



Fund for the Future of our Children (FFC)

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**For updates on our continued efforts,
please visit our Children of Abraham Peace Essay
Contest
website at www.futureofchildren.net/essaycontest/**

Fund for the Future of our Children (FFC)

Presents the

Children of Abraham

PEACE ESSAY CONTEST

Celebration & Award Ceremony



Artwork by Piotr Mlodozieniec, Warsaw, Poland
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**Sunday, March 26, 2006
3:00 – 6:30 p.m.**

**Riggs Library
Georgetown University
Washington, DC**

Co-Sponsors
**Georgetown University's Office of Campus Ministry
& Price Alwaleed bin Talal
Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding**

Children of Abraham

PEACE ESSAY CONTEST

Welcome. . .

On behalf of the Fund for the Future of our Children (FFC) and the cosponsors of this program, I would like to welcome you and to thank you for joining us at the Celebration & Award Ceremony of the first annual *Children of Abraham Peace Essay Contest*. Your presence here today is a testament to the importance of creating interfaith dialogue and understanding in our world community.

We would like to extend a special welcome to Ms. Cokie Roberts, along with our gratitude for accepting the invitation to be with us today and for her message of hope and encouragement to all of us who are working together to build the foundations of peace.

This project would not have been realized without the support of our patrons, Mrs. Josephine F. Ammerman and Mr. Andrew Ammerman, the distinguished members of our Advisory Committee, Kick-Off Workshop Leaders and Panelists, and our On-line Mentors and Judges whose gift of time and knowledge has been invaluable to us.

It is with great pride and pleasure that we feature our seven young panelists, who have each declared their commitment to work as leaders and peacemakers within their communities.

Although the first annual *Children of Abraham Peace Essay Contest* is coming to a close this evening, the mission it espouses continues. As our student essayists have noted in their essays, a profound lack of knowledge and real misunderstanding about the nature of religions continues to permeate civic society both in this nation and worldwide. This gap in our understanding has long fueled hostilities between individuals and among groups of people.

Special Thanks!

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Special Thanks!

ESSAY JUDGES

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ON-LINE MENTORS

Rabbi A. Nathan Abramowitz, *Faculty, Theology Department, Georgetown University*

Nouredine Ale-Ali, Ph.D., *Author and Islamic Scholar*

John Deken, *High School Teacher, Columbia Missouri*

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June Murray, *High School Teacher, Hudson, Massachusetts*

Sulayman S. Nyang, Ph.D., *Professor of African Studies, Howard University*

Muhammad Shafi, Ph.D., *CEO, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Dar al Islam*

William (Issa) Shandor, *Director, American School of Agadir, Morocco*

FFC recognizes that young people are both the most vulnerable victims of this tragic situation and also the most promising agents of change as we seek a remedy. In order to encourage them in this pursuit, FFC has invited the young people you will meet today to continue the work of peace-making they have begun – and they have accepted that invitation.

Over the remainder of this academic year and throughout the next, these seven student leaders will act as emissaries to their peers, visiting schools throughout the Washington DC region – their mission to share with others about the commonalities to be found in the Abrahamic traditions, and to draw attention to the issue of religious understanding and its relationship to peace.

Through this generous commitment of their time and energy it is hoped that much will be accomplished. Among these, first, this presence in the schools will make visible an intention on the part of students to address problems of intolerance that they recognize in their own milieu. Second, they will demonstrate the role that young leaders can take in addressing those problems. Third, they will convey the hope that education will bring about the realization that religions teach peace and understanding, and that religious differences do not entail mutual hostility. Thus they will lay a foundation for further work in the area of inter-faith understanding.

As part of their presentations, each of our panelists will describe a project that they have designed to create interfaith understanding in their communities. It is our hope that you will choose to support our young peacemakers in their efforts to lay the foundations for peaceful coexistence among people of different faith traditions.

Peace be upon you, Shalom, and Asalam alaikum.

Avideh Shashaani, Ph.D.

President, Fund for the Future of our Children



Celebration & Awards Ceremony

3:00 – 6:30 p.m.

3:00 Opening & Introductions

Reverend Timothy Godfrey, S.J., Director,
Office of Campus Ministry,
Georgetown University

"Turn! Turn! Turn! (To Everything There Is a
Season)," performed by Lena Seikaly and
Andrew Grossman

Avideh Shashaani, President,
Fund for the Future of our Children
Andrew Ammerman: Board of Regents,
Georgetown University

3:15 Keynote Address

Cokie Roberts, ABC News Political Commentator
Senior News Analyst, NPR

3:30 Panel Presentation

Eliza Adelson, Dana Alsaadi, Avi Edelman,
Zachary Eaton, Uneeb Qureshi, Heba Tellawi,
Mindy Zhang

4:30 Presentation of Awards by Cokie Roberts

4:45 Reading & Chanting of Scriptures

Imam Yahya Hendi & Panelists

5:00 Candle Light Ceremony

"Over My Head," Traditional African American
spiritual, performed by Lena Seikaly

5:30 Reception

Essay Abstract: The three Abrahamic traditions are Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. My essay focuses on implementing a specific STEP series. "Seek: Truth, Education, and Peace" establishes a STEP program to be voluntarily applied in an area's local private high school. It promotes a weeklong program that centers on the education of young minds (with respect to the three Abrahamic faiths). The main cause of untruthful stereotypes is ignorance, or the lack of education. Once that is combated and eliminated, unity and peace are attainable.

Mindy Zhang is an IB diploma candidate, and is currently taking IB World Religions in school. In addition, she is the Virginia Student Area Coordinator of Amnesty International, and the Vice-President of Model United Nations. She also has campaigned for an end to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur through Amnesty. Mindy is interested in social and humanitarian issues, especially those involving conflict resolution and peace-building. She hopes to major in International Studies and Economics and pursue a career in global economic development

Essay Abstract: The value of peace is a key belief that unites the Abrahamic faiths, and realizing the roots of peace in each of the religions will encourage greater religious understanding in our communities. At my school, ignorance and a lack of communication cause religious misunderstandings, but both problems can be alleviated through a solution that incorporates education, interfaith dialogue, and action to expand the interfaith movement. Indeed, peace can only be achieved through understanding, and in educating students about the similarities of the Abrahamic faiths; tolerance can be furthered in our own communities and in the world.

Essay Abstract: My essay examines the role of peace in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity by looking at the way in which each religion preaches brotherhood, acceptance, and a peace ushered in by God. I then discuss religious misunderstandings that have occurred at my school, and explain that I think ignorance is the cause of these misunderstandings. Finally, I design a program, called "One God, One Voice," that will attempt to build religious understanding among teenagers.

Uneeb Qureshi is 16 years old and was born in Islamabad, Pakistan. He is currently a junior at Thomas S. Wootton High School in Rockville, MD and is actively engaged in sports and the community. Uneeb has entered many essay contests and enjoys writing about philosophical/ethical topics. His academic interests include history and philosophy, and he plans a career in medicine, psychiatry or neurology. Hobbies include indoor/outdoor track, tennis, literature, debate, and guitar.

Essay Abstract: This essay attempts to discern the roots of peace, as is evident in the Abrahamic traditions, in chronological progression, from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, looking at core religious values, tenets, and customs. While stating some reasons for conflicts existing today, I propose a feasible outline for community involvement and interaction that will help increase religious toleration in local communities and, eventually, the world.

Heba Tellawi is a junior at the Islamic Saudi Academy in Alexandria, Virginia. She is originally Palestinian but has lived in the United States all her life. This past summer she volunteered at INOVA Mt. Vernon Hospital. She serves as the co-president of the Community Service Committee, and treasurer of her class in the Student Government Association. She is a staff-writer for *The Falcon Flyer*, the newsletter at her school. Heba also participates in Model United Nations and plays on the Varsity Basketball team. She has participated in Presidential Classroom and the Mt. Vernon Basketball League, and hopes to attend Princeton University and double-major in journalism and international law.



Cokie Roberts is a political commentator for ABC News where for over fifteen years she has covered Congress, politics and public policy. She also serves as Senior News Analyst for National Public Radio. From 1996-2002 she and Sam Donaldson co-anchored the weekly ABC interview program *This Week*. In her more than thirty years in broadcasting, Roberts has won numerous awards, including three Emmys. She has been inducted into the Broadcasting and Cable Hall of

Fame, and was cited by the American Women in Radio and Television as one of the fifty greatest women in the history of broadcasting.

In addition to her appearances on the airwaves, Roberts, along with her husband, Steven V. Roberts, writes a weekly column syndicated in newspapers around the country by United Media. The Roberts are also contributing editors to *USA Weekend Magazine*, and together they wrote *From this Day Forward*, an account of their more than thirty-five year marriage and other marriages in American history. The book immediately went onto *The New York Times* bestseller list, following a run of half a year on the list by Cokie Roberts' other book, *We Are Our Mothers' Daughters*. The number one bestseller is an account of women's roles and relationships throughout American history. Roberts has also written another book, *Founding Mothers*, the stories of the women who raised this nation.

Cokie Roberts also serves on the boards of several non-profit institutions and this year was reappointed to the President's Commission on Service and Civic Participation. She is the mother of two and grandmother of six.

About the Panelists

Eliza Adelson is a junior at the Holton-Arms School in Bethesda, Maryland. She volunteers for the Latino Student Fund, tutoring a Spanish child in both Math and English. She spent her summer building houses and schools in a small village in Costa Rica, and plans on doing further volunteer work in Latin America this summer. Eliza is the news editor for the *The Scribbler*, the school newspaper at Holton. As a Peer Counselor she advises and guides freshman to help them respect individual differences while promoting school wide community spirit. After school she volunteers at the Concord Hill School teaching Spanish to kindergarten and third grade. Eliza plans to study international relations in college. She hopes to attend Georgetown University.

Essay Abstract: My essay begins with underlying similarities among the Abrahamic religions. As it progresses, I discuss the most recent developments in international movements for religious understanding, while keeping in mind the ever-present conflicts occurring while these great strides are being made around the world. I conclude the essay with my own experiences with religious misunderstandings in my community, and propose a project, known as "Gardens of Peace," as a way to help mollify this baffling situation.

Dana Alsaadi was born in Cairo, Egypt, and is now a sophomore at the Islamic Saudi Academy in Alexandria, VA. She enjoys reading, writing, tutoring, studying French, and playing various sports, some of which are soccer, tennis, and gymnastics. Dana is very involved in school activities. She is her class representative in the Student Government Association, a member of the Community Service Committee, and an avid participant of Model United Nations. Dana has participated in the National Student Leadership Conference's medical and diplomacy abroad programs. She intends to study medicine at Georgetown University.

Essay Abstract: Peace is an essential value rooted in the three Abrahamic traditions. Such knowledge, if widespread, would cause people to stop and think. They would become more appreciative of the other religions, if only they knew how important peace was in each one.

Judaism, Christianity, Islam - they are so similar! But the common misconceptions that prevail in society today prevent the people from seeing the positive and approving it. That is why each community should develop a proposal intended to increase its religious understanding. I know that, if correctly executed, an inter-faith youth group in my community will enhance relations between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and broaden their horizons in hopes of a better tomorrow.

Zachary Eaton is a junior at Montgomery Blair High School in Maryland. He divides his time between rigorous academics and participating in community theatre. He directs and acts for The Pine Players, a wholly student initiated and run theatrical organization based in Takoma Park, MD, which raises money for *Bread for the City*. He hopes to one day study European History and English Literature at Amherst College.

Essay Abstract: At the heart of all the problems between the Abrahamic faiths is a lack of understanding between the majority of their disciples. Many people do not know about the many commonalities between these three ancient faiths. This startling lack of education has helped enable generations of religiously fueled violence to take place around the world between the people of the Abrahamic religions. It is of paramount importance that this ignorance is eradicated with the utmost alacrity. The key to peace lies in understanding. Thus, educating people about the similarities and the common roots of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity is essential.

Avi Edelman is a junior at Blair High School in the Communications Arts Program. He is interested in politics and is the Co-President of his school's Young Democrats club. His interests also include film, and making movies, advertisements, and news segments for my school's video production program. He would like to pursue film as a career, possibly at NYU or Columbia. This year Avi is a participant in Operation Understanding DC, a year-long program that brings 16 black and 16 Jewish teenagers together to explore common bonds and create inter-racial and inter-religious dialogue. He is also an Orioles fan!