:00 pm - 2:30 pm**

**Reporting In, Summary, Outcomes, Collaboration, Action Plans,  
and Where We Go From Here.**

