



Fund for the Future of our Children

and

Georgetown University's
Office of Campus Ministry

welcome you to the



Third Annual Children of Abraham

PEACE ESSAY CONTEST

Sunday, October 28, 2007

1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Inter-Cultural Center Auditorium
Georgetown University
Washington, DC

Welcome to this year's Kick-Off event!

On behalf of the Fund for the Future of our Children (FFC) and the co-sponsors of this program, I would like to thank each of you for your interest in the contest and for joining us today. I hope you will find your time and effort rewarded.

This forum for peace and understanding is the product of much hard work by many people... scholars, teachers, clergy, interfaith youth leaders, and volunteers. Appreciation and recognition go to FFC's patrons, Mrs. Josephine F. Ammerman and Mr. Andrew Ammerman, to the many distinguished members of our Advisory Committee, and to all of our speakers, judges, and on-line mentors for their invaluable support.

As part of its continuing effort to promote peace and interfaith understanding, FFC is expanding its efforts in several directions in the upcoming months. First, as part of today's kick-off celebration, two of last year's essay contest winners will be awarded Youth Leadership Micro-Grants for their work in fostering reconciliation and harmony between individuals and nations. These awards consist in both cash grants and matching grants to support their on-going efforts.

In order to expand depth of knowledge and experience for young leaders, FFC is planning an annual one-week summer "think tank" to give students an opportunity to think through and discuss various social issues, such as peace, social justice and corruption, from the perspective of the Abrahamic faiths.

During their stay, these young leaders will share ideas and draw inspiration from national and international adult leaders already working on these issues. This experience will also allow them to explore in further depth the thinking of other leaders for peace and their religious traditions – such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Elie Wiesel, and others who have faced "mission impossible" tasks in difficult times. FFC intends to offer its first "think tank" experience to contest participants during the summer of 2009.

Emerging from efforts put forth by participants in the Children of Abraham Peace Essay Contest and the Youth Leadership program, FFC will create "virtual" peace museum to pay tribute to those leaders worldwide who have moved the world closer to the one envisioned by the founders of the Abrahamic faiths. These leaders and their accomplishments will be portrayed and interpreted by those young people whom they have inspired and who aspire to add to the legacy of peace.

In all these ways and many others, FFC and its partners celebrate the potential our youth offers for bringing peace to our world.

Shalom, Peace, and Salam.
Avideh Shashaani, Ph.D.
President, Fund for the Future of our Children

Agenda

1:30 — Opening and introductions:

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

Avideh Shashaani, President, Fund for the Future of Our Children

2:00 — Panel presentation: *Moderator, Zeina Azzam Seikaly*

"Leadership for Peace," **Ambassador Helmut Tuerk**, Member of the Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

"Leadership for Peace," **Dr. Monika Tuerk**

"Moses, Jesus, Muhammad: Prophets for God's Peace," **Reverend Raymond Kemp**, Resident Senior Fellow, Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University

"The Jewish Prophetic View of Corruption and Injustice," **Rabbi Harold White**, Senior Jewish Chaplain, Georgetown University

3:00 — Pizza and soda break

3:30 — Panel presentations: *Moderator, Lansing Freeman*

"Overcoming the Dynamics of Corruption: A New Leadership Model," **Kenneth E. McNeil**, Senior Partner, Susman Godfrey, LLP

"Overcoming Obstacles: Collectively and Collaboratively," **June Murray-Crawford**, Hudson High School, Hudson, MA

"Islamic Ethics and the Question of Corruption and Injustice," **Professor Sulayman S. Nyang**, Professor of African Studies, Howard University

4:00 — Q & A with panelists

4:15 — Presentation of Micro-Grant Leadership Awards to:

Priya Agarwal-Harding, Glenelg High School
Melissa Mergner, Montgomery Blair High School

4:45 — Readings from the Sacred Scriptures, *Moderator Mike Goggin*

Priya Agarwal-Harding, Dalia Deak, Gleb Drobkov,
Mandeep Singh Bedi

About the Panelists, Speakers, and Presenters

Lansing Freeman is a teacher at Montgomery Blair High School (MBHS) in Silver Spring, Maryland. MBHS serves a diverse population, houses the Montgomery County Public Schools' Communication Arts Program (CAP) and the Science, Mathematics, and Computer Science Magnet Program, and with over 3,000 students is the country's largest enrollment. He teaches Middle East Studies, National, State and Local Government, US History and Peace Studies to students in grades 9 through 12 enrolled in the Communication Arts Program. He received a BS in Finance from the University of Delaware and a Master's in Education from Johns Hopkins University. Before his current teaching career he worked in sports marketing and management.

Father Timothy S. Godfrey, S.J. joined Georgetown University's Campus Ministry staff in July 2004 as Director of Campus Ministry. Fr. Godfrey most recently served as pastor of St. Patrick Church in Oakland, California, where he also mentored Jesuit and lay graduate theological students in pastoral ministry. He has also worked in East St. Louis, Illinois, as a public health nurse, and has served as associate pastor of St. Francis Xavier (College) Church in St. Louis, Missouri, and of St. Ignatius Church in Portland, Oregon. Fr. Godfrey holds Master of Divinity and Master of Theology degrees from the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, a Master of Social Work degree from Washington University in St. Louis, and Bachelor of Nursing and Bachelor of Arts degrees from St. Louis University.

Michael J. Goggin is the assistant director of the InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington (IFC). He spent 6 1/2 years as Youth Minister and Coordinator of Adolescent Faith Formation at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Community in Derwood, Maryland. During that time and subsequently, he received the Outstanding Adult Leadership Award from the Archdiocese of Washington (1999). He earned his BSFS degree from the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University in 1992, and in the spring of 2005 he completed his MA degree in Theology with a concentration in Word and Worship at the Washington Theological Union.

Reverend Raymond B. Kemp is currently a Resident Senior Fellow at the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University, as well as an adjunct faculty member at both Georgetown and Washington Theological Union. He is also Coordinator of Preaching the Just Word, a national program sponsored by the Woodstock Theological Center to assist priests and other ministers to be more effective in preaching biblical and social justice. The Reverend Kemp was named an honorary peacemaker by the Program on Justice and Peace at Georgetown University for his work with students on the Living Wage Campaign. His publications include *Journey in Faith*, and articles in *Worship*, *The Catechumenate*, *Church*, *Liturgy 90*, and *National Catholic Reporter*. He received his STL at St. Mary's Seminary and University (1967).

Kenneth McNeil is a 25-year partner in the law firm of Susman Godfrey LLP. He is currently on the board of directors of the Lawyer's Committee on Civil Rights, founded by John F. Kennedy to promote civil rights enforcement. He has served on the 12-member board of the Civil Justice Institute of the Litigation Section of the American Bar Association, and has been chair of the Antitrust and Business Litigation Committee of the State Bar of Texas. Prior to being a trial lawyer, he was an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, studying legal regulation and large-scale corporate behavior. He has published scholarly articles on topics including the dynamics of bureaucratic power in modern society. He has been a major long-time contributor to the Servant Leadership School, which brings a deep ecumenical religious perspective to training people to deal with issues of the poor and global injustice.

June Murray-Crawford has been a social studies teacher for the past 16 years. A graduate of Villanova University (BA) and Simmons College (MA), June has taught in a variety of locations from Boston, Massachusetts, to Cali, Colombia. For the last ten years she has taught World Cultures at Hudson High School in Hudson, MA, and has led student trips to the Peruvian Amazon, where her students delivered school and medical supplies to rural villages. Ms. Murray has also been involved with Cultural Survival, a non-profit whose objective is to promote the voices of the indigenous communities of the world. She has traveled to China and the countries of Benin and Ghana, and this year will be going to Russia, bringing each new destination into her classroom for her students to experience. Last year she was elected vice-president of her teacher's union.

Sulayman S. Nyang, Ph.D. is a professor at Howard University, where his principle areas of research include Islam, African systems of government, and African political thought. He has published many articles and books, and has sat on the editorial boards of several scholarly journals, including the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (USA), and *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* (Birmingham, UK). In the 1980's he served as chairman of the Africa and International Committee of the Montgomery Chapter of the NAACP. Mr. Nyang served for nine years as the chairman of the African Studies Department at Howard University. From 1993 to 1999 he served as the lead developer of the African Voices at the Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution. He was the Co-Principal Investigator for Muslims in the American Public Square, a project funded by the Pew Charitable Trust and based at Georgetown University's Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding.

Zeina Azzam Seikaly has worked as Outreach Coordinator at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies (CCAS) at Georgetown University since 1994. She coordinates programs for pre-college educators on all aspects of Arab affairs and serves as a consultant for curriculum materials and speakers in the classroom. She regularly plans or presents lectures about the Arab world, the larger Middle East, and Islam for teachers and community groups. Previously, Ms. Seikaly worked in the publishing field as editor of academic articles and monographs on the Arab world and Islam. She has written article, book, and film reviews for scholarly publications, worked

as a Lecturer in the Sociology Department at George Mason University, and taught Arabic to children and adults. Ms. Seikaly is currently president of the Middle East Outreach Council. Her academic background includes an M.A. in Sociology from George Mason University and a B.A. in Psychology from Vassar College, as well as a Publication Specialist Program certificate from George Washington University.

Judge Helmut Tuerk has served the international community in a variety of capacities. From 1967-1993 he has held numerous diplomatic posts including Consul General and Acting Consul General (Hong Kong), Deputy Head of Mission (Bonn), and Deputy Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs. From 1993 to 1999, he served as Ambassador to the United States, as Permanent Observer to the Organization of American States, and as Ambassador to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. From 2002 to 2004 he has served as a member of the Austrian National Security Council, and as Ambassador to the Holy See, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, and the Republic of San Marino. Since 1 October 2005 he has been a Member of the Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. In his own country, Ambassador Tuerk has served as Director General of the Office of the Austrian Federal President, as a member of the Austrian National Security Council, and in many other capacities.

Monika Tuerk, Ph.D. studied law at the University of Vienna, and practiced law in Upper Austria and Vienna. She is married to Helmut Tuerk, and has lived with him in many regions of the world. She has participated in various Catholic charity programs in Vienna, focusing on aid to senior citizens and to children. She is currently working on behalf of Hospice and SOS Children's Villages USA. In 1998, Dr. Tuerk was awarded FFC's lifetime achievement award.

Rabbi Harold S. White is the Senior Jewish Chaplain at Georgetown University. He teaches in the Theology Department of Georgetown and has been very active in creating a milieu of Jewish-Christian theological dialogue in the greater Washington metropolitan area. He also currently serves as scholar-in-residence at Holy Cross Abbey in Berryville, VA, and at Mercersberg Academy in Mercersberg, PA. He completed his undergraduate degree at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT, and received Rabbinical Ordination at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York City. Rabbi White has served as a US Navy Chaplain at Paris Island, SC, and with the 7th fleet in the Pacific. He also served as the associate Rabbi of Temple Sinai in Washington, DC, from 1980-1985. He has served as a congregational Rabbi at the Dublin Jewish Progressive Congregation in Dublin, Ireland, and at Beth Israel Congregation in Ann Arbor, MI. He was the B'Nai B'rith Hillel Foundation Director at the American University for nine years, prior to being appointed Jewish Chaplain at Georgetown University.

About the Micro-Grant Leadership Award Recipients

Children of Abraham peace essayists are encouraged to apply what they learned from the Abrahamic religious traditions by proposing a creative project for peace in their community, nation, or world. FFC has initiated a "micro-grant" leadership award to recognize visionary efforts by these young people, and to encourage others to develop their proposals into viable projects.

The first FFC Youth Leadership Micro-Grant of \$1,000, plus a \$1,000 additional matching grant, will be awarded at the 2007 Kick-Off event to Priya Agarwal-Harding for her work with Prayas, an organization whose goal is to stop the child trafficking in India. A second will be awarded to Melissa Mergner – already a rising filmmaker – to document efforts to promote peace between North and South Korea.



Priya Agarwal-Harding is 16 years old and in her senior year at Glenelg Country High School. Priya is passionately interested in international development especially related to cross-cultural communication. Priya is currently (2007) working as an intern at the Johns Hopkins Center for Public Health (JHPIEGO) and has also worked as an intern (2006) with the International Youth Foundation of Baltimore. Priya has lived in various countries: Ghana, India, and the UK accompanying her parents in their UN careers. Priya is a member of the National Honor Society and founder and president of the Future Business Leaders in America (FBLA) in her school. She has a passion for writing, literature and history, and is a recipient of the President's Volunteer Service Award-2005. Her main hobbies include classical Indian dance, Bharat Natyam, modern dance, and traveling. She has already raised \$1,000 for Prayas to earn the Micro-Grant matching funds.

Melissa Mergner attends the Communication Arts Program at Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Maryland. She has written and directed three documentaries, including "Legacy of Peace" about Japan's A-bomb victims, and "Woody Guthrie: Voice of the Common Man." Her films have won awards and have been shown at over 20 film festivals across the U.S. She is currently helping the Farm Labor Organizing Committee with fundraising, by redoing a video she did related to the death of one of the farm workers - Urbano's Song; as well as working on a campaign with them against the tobacco industry. As part of her video on the reunification of Korea, she visited a Buddhist Temple. She is also a member of Blair's swim team. She enjoys drawing, sewing and cooking. She hopes to attend art school when she graduates from high school in 2009.



2007-2008 Essay Question

The majority of people want to live their lives in peace and harmony with other people. They want those in power to work for the good of all Humankind. Unfortunately, we face a world in which the great religious goals of compassion and love are often deeply “corrupted” by power. Corruption is occurring in all sectors: political, economic, and religious. To quote the famous phrase by the political philosopher Lord Acton: “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

Corruption spawns a vicious cycle of cynicism, injustice, disillusion and hopelessness that leave many dispirited and believing that “altruistic” or spiritual compassion are ineffective.

The leaders of each of the three Abrahamic faiths—Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad—each witnessed ways in which powerful interests often became corrupt, corrupted the masses around them to maintain power, and created an atmosphere in which injustice was accepted. They each challenged both corruption and injustice with a vision of compassion.

They contended that love and compassion are central in reversing the vicious spiraling cycle of corruption and injustice. In doing so, they turned cynicism about compassion on its head.

Leaders everywhere and in every generation must revitalize the struggle against corruption and its demoralizing effects. To inspire critical thinking on this issue, FFC’s Third Annual Children of Abraham Essay contest asks the following questions:

- *How did each of the leaders of the Abrahamic faiths – Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad – seek to creatively transform the corruption and injustice in the societies in which they found themselves?*
- *Using the insights from these leaders, suggest a specific project that would seek to transform some type of corruption and injustice which faces your community, nation, or world today.*

Essay Judges

Karima Diane-Alavi, former Director Dar al Islam Teachers’ Institute

Andrew R. Ammerman, Board of Regents, Georgetown University

Brian Hendrix, Senior Consultant, Art of Facts, Houston, Texas

Reverend Raymond B. Kemp, Resident Senior Fellow, Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University

Alex Kronemer, Writer, Film Producer, and Lecturer on Religious Diversity

Josetta (“Jo”) Owen, Teacher, Volunteer, and Philanthropist

Jorge Romero, Attorney, K&L Gates, LLP

On-line Mentors

Rabbi A. Nathan Abramowitz, Faculty, Theology Dept., Georgetown University

Laith Al-Qasem, CEO of Arabian Business Consultants for Development

Mark Braverman, Clinical psychologist and organizational consultant

John Deken, High School Teacher, Columbia Missouri

David Gage, Ph.D., Founder, BMC Associates

Michael Goldman, Jewish Chaplain, Georgetown University Law & Medical Centers

Adila Laidi-Hanieh, Professor, Bir Zeit University

Molly Linehan, High School Campus Minister, Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin School

Fr. William McFadden, S.J., Faculty, Theology Department, Georgetown University

Zachary McIntyre, High School Teacher, Guymon, Oklahoma

Kenneth E. McNeil, Senior Partner, Susman Godfrey LLP

Sabree Muhammad, High School Teacher, Bronx, New York

June Murray-Crawford, High School Teacher, Hudson, Massachusetts

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

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

On-line Peer Mentors

Avi Edelman, Columbia University student and 2005-2006 first prize winner, Children of Abraham Peace Essay Contest. He is a freshman this year at Columbia University in New York City, serving as a reporter for the campus television station and board member of the Columbia College Democrats. He is a graduate of Operation Understanding DC, a year-long program that brings sixteen Black and sixteen Jewish teenagers together to explore common bonds and create inter-racial and inter-religious dialogue.



Mindy Zhang, student at the Wharton School of Business and 2005-2006 second prize winner, Children of Abraham Peace Essay Contest. This semester, Mindy is continuing her studies of Mandarin Chinese and French, in addition to her business courses. She is a corporate liaison for Wharton Women, an organization that prepares women and girls for the professional world, and she is fundraising for the Wharton China Business Forum, an annual conference that promotes awareness about Chinese markets. She is also continuing her involvement in Model United Nations as an Assistant Secretary General for UPMUNC, Penn's college debate conference. She has decided to study abroad -- either in Shanghai or Paris for linguistic immersion.

About the 2006-2007 Children of Abraham Peace Essay Contest

Last year's essayists addressed the two-part essay question: "How did Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad model leadership for peace through their lives and teachings? Choose a community or an area of conflict, and describe how the example of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad would help you promote peaceful coexistence."



Awardees on stage with Rev. Elizabeth Orens

At a workshop event very much like today's, 80 students had the opportunity to hear scholars and clergy (several of whom have returned today) describe the leadership undertaken by the founders of the Abrahamic faiths.

Writing the essay required deep thought about those faiths, and about the meaning of leadership in a troubled world. Essays were submitted by young writers, who represented seven area high schools and many religions, and cultural backgrounds.

Awardees were honored at the April award ceremony held at Georgetown University, at which essayists had an opportunity to address the gathering and present a summary of their work.

The first Teacher's Award for Peace Advocacy was presented to Lansing Freeman of Montgomery Blair High School, who had mentored many of the contest winners.



Lansing Freeman receiving the Teacher's Award for Peace Advocacy.



Several of the winners of the first year's contest were on hand to present a moving testimony to the ways in which their participation in the essay contest had influenced their lives. A reception followed.

The 2006-2007 Awardees

First Place - Mandeep Singh Bedi,

"Moses, Jesus, Muhammad—Leaders of Peace," Montgomery Blair High School

Second Place - Melissa Mergner,

"Peace for Halabeioji," Montgomery Blair High School

Third Place - Sharif Kronemer,

"The Enduring Models," Springbrook High School

Fourth Place - Dalia Deak,

"Teachings of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad" Islamic Saudi Academy

Fourth Place - Isel Otero-Vera,

"Peace Essay," Walter Johnson High School

Fourth Place - Melanie Snail,

"The Prophets Who Lived to Achieve Peace," Montgomery Blair High School

Fourth Place - Lauren Sumida,

"Leadership for Peace: The Prophet's Teachings and Their Application Today," Montgomery Blair High School

Honorable Mention - Priya Agarwal-Harding,

"A Noble Path to Noble Peace," Glenelg High School

Honorable Mention - Gleb Drobkov,

"Steps to Coexistence in the 21st Century," St. Alban's High School

Honorable Mention - Alicia Fuhrman,

"Coexistence: A Modern Practical Approach," Robinson Secondary School

Honorable Mention - Kenneth Fung,

"The Peace Trio," Robinson Secondary School

Honorable Mention - Mona Moustafa Meky,

"Prophets Moses, Jesus and Muhammad," Islamic Saudi Academy

Honorable Mention - Valli Sanmugalingam,

"Leading for Love," Walter Johnson High School

Honorable Mention - Youmna Sherif,

"Peace and Extraordinary Leadership: The Role of Compassion, Selflessness and Mercy," Islamic Saudi Academy

Honorable Mention - Benjamin Shih,

"Prophet Initiative," Montgomery Blair High School

About the 2005-2006 Contest

The first Children of Abraham Peace Essay Contest in 2005-2006 asked students to consider, "How might understanding the roots of peace in each of the Abrahamic traditions — Christianity, Islam, and Judaism—help to bring about religious understanding in your community?"



Cokie Roberts at the podium

Essayists were asked to consider: 1) Similarities that exist between the faiths, especially the role of peace within each; 2) Examples that illustrate the conflict between the Abrahamic religions despite the tradition of peace; 3) Instances of religious misunderstanding that occur in their communities. Finally, they were asked to create a proposal for a project that could be implemented in their own community to promote peace.



2005-2006 Awardees

Awardees were honored at the April award ceremony held at the Riggs Library, Georgetown University. Cokie Roberts delivered the keynote address. The seven award-winning essayists participated in a panel discussion, which was followed by the candlelight ceremony during which Ms. Roberts handed out the prizes. A reception followed.

The 2005-2006 Awardees



First place – Avi Edelman,
“One God, One Voice: Peace in the Abrahamic Faiths,” Montgomery Blair High School

Second place – Mindy Zhang,
“Education, Dialogue, and Action: The Keys to Generating Religious Understanding,” JW Robinson Secondary School

Third place – Zachary Eaton,
“Plan for Peace: An Essay on the Three Abrahamic Faiths,” Montgomery Blair High School

Honorable Mention – Eliza Adelson,
“Gardens of Peace,” Holton-Arms School

Honorable Mention – Dana Alsaadi,
“Embracing Peace...In Hopes of a Better Tomorrow,” The Islamic Saudi Academy

Honorable Mention – Uneeb Qureshi,
“The Future of Mankind,” Thomas S. Wootton High School

Honorable Mention – Heba Tellawi,
“Peace in the Abrahamic Religions,” Islamic Saudi Academy

Advisory Committee

Lansing Freeman
Teacher, Montgomery Blair High School, Silver Spring, MD

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

Michael J. Goggin
Assistant Director, Inter Faith Conference of Metropolitan Washington

Imam Yahya Hendi
Muslim Chaplain, Georgetown University

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

Reverend Elizabeth Orens
Former Chaplain of the National Cathedral School; currently Rector at the St. James Parish in Parkton, MD

Zeina Seikaly
Outreach Coordinator, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University

Rabbi Harold S. White
Senior Jewish Chaplain, Georgetown University



Poem

If we all loved each other
Wouldn't it be a lovely sight?
Red and yellow, black and white
If we did not care what religion one had
The world wouldn't be cruel
And no one would be sad
If we replaced hatred with love and
Joined our hands together
Everyone would be happy and that
Day would be remembered forever
If there were no guns and knives
There would be happiness from
Door to Door
If people would not judge one by
What one is instead by whom one is
It would be more amazing than the
Invention of light
If there was peace among the world
Wouldn't that be a lovely sight?

~ Zakaria Ismail Kronemer
2004, 6th grade



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